

Introduction

In 1860, a captain in the United States Navy was tasked with managing the love letters that American women sent to samurai. His assignment—poring through the foot-high pile of hand-written missives delivered daily—required time and tact, resources increasingly exhausted as the visit of the first-ever Japanese Embassy to the United States continued into the hot, heavy days of summer. Some of the entreaties were harmless—invitations to visit female seminaries, requests for autographs, questions about the embassy’s plans—others, less so. Some letters contained messages and warnings that could undo all the efforts of the US government regarding its future relations with that mysterious island nation and for the first diplomatic mission to leave Japan since 1613.

But what was to be done with these scandalous pages? Letters with return addresses, scrawled in cursive above broken wax seals or on the reverse of palm-sized pages folded into quarters, could be returned to their points of origin, ideally to the fathers of these indiscreet lady writers. The American officer himself—one of the embassy’s official escorts—would retain some of the correspondence, perhaps embracing his role as sea captain-turned-archivist during this significant moment in American history. The remaining letters—too sensational or seditious to be preserved in the captain’s family home for the next hundred and sixty years—would reach a different destination: the flickering flames of a hotel fireplace.

If only all of Captain Samuel Francis Du Pont’s embassy duties could be dispatched so easily. The streets and newspapers of the nation’s capital had been filled with discussion of “the distinguished strangers,” as the press called the Japanese.¹ Du Pont greeted the samurai upon their arrival at the harbor of Hampton Roads, Virginia, and the embassy, after four months of travel, reached the Navy Yard of Washington, DC, on May 14. Hundreds of people waited outside the embassy’s hotel each morning, in the hopes of seeing the samurai, and in queues that had increased in number and audacity since the Japanese began their northward travels from Washington, DC. Female teenagers accosted the Japanese for handshakes, young boys fought to carry the embassy’s shopping, and both male and female Americans attempted (sometimes successfully) to lead the Japanese into their homes or

¹ The Japanese were often referred to in the press as “distinguished strangers.” For some of the many examples, see “The Japanese at New York,” *Daily Dispatch*, May 4, 1860, 1; “The Japanese Embassy at Panama,” *Daily Crescent*, May 14, 1860, 10.

brothels.² Guards stationed outside the hotel were supposed to keep out the relentless and rowdy, but the people of America, it seemed, would not be denied. Du Pont may have grimaced at the behavior of his supposedly civilized countrymen: the grabbing and touching, the theft of one samurai's irreplaceable family swords, the frenetic impropriety of American young ladies, the shock of one samurai returning to his room to find an American man trying on his clothes in his absence.

Du Pont's days were occupied not only with the bold and wily deeds of his fellow citizens, but also with disgruntled Japanese dignitaries—unhappy with the crowds (too big), unhappy with their scheduled time in the United States (too long), and unhappy with the food prepared on their behalf (too strange, too covered in sauce). No expense had been spared in the entertainment and catering of the Japanese, and yet, the samurai seemed unhappy with the smoked tongue, boiled mutton, and other delicacies prepared for their enjoyment. Attempts had been made to accommodate the embassy's peculiar palates, such as the addition of rice drizzled in butter and sugar to some of the meals. Du Pont could not have known the horror with which this dish was received by the samurai, accustomed to a diet without dairy products or the refined sugar so prevalent in American cooking. Reports and records of the Japanese reveal a fondness for at least some of the sustenance that the United States had to offer, but it would take more than champagne and ice cream to ensure the future harmony and commerce of the United States and Japan. The happiness of the embassy was an issue of state importance, or else Captain Du Pont would not have been tasked with such a daunting mission.

The embassy of seventy-seven men, with three official ambassadors, departed aboard the USS *Powhatan* from Yokohama, Japan on February 13, 1860. The diplomatic objective of the 1860 Japanese Embassy was the ratification of the Treaty of Amity and Commerce, which, among other conditions, opened certain Japanese ports to American trade. A ninety-six-man Japanese escort group and an additional eleven American sailors aboard the *Kanrin Maru* transported the embassy's gifts and luggage. The *Kanrin Maru* arrived in California two weeks before the USS *Powhatan*. Those aboard both ships reconnected in California and enjoyed a brief time together before the official embassy's journey continued. The USS *Powhatan*, after refueling in Hawai'i and California, sailed to Panama. The embassy crossed Panama by train, boarded the USS *Roanoke*, and, after some minor confusion,

² Hirose Hoan, *Kankaikōro nikki* [A diary of a voyage surrounded by sea], Hyōryū-ki sōsho, vol. 92, National Diet Library Digital Collections, accessed January 17, 2019, <http://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/767349>; Tamamushi Sadayū, *Kōbei nichiroku* [A daily record of a voyage to America], 8 vols., in *Seiyō kenbunshū* [Knowledge of the West], ed. Numata Jirō and Matsuzawa Hiroaki (Tokyo, 1974), 1:42, 4:106; Muragaki Norimasa, *Kenbeishi nikki* [Diary of the voyage of the mission to America], in *Kengai shisetsu nikki sanshū*, ed. Nihon shiseki kyōkai, 3 vols. (Tokyo, 1971), 1:103.

arrived in Washington, DC on May 14, 1860. The escort group aboard the *Kanrin Maru* left San Francisco for Japan on May 8, 1860. After the treaty ratification on May 17, the embassy experienced a whirlwind of technological and cultural demonstrations, celebrations, and shopping. The embassy spent nearly four weeks in Washington, DC, one night in Baltimore, seven nights in Philadelphia, and two full weeks in New York City before leaving the United States for Japan on June 30. The embassy then traveled east and circled the Cape of Good Hope before reaching Shinagawa, Japan on November 9, 1860. During the embassy's travels, the samurai toured museums, factories, and the greatest sightseeing points that the American cities which they visited had to offer. The samurai did not always engage in these excursions willingly, and many were more than eager for their journey to end. Several of the embassy members left journals, and, as scholar, Masao Miyoshi, has discussed in his study of the embassy, the 1860 embassy members' records are rife with poignant reflection, humorous misunderstandings, and moments of deep human connection.³

During the embassy's time in the United States, the importance of the 1860 Japanese Embassy was one of the few political issues upon which most antebellum Americans, regardless of race, gender, or region, seemed to agree. Commercial interest in Japan transcended regional loyalties, and both Northerners and Southerners were inclined to think the best of "this wonderful people,"⁴ their potential trade partners. Newspapers publicized "the fine heads, intellectual countenances and dignified bearing"⁵ of the embassy members. The diplomatic mission was the "great event of the age,"⁶ with some newspapers printing as many as seven articles about Japan and the embassy per issue.⁷

Du Pont was accustomed to a certain level of stature as a member of the prominent Du Pont family, but the avalanche of guests and visitors for the Japanese was unprecedented both in Du Pont's lifetime and that of his nation. Many of the samurai—and especially the seventeen-year-old assistant interpreter who enjoyed particular popularity with American women—were mistakenly believed to be and advertised as princes, making the 1860 Japanese Embassy not only the first official

³ For the different impressions that the embassy members themselves had of their journey and overseas encounters, see Masao Miyoshi, *As We Saw Them: The First Japanese Embassy to the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 55–95.

⁴ "Japanese—The Objects of the Embassy, etc.," *Wilmington Journal*, May 24, 1860, 5.

⁵ "The Japanese Embassy in San Francisco—Their Trip—Recapture by the State Authorities—California News—Advices from the Territories, &c.," *Daily Dispatch*, April 17, 1860, 2. Masao Miyoshi suggests that Consul General Townsend Harris is in part responsible for the misconception that the Japanese were princes. See Miyoshi, *As We Saw Them*, 24–25.

⁶ "The Japanese Embassy—Their Arrival at Washington, &c., &c.," *Daily Exchange*, May 15, 1860, 4.

⁷ "Japan," *Daily Exchange*, May 25, 1860, 4.

Japanese Embassy to the United States, but also the largest “royal” tour in American history.⁸ Family members had descended upon Du Pont for surprise social calls at the hotel where he stayed with the Japanese. Friends, however loosely defined, had begun calling in even the most fragile of favors in the hopes of introducing their wives and daughters to the samurai. Even Du Pont’s wife was plagued by requests, though his beloved Sophie was perhaps less troubled by, in the words of one of her young relatives, “this Japanese embassy business,” and how it thrust Sophie even more prominently into the spotlight of Delaware society.⁹

Sophie, as one of the few direct links to arguably the most celebrated and, later, controversial American event in the summer of 1860, was a hub of insider information for her eager relatives, confidantes, and neighbors. Writing from the Du Ponts’ family home in Wilmington, Delaware, Sophie described receiving a gift of strawberry plants from a dentist who had previously promised such benevolence, and coincidentally chose to deliver his gift upon the news of the embassy’s arrival. Sophie commented that it was perhaps “the hope of inspecting Japanese teeth, and operating on Japanese princes [that] recalled the strawberries to his recollection.”¹⁰ Presents poured into the hands of Captain Du Pont as well, though they were not intended for him. Maps, paintings, scientific instruments, books, and favors large and small arrived from all corners of the nation for the Japanese. A few of the doggedly devout continued to send invitations to church gatherings or—against the explicit instructions of the United States government—presents of bibles to the nation’s non-Christian guests, either unaware of or unconcerned with the severe consequences that could befall the Japanese Embassy members should they be seen, even by each other, perusing such material.

While Du Pont penned responses to the many missives on his desk, seventeen-year-old Tateishi Onojirō Noriyuki, the most famous of all the embassy members, was otherwise engaged. Known to the American people as “Tommy,” assistant interpreter Tateishi was, by all accounts, enjoying the new sights and

⁸ Antebellum newspapers were aware of the 1794 Boston visit of Prince Edward, Duke of Kent and Strathearn. “Edward, Prince, Duke of Kent and Strathearn (1767–1820),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew, Brian Harrison, Lawrence Goldman, and the British Academy (Online: Oxford University Press, 2004). The 1798 visit of exiled prince Louis Phillipe (1773–1850), future king of France, was not a state visit and was not discussed by daily Southern metropolitan newspapers in connection with the 1860 embassy. Also not part of an official state visit, Abdul Rahman Ibrahima ibn Sori, a Fula prince and Muslim who had been captured and enslaved, made national headlines in the early nineteenth century for the story of his enslavement in Mississippi and his efforts to free his children. Terry Alford, *Prince among Slaves* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁹ Henry Algernon Du Pont to S. M. K. Smith, May 6, 1860, Winterthur Manuscripts, Group 8, Series A, Hagley Library, Wilmington.

¹⁰ Sophie Madeleine Du Pont to Samuel Francis Du Pont, May 17, 1860, Winterthur Manuscripts, Group 9, Series D, Box 60, Hagley Library, Wilmington.

sensations that America had to offer, whether, as newspapers described, “[drinking] champagne like a trooper”¹¹ or flirting with American ladies.¹² Tateishi perhaps holds the worldwide honor of being the first representative of any nation to spray children with a firehose as part of a diplomatic visit, let alone to delight and applause.¹³

When not sightseeing, shopping, or strolling about the town, Tateishi found much to keep him occupied indoors. Sometimes he would entertain, one by one, the massive queues of people gathered to meet him. Or perhaps he would release origami butterflies from the upper floor windows, and watch as they wafted down to the cheering crowd below. Early in the embassy’s stay, some of the Japanese amused themselves by throwing Japanese coins and bits of Japanese paper out the hotel windows to the eager crowd below. Some especially enterprising Americans brought with them large buckets in the hopes of catching a precious souvenir from that mysterious nation across the sea. Whatever Tateishi did to occupy his time, it was likely that Du Pont would read about it—for better or for worse—in the newspapers the following day.

Tateishi was excited to be in the United States, but overall, the embassy was not a triumphant moment for the government of Japan. In 1851, President Millard Fillmore ordered a naval expedition to Japan with the purpose of opening Japan to American trade. The mid-nineteenth century was a time of great rivalry amongst European powers for influence and empire in East Asia, and the “closed” country of Japan attracted the interest of several powerful nations for the economic opportunities and prestige that it represented. The United States was no exception. American whaling interests in the Pacific necessitated a safe harbor for rest and refueling, and reports of Japan’s rejections of shipwrecked castaways enraged American and European readers around the world. American efforts in the 1840s to establish commerce with Japan grew more aggressive in the 1850s, and Commodore Matthew Perry sailed to Japan in 1853 with the intent of enacting the president’s orders—by force, if necessary.¹⁴ Perry’s gunboat diplomacy sparked political turmoil in Japan, pitting those of different mindsets on how to solve the foreign crisis against each other. In 1854, after much debate and a series of delaying tactics, representatives of the shogunate saw no choice but to sign the Treaty of Peace and Amity, which opened the ports of Shimoda and Hakodate to American ships and established an

¹¹ “Tribulations of Japanese ‘Tommy,’” *Cincinnati Daily Press*, June 16, 1860, 1.

¹² “A Japanese Gone North,” *Daily Dispatch*, June 11, 1860, 1.

¹³ “A Japanese Gone North,” *Daily Dispatch*.

¹⁴ For details regarding the Perry expedition, see Paul Hendrix Clark, *The Perry Expedition and the “Opening of Japan to the West,” 1853–1873: A Short History with Documents* (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2020).

American consulate in Japan. Negotiations continued until the signing of the 1858 Treaty of Amity and Commerce, which opened four additional ports to foreign trade and allowed for the exchanging of diplomats. The 1860 embassy's journey to the United States was to ratify this treaty. In 1860, the signing of this treaty was a cause for great celebration in America. For the Japanese, it meant an end to the official foreign policy that had governed their society for the past 260 years, and a permanent change to the Japanese way of life.

The 1860 embassy's visit to the United States was, for the Japanese, neither a merry occasion nor a reconnaissance mission. Unlike the second Japanese delegation that visited the United States in 1872, in 1860, the Japanese Embassy did not have a clearly defined agenda for learning more about American people, technology, or institutions. Many of the samurai—exhausted and homesick—secluded themselves in their hotel rooms and away from the strange and foreign world outside their windows. Fears of future American imperialism weighed heavily on the minds of many.

The United States in 1860 was also far from untroubled. The samurai embassy arrived at a time when debates regarding slavery divided the nation. Less than one year before their arrival, John Brown's failed slave uprising at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, escalated controversy and confrontation across the country. The embassy also arrived in the middle of an election year, with the Republican National Convention nominating Abraham Lincoln just a day before the samurai first visited the White House. Issues of race, rights, and the nation's future were at the forefront of cultural and political discussion in the year 1860, and the Japanese were a part of this. The samurai, immediately upon their arrival, initiated a deluge of commentary that attempted to reconcile America's endemic racial hierarchies and understandings of "civilization" with the nation's economic ambitions regarding Japan. The Japanese ambassadors—men of color and also of conspicuous wealth and perceived power—jumbled the usual metrics of American hierarchy building.

Of all the samurai, it was Tateishi who inspired the most excitement and controversy in the writings of antebellum Americans. Soon after the embassy's visit to the White House in mid-May 1860, newspapers seized upon the energetic and jubilant figure of "Tommy," the assistant interpreter who, if the newspapers were to be believed, grew to love America more by the day. By the time of his departure, Tateishi was reported to have expressed an eagerness to "perfect himself in English" and "[go] to the naval school, or to West Point—and finally [get a] Yankee wife."¹⁵ "Tommy" seemed to be attracted to more than just American culture, and stories of his flirtations and romances with American women made national headlines. In DC, Tateishi was reported to have acquired a local sweetheart, "a little maid in blue,

¹⁵ "The Japanese Embassy: From the Japanese on Their Way Home, News of the Niagara," *New York Times*, August 20, 1860, 1.

standing upon the sidewalk and tearfully bewailing the departure of all Japanese.”¹⁶ In other accounts, Tateishi was a charming rascal, his interests flitting from lady to lady throughout his travels. The women of America were not to be discouraged by these tales, and public and private discussion of Tateishi and the Japanese Embassy continued even after the embassy left the United States at the end of June 1860.

In the early stages of the embassy’s visit, American newspapers celebrated the perceived Japanese interest in American women, while alternatively mocking and encouraging the women who queued outside the embassy’s hotel in the hopes of a samurai encounter. However, from the moment that the embassy’s visit was announced, and for the duration of the embassy’s stay, the American metropolitan press struggled to define the Japanese while welcoming them into public and private American life.¹⁷ The Japanese arrived at an internally turbulent time in the United States and provided, with a state-supported whirlwind of exoticism and festivities, both a celebratory and contentious outlet for the political and social tensions facing the nation.

During the summer of 1860, the person and image of “Tommy” symbolized the multitude of ambitions and anxieties that many American people held towards Japan and the Japanese. The depiction of “Tommy” and the Japanese in American newspapers changed dramatically over the course of his stay, from curious celebrity to romantic icon, to something more sinister. Yet this assistant interpreter was more than the “Oriental Adonis”¹⁸ that many newspapers depicted him to be. After returning to Japan in the fall of 1860, he educated future leaders of Meiji-era Japan (1868–1912). He fought for the government of samurai, the Tokugawa shogunate, on the losing side of a civil war (1868–1869, also known as the Boshin War). After a hasty wartime escape and a name change, Tateishi managed to transition into Japan’s new political regime. He later traveled across Europe and represented Japan as a member of the Iwakura Mission (1871–1873). The Iwakura Mission was one of the most influential diplomatic operations in Japanese history and the inspiration for many of the industrial, political, and social initiatives of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Japan. Throughout his life, Tateishi contributed to many of the defining cultural and national endeavors of nineteenth-century Japan. He

¹⁶ “The Japanese Embassy,” *New-York Daily Tribune*, June 12, 1860, 5.

¹⁷ Here I am using the phrase “metropolitan publications” to encompass newspapers, including those with a political or commercial focus, published in metropolitan areas in daily or weekly form and aimed towards an English-speaking audience, excluding specialty publications targeting specific minority and religious groups, women, or children. Examples of such publications consulted for this study include the *New York Herald*, the *Daily Dispatch*, *Harper’s Weekly*, the *Daily Alta California*, and the *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, among others. The majority of these metropolitan publications’ editors, publishers, and documented contributors were white and male.

¹⁸ “The Japanese Embassy,” *New-York Tribune*, June 12, 1860, 5.

participated in foreign relations, in coal mining, in the colonization of Hokkaidō, and later lived in Hawai'i as an overseer of early Japanese immigration. He changed names and professions many times, and lived a life quite separate from that of the symbol of him created by the American press. In the 1860s, before Japan's civil war, "Tommy," despite being almost unheard of in Japan today, was arguably the most famous Japanese person outside Japan.

Interactions between samurai diplomats and transnational actors sparked a whirlwind of national optimism and cultural fantasy that challenged linked conceptions of race, masculinity, and power. The fame and influence of Tateishi, the man, and "Tommy," the symbol, is a story that controverts many of the assumptions of "East learning from West" that have defined US-Japanese relations since Commodore Matthew Perry first sailed into Japanese waters in 1853.¹⁹ During the summer of 1860, "Tommy" inspired music, mayhem, and a questioning of the meaning of "civilization" itself—a concept both influential and ambiguous in the US during the time of the Japanese Embassy's visit. *Civil War Samurai* embraces the double lives of "Tommy" and his legacy, both in fighting for the losing side of Japan's civil war, while also playing a role in the cultural and intellectual buildup to the American Civil War. This book shares not just the largely forgotten story of an extraordinary life, but also why and how such an unprecedented story was soon buried as little more than a footnote in Japanese and American history.

Civil War Samurai brings together over two thousand primary sources never before combined in the study of American or Japanese history, including letters to samurai written by American women, children, and teenagers, antebellum newspapers, African American and abolitionist periodicals, nineteenth-century illustrations and photographs of samurai, Japanese journals and personal letters, state documents, and oral histories passed down from the descendants of samurai, among other sources. The first chapter of this book examines the initial welcome of the 1860 embassy in metropolitan American publications, and how Southern editors were encouraged by the embassy's interracial encounters to depict their region as morally superior to and culturally separate from the American North. The second chapter explores how American women both reinterpreted and rejected their state's hierarchies of civilization and race in favor of their own non-violent interests of commerce, fantasy, and connection with samurai. The third chapter discloses how African American journalists and abolitionist writers engaged with the Japanese as an experience in transnational solidarity inspired both by and against racial prejudice. This book then shifts to reveal the man behind the legend,

¹⁹ In the stories that follow, Tateishi himself will be discussed using the name which he held in that particular time of his life, and "Tommy" will refer to the symbol and idea of this samurai created by the American press.

taking a biographical approach to Tateishi's life as a young samurai in Chapter Four, then continuing in Chapter Five with an exploration of Tateishi's involvement in the Boshin War.²⁰ Chapter Six uncovers Tateishi's second and final trip to the United States, and how post-civil war politics altered the course of his life and legacy. Chapter Seven reveals his activity in Hawai'i, Russia, and Hokkaido, following Tateishi to his final days in Japan on the eve of World War I. The Conclusion explores the complicated nature and near erasure of Tateishi's celebrity within American and Japanese history.

Tateishi's story provides new insight into the cultural history of Japan, the United States, transnational exchange, and the politics of historical memory in the context of US–Japan relations. Many Japanese-language discussions of the 1860 embassy focus on reprinting the observations of select embassy members, rather than exploring the symbolism, reasons, or controversy behind the American enthusiasm for the Japanese.²¹ Similarly, past English-language works on the 1860 embassy discuss the reception of the Japanese in the context of diplomacy or individual experience.²² Japanese-language scholarship on the 1860 embassy provides insight into the embassy's effect on the careers of future Japanese intellectual and political leaders, but rarely questions the veracity or intent of the American reports of the

²⁰ This is much in the style of the works of Simon Partner, aiming “to put a human face on the experience of change.” Simon Partner, *Toshié: A Story of Village Life in Twentieth-Century Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), xii.

²¹ For example, see Akatsuka Yukio, *Kimi wa Tomi Poruka o kiita ka?* [Have you heard the Tommy Polka?] (Nagoya: Fubaisha, 1999); Kanai Madoka, *Tomi to iu na no Nihonjin: Nichibei shūkō shiwa* [A Japanese named Tommy: A history of Japan-US friendship] (Tokyo: Bun-ichi sōgō shuppan 1979); Isobe Hakuhei, “Bakumatsu, the boy interpreter who became an American idol: the retainer named Tommy and the strange life of Tateishi Onojirō,” lecture notes for March 31, 2012 speech to SBS Institute Parché, Y93-J5827, National Diet Library; Nakazaki Masao, “Man'en gan'nen kenbeishisetsu no mita Minamijūjisei—Shisetsu ichi gyō no tenmongakuteki taiken (The “Southern Cross” as seen by the First Japanese Embassy to the United States of America (1860), and Their Other Astronomical Observations),” *Chukyo University Bulletin of the Faculty of Liberal Arts* 26 (3: 1986): 399–449; K. Nakamura, “The Japanese experience of Western music at the end of the bakumatsu era: recordings of the experiences of the 1860 Japanese Embassy to the United States,” *Hikaku Bunka* 2 (Spring: 1986): 24–75; George Hinkle, “Samurai in San Francisco: The Japanese Embassy of 1860,” *California Historical Society Quarterly* 23 (4: 1944): 335–47; Allan B. Cole, “Japan's First Embassy to the United States, 1860,” *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 32 (2: 1941): 131–66; Kobayashi Kengo, “The 1860 Japanese Embassy to the United States: Details of the 150th Anniversary Symposium,” *Nippon shūgi* 12 (Winter: 2010), 83–92; Okabayashi Nobuo, “Some Phases of Experience in the First Japanese Embassy to U.S.A. 1860 (3),” *Doshisha Law Review* 41 (4: 1989): 75–131.

²² See Walter LaFeber, *The Clash: A History of U.S.-Japan Relations* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997); W. G. Beasley, *Japan Encounters the Barbarian: Japanese Travellers in America and Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Donald Keene, *Modern Japanese Diaries: The Japanese at Home and Abroad as Revealed through Their Diaries* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

embassy's visit.²³ To date, Masao Miyoshi's *As We Saw Them* (1979) is the most critical scholarship on the 1860 Japanese Embassy. Miyoshi's excellent work examined the embassy's interactions through a literary lens, focusing on the mutual experience of otherness and the beginnings of diplomatic US–Japan relations. Miyoshi treated Tateishi's popularity with American women as a curiosity rather than a provocative or significant cultural phenomenon. With the exception of Masao Miyoshi and a few other notable works, such as those by Akira Iriye, W. G. Beasley, Donald Keene, and Walter LaFeber, most English-language writings on the 1860 embassy reflect a racialized early- and mid-twentieth-century celebration of an “awakened” Japan on the road to “progress.”²⁴ Neither Japanese- nor English-language scholarship has explored the deeper reasons of *why*, beyond Tateishi's youth and apparent charm, Tateishi so excited the American people, or the consequences of this excitement. The story of “Tommy” wanting to attend West Point and “[get a] Yankee wife”²⁵ has gone unquestioned and separated from the cultural contexts that shaped this allegedly mutual infatuation.

Mid-nineteenth-century reports of the United States' foray into a reluctant, but ultimately eager Japan, whose ladies “laid aside their reserve and shyness”²⁶ as “the country for miles was thrown open to us, without let or hindrance”²⁷ imbued Japan–US encounters with strong, gendered connotations. Gender and race have played defining roles in American and Japanese history since the beginning of US–Japan relations. The literature on these topics, both academic and historical, is extensive. Previous scholarship, such as work by Oguma Eiji and Tessa Morris-Suzuki, has dedicated great attention to representations of Japanese racial identity throughout

²³ Fukuzawa, *The Autobiography of Fukuzawa Yukichi*; Nakazaki Masao, *Fukuzawa Yukichi to shashin-ya no musume* [Fukuzawa Yukichi and the photographer's daughter] (Suita: Osaka daigaku shuppankai, 1996); Hashimoto Susumu, *Kanrin Maru Taikai o yuku: San Furanshisuko kōkai no shinsō* [*Kanrin Maru, travel the ocean: the true story of the San Francisco voyage*] (Tokyo: Kaibundō, 2010); Imai Ichirō, “Kanae Sano and Tommy Onojiro Tateishi,” *Historical English Studies in Japan* 15 (1982): 15–32; Kiyooka Eiichi, “Man'en gannen Kenbei shisetsu to Kanrinmaru no Hawaii kikō [The 1860 Embassy to the United States and the Kanrin Maru's stop in Hawai'i],” *Shigaku* 16 (2: 1937): 233–65; Ishihara Chisato, “Man'en gannen Kenbei shisetsu ichigyō no shōraiho ni tsuite [About the 1860 Embassy to the United States and the gifts they brought],” *Historical English Studies in Japan* 14 (1981): 185–215.

²⁴ Miyoshi, *As We Saw Them*; LaFeber, *The Clash*; W. G. Beasley, *Japan Encounters the Barbarian*; Keene, *Modern Japanese Diaries*; Akira Iriye, *From Nationalism to Internationalism: U.S. Foreign Policy to 1914* (London: Routledge, 2002). For one of many examples of discussion of an “awakened” Japan, see Chitoshi Yanaga, “The First Japanese Embassy to the United States,” *Pacific Historical Review* 9 (2: 1940): 113–38.

²⁵ “The Japanese Embassy: From the Japanese on Their Way Home, News of the Niagara,” *New York Times*.

²⁶ “Voyage Around the World,” *New York Times*, March 12, 1855, 8.

²⁷ “Voyage Around the World,” *New York Times*.

history, in the argument against conceptions of Japan or “the Japanese” as a homogenous monolith.²⁸ Joseph M. Henning has examined the role and representation of race and religion in American–Japanese relations, as well as the observations and influence of American artists, missionaries, statesmen, and other travelers to Japan in the late nineteenth century.²⁹ The experiences of Japanese Americans are also essential to understanding gendered and racial encounters between the US and Japan. Eichiro Azuma, Gary Okihiro, Takashi Fujitani, and others have examined the role of gender and race in the shaping and experience of Japanese America at the transnational level, as well as the Japanese and Japanese American resistance to and experience of racism.³⁰ Gary Leupp’s examination of over three centuries of interracial relationships between Japanese women and foreign men articulates the continually shifting racial and gender dynamics inherent in US–Japan historical encounters.³¹ Recent work by Sonia Gomez analyzes interracial marriage between Japanese women and both white and Black American men in the context of Japanese America.³²

Rich scholarship on gender has brought further attention to the different ways in which gender has played a role in Japanese history. Edited volumes by Barbara Molony and Kathleen Uno, and by Julia C. Bullock, Ayako Kano, and James Welker, Sabine Frühstück and Anne Walthall, and Yoshikuni Igarashi have explored

²⁸ Oguma Eiichi, *A Genealogy of ‘Japanese’ Self-Images*, trans. by David Askew (Melbourne, Australia: Trans Pacific Press, 2002), original work published in Japanese, *Tan’itsu minzoku shinwa no kigen – ‘Nihonjin’ no jigazō no keifu* (1995); Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation*. Japan in the Modern World (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1998).

²⁹ Joseph M. Henning, *Outposts of Civilization: Race, Religion, and the Formative Years of American–Japanese Relations*. New York: New York University Press, 2000.

³⁰ For the evolution of representations of Japanese racial identity, see Gary Y. Okihiro, *Margins and Mainstreams: Asians in American History and Culture* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014). For identity in the context of Japanese America, see Eiichiro Azuma, *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). For conceptions of race in the context of Japanese imperialism, see Paul D. Barclay, *Outcasts of Empire: Japan’s Rule on Taiwan’s “Savage Border,” 1874–1945s* (Oakland: University of California Press: 2017); Takashi Fujitani, *Race for Empire: Koreans as Japanese and Japanese as Americans during World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); Leo T. S. Ching, *Becoming “Japanese”: Colonial Taiwan and the Politics of Identity Formation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Louise Young, “Rethinking Race for Manchukuo: Self and Other in the Colonial Context,” in *The Construction of Racial Identities in China and Japan: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, edited by Frank Dikötter, 158–76 (London: Hurst, 1997); John W. Dower, *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993).

³¹ Gary P. Leupp, *Interracial Intimacy in Japan: Western Men and Japanese Women, 1543–1900*. (London: Continuum, 2003).

³² Sonia C. Gomez, *Picture Bride, War Bride: The Role of Marriage in Shaping Japanese America* (New York: New York University Press, 2024).

Japanese history through the lens of Japanese masculinity and the experience of male Japanese bodies.³³ Nineteenth-century relationships between Japanese women and white men, and the power and racial dynamics that enabled and encouraged or discouraged these relationships, have received extensive scholarly attention, but “Tommy” and the 1860 embassy present a different story.³⁴ In 1860, the American perception of romantic relations between Japanese men and American women became a source of national pride while at the same time, newspapers expressed fear that Japanese might “make up their minds to colonize.”³⁵ For antebellum Americans who encountered the embassy, the meaning and place of race, gender, and Japan were in constant motion, and inspired ideas and relationships in defiance of the state that enabled such a diplomatic mission.

The 1860 embassy, when viewed through the lens of “Tommy” and his influence, does not fit neatly into the entrenched story of Japanese modernization through Westernization. Historian, Sho Konishi, has written of how the “opening” of Japan to the West has gone almost unquestioned in the story of Japan’s rise as a modern nation, essentially silencing alternative stories of Japanese history in the process.³⁶ The 1860 embassy is one such alternative story of “opening,” revealing a rush of intellectual activity within and about groups of people typically outside the narrative of Japan’s foreign encounters in the mid-nineteenth century.

There has only ever been one samurai to become a celebrity both beloved and vilified by the American people. This is his story, and the story of the many lives touched by the samurai once known as “Tommy.”

³³ *Rethinking Japanese Feminisms*, Julia C. Bullock, Ayako Kano, and James Welker, eds. (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2017); Barbara Molony and Kathleen Uno, *Gendering Modern Japanese History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2005); Yoshikuni Igarashi, *Japan, 1972: Visions of Masculinity in an Age of Mass Consumerism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021); *Recreating Japanese Men*, Sabine Frühstück and Anne Walthall, eds., (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

³⁴ For an overview of “treaty port marriage” relationships between Japanese women and white men in the nineteenth century, see Arthur Groos, *Madama Butterfly = Madamu Batafurai: Transpositions of a “Japanese Tragedy”* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), 1–11; Leupp, *Interracial Intimacy in Japan*, 144–56.

³⁵ “The Japanese in Philadelphia: Where They Went and What They Saw Yesterday,” *New York Times*, June 12, 1860, 1.

³⁶ Sho Konishi, “Reopening the “Opening of Japan”: A Russian-Japanese Revolutionary Encounter and the Vision of Anarchist Progress,” *American Historical Review* 112 (1: 2007): 101–30, 101–102.