**THE OPENING OF KOREA**

**A Conflict of Traditions**

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THE OPENING OF KOREA: A CONFLICT OF TRADITIONS

Korea’s crucial mission of 76 men arrived in Yokohama on the 29th day of May, 1876. There had been a dozen missions to Japan during the Tokugawa period, but this one was different from the previous ones in that it marked a turning point in Korean-Japanese relations. The old system had to be discarded and a new one established. Korea was dragged into a new relationship in spite of socio-economic unpreparedness and the *yangban*1*)* ideology which was rigidly bound by out-of-date Confucian doctrine. Moreover, the transmission of culture started to take a reverse course; from the west to Korea through Japan, not from China to Korea.

On the day of its arrival, the Korean mission marched the streets of Tokyo among the crowds of Japanese people.

Two Neptune-like braves with symbols of power—huge tridents—led the procession, in which was a band of twenty performers on metal horns, conch-shells, flutes, whistles, cymbals, and drums. Kim Ki-su, the chief envoy rode on a platform covered with tiger skins, and

*\** The stimulus for this article was provided by the newly discovered manuscript material in the Asami Collection of the East Asiatic Library, University of California, Berkeley; the manuscript seems to me to be an original diary, carrying the title, *Kim Ki-su Ildong Kiyu* 金綺秀 日東記游 (Diary of Kim Ki-su’s Mission to Japan), which was apparently added by Asami Rintaro, 淺見倫太郞, the collector of this material, in his own calli¬graphy. This book is cited in this article as KIK.

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1) *Yangban* 兩班 originally meant officials both civil and military, but it became a designation for the upper privileged class or caste in the Korean social stratification. Only people of this class in principle as well as practice were allowed to take the national civil and military examinations, whereby they could be appointed to governmental positions of importance.

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resting on the shoulders of eight men, while a servant slave bore the umbrella of State over his head, and four minor officers walked at his side. The remainder of the suite rode in “jin-riki-shas” and the Japanese military and civil escort completed the display. The contrast between the new and the old was startling. The Japanese stood with all outward signs of the civilization that is coming in.2)

Many of the Japanese ridiculed this parade, but one of the Japanese newspapers warned them not to be proud of their modernization, reminding them of the visit of the Japanese envoy party to the United States sixteen years before,3) when samurai swords were whirled past the wonders, mechanical and natural, of America.4)

The Korean envoy tried to maintain his dignity by behaving in the Confucian way, neglecting all the new ideas which were challenging the Confucian ideology. But this challenge was not all; he had to undergo many embarrassments from the beginning of his mission. Japanese officials, although they knew the Confucian behaviour pattern, tried hard to take every possible advantage of him. Moreover, the Japanese officials had many practical objectives in their negotiations with the Korean envoy; on the other hand, the Korean party had no positive objectives other than the mere renewal of friendly relations which had been interrupted for some years. It did not envisage any basic change in the old East Asiatic order.

Korean Japanese relations had traditionally been conducted in terms of

2) W.E. Griffis, *Corea, the Hermit Nation* (London: 1905), pp. 432—34, also cited in Mun Il-p’yŏng 文ᅳ平 *Hoam Chŏnjip* 湖岩全集 [Collection of Hoam’s works], (Seoul: 1940), III, p.33. It is notable that the modern Korean historian (the latter), in sharp contrast to the former, proudly depicts the scene.

3) Shimbun shusei meiji hennen-shi hensan-kai, *Shimbun shusei meiji hennen-shi*, 新聞集成明治編年史 [Chronological Meiji History Compiled from Newspaper Collections], (Tokyo: 1934-36), II, 557, cited as SSMH.

4) T.A. Bailey*, A Diplomatic History of the American People* (New York: 1955) p.334.

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“Pan-Confucianistic” ideas.5) in the Far East, especially among China, Korea, and Japan, the western concept of sovereignty did not exist, though there were “tributary” missions. These several nations maintained sov-ereignty, but culturally they were closely attached to each other in an order which was described in fraternal terms: China was the eldest brother; Korea, the middle brother; and Japan, the younger brother.

**I. Pan-Confucianistic Relations**

Earlier relations had developed between Korea and various private groups of Japanese clans, especially in the western part of Japan, such as Tsushima, Iki, Satsuma, etc., for the purpose of trade in the guise of tribute.6) These private groups, by sending tributary missions, tried to build up a lucrative trade in addition to forming channels for the importing of Buddhistic and Confucianistic cultures. On the Korean side, this tributary system was not only valueless but also a burden to the economy, which was built on a highly centralized system of royal economy. The policy adopted by the Koryŏ dynasty of restricting the tribute missions led to discontent on the part of the Japanese private groups, and contributed to the rise of piracy. Koryŏ was harrassed by the activities of these pirates, and the founder of the Choson dynasty rose to power by defeating them. On the other hand, in Japan many of the local traders under the Kyushu Tandai became powerful figures in opposition to the unification of Japan because of their lucrative trade7) and piratic activities. They played an important role in the Sengoku period,

5) F.M. Nelson used such words as Confucian order, Confucian internationalism in his book, *Korea and the Old Orders in Eastern Asia* (Baton Rouge: 1946), pp. 3—20, but it should be understood as cultural intercourse rather than diplomatic relations. The word “Pan-Confucianistic” better explains the situation in the East Asiatic order, as the basic philosophy was more or less Confucianistic.

6) *Koryŏ-sa* 高麗史 9 ch., 10b, and Aoyama Koryo, “Nichirei tsusho kanken,” 曰 麗通商管見 *Shiratori hakase kanreki kinen toyo-shi ronso* (Tokyo, 1924), pp. 117-31.

7) *Kyushu Tandai* 九州探題 was a post set up by the Kamakura Shogunate for the control of the Kyushu area and was abolished at the time of Hideyoshi. This office was active in the trade with Korea. Akiyama Kenzo, “Muromachi shoki ni okeru Kyushu tandai no Chosen tono tsuko 室町初期に於け る九州探題と 朝鮮との通交*Shingaku Zassi*, XLI (Tokyo, April, 1931), pp. 31—72.

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especially in the decentralization of Japan. These trends were still strong after the re-unification by Hideyoshi, who felt it necessary to emasculate the western Datmyo; he had them initiate , the war by promising in advance alienation of Korean territory.

After the Chosŏn dynasty was established, Confucianism was the only theory acknowledged by Chosŏn kings and *yangban*. Peaceful trade was opened between Japan and Korea. Among the local traders of Japan, those of Tsushima were the most active and were delegated to represent all Japanese commercial interests. Frequent *wako* (*waegu*) raids and riots of Japanese inhabitants at Korean ports sometimes resulted in suspension of friendly relations. Whenever suspension came, Tsushima was the first to suffer from the interruption of food supplies, since it depended upon Korea for its food supply (conferred as Segyŏn-sŏn 歲遣船 [annual convoys] of rice and beans, while Korea received copper from Japan). This dependency in modern times became an embarrassing factor to the Tsushima lords.9) Besides these food supplies, Tsushima depended upon trade for income and monopolized it as far as possible. There was some smuggling of such items as gold, silver10) and ginseng. This trade ceased about thirty years prior to Hideyoshi’s invasion because of the wars of the Sengoku Period. It is noteworthy that whenever Tsushima had difficulties with Korea, the Daimyo always asked the Bakufu to make efforts to re-open relations. This tendency after Hideyoshi’s rise to power and the establishment of the Tokugawa Shogunate led to direct friendly relations between the Shogunate and

8) The proper name of the widely known Yi dynasty is Chosŏn dynasty (1392—1910). The National History Compilation Committee has recently undertaken publication of the “Choson Dynasty Veritable Records” (annals) under the title, *Chosŏn wangjo sillok* 朝鮮王朝實錄 and claims the validity of using the proper title “Choson” instead of the Japanese invention.

9) The Tsushima lord confessed to Sada (see footnote 22) the shameful fact that his ancestors received rice annually from Korea. Sada Hakubo, “Seikan-ron no kyumo-dan” 征韓論の舊夢談 *Meiji bunka zenshu* 明治文化 全集 XXII (Tokyo, 1929), pp. 40-41,

10) Obata Jun, “Chusei kohanki ni okeru nissen kin-gin boeki no kenkyu” 中世後半期に於け る日鮮金銀電易の研究 *Shigaku Zassi*, XLIII, (Tokyo, June-July, 1932), pp. 692-717: 873-912.

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Korea, although Tsushima, as a result of its previous role as a mediator, was responsible for the negotiations. On the basis of this experience the people of western Japan were later able to play an important role in foreign trade with the western countries.

After the Hideyoshi invasion, even civil officers of Korea were ordered to wear swords as reminders of their antipathy for Japan.11) But the Confucian theory which favours peaceful relations with its neighbours, together with the fear of another invasion by military power, impelled Korea to enter into peaceful relations with Japan. Tokugawa Iyeyasu, “the Shogun of Virtue” was as eager to re-establish friendly relations and consented to Korea’s demand for the return of the Koreans captured during the invasion.12) Moreover, Tsushima especially wanted friendly relations with Korea for economic reasons. Korea opened one port for Japanese liaison and trade, but only a very small group of Japanese missions were allowed to come to the capital. From Korea to Japan, congratulatory missions and reports were sent only on occasions of great national celebrations in Japan, although Japan wanted to have the missions come more often at the beginning. The expense of the missions, varying from 270 to 500 in number, was to be borne by the Japanese. Korean gifts were usually hundreds of catties of ginseng, tiger skins, books, and so on, while Japan’s gifts to Korea were mainly swords, silver, and so forth. But the financial burden proved too heavy for both sides, and in 1763, with the hope of reducing the cost, negotiations were conducted for receiving the Korean envoy on the island of Tsushima. The Bakufu again had to pay a great sum of money that year to prepare a new reception hall for the Korean mission.13) Thus, a tremendous amount was spent after the decision to retrench had been taken.

11) Yi Yu-wŏn, *Imha P’ilgi* 林下筆記 manuscript, 15 ch., 43a (unpaged, pagination my own).

12) I. Yamagata, “Japanese-Korean Relations After the Japanese Invasion in Korea in the XVIth Century” *Transactions of Korean Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, IV, pt. II (Seoul, 1913), PP. 4-7.

13) Tabohashi Kiyoshi, 田保摘潔 *Kindai nissen kankei no kenkyu* 近代日 鮮關 係の研究 (Seoul, 1940), II, pp. 639-892, cited as KNKK.

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The Shogunate was having financial difficulties about this time, and the expense of the missions was one of the factors which led to the economic decay of Tokugawa Bakufu.

Even though Korean-Japanese relations in this period were on a basis of equality,14) it is evident that partly because of the feeling of inferiority that the Japanese felt regarding their Confucian culture, the Tokugawa planned to gain the good will of Korea in order to benefit the underdeveloped Confucian culture of Japan. This is demonstrated in the Shogunate order to the Japanese people issued in 1711, at the time of the arrival of the largest of the twelve missions15) sent during this period In that year the Shogunate prohibited Japanese men and women from forming mixed groups while viewing the Korean mission at the roadside.16) In short, the sexes were separated, for fear that the Korean envoy might get the impression that the Japanese were lacking in the practice as well as in the understanding of Confucian theory. The Tokugawa Shogunate, it is clear, spent enormous sums to learn Confucian culture from the Korean missions. Envoys of high rank were always busy, travelling “the Highway for Koreans”17) in their palanquins supported by Japanese servants, writing specimens of their calligraphy, or composing poetry for the many Japanese leaders. For this reason the Koreans felt themselves superior to the Japanese as long as the Confucian culture was welcomed. This psychological relationship became an obstacle to the, initiation of new international relations in the context of the modern period.

**II. Transition to Modern Relations**

Japan was forced open by Commodore Perry in 1854,

14) Sayŏg-wŏn, *Tongmungwan chi*, 通文舘志 6 ch., 7a-8a.

15) Twelve missions were sent to Japan in the years of 1608,1617,1624,1632, 1643, 1652, 1682, 1711, 1719, 1748, 1764 and 1845. The last mission, which Nelson omitted from his book, was received at Tsushima Island.

16) KNKK II, 815.

17) The road was even called *Chosenjin gaido* 朝鮮人銜道, as the Korean missions were so popular in those days. Yamagata, op.cit., p.10.

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and then signed a series of treaties with. America, Britain, France, Russia, and Holland in the following four years. In 1860, Shogun Iemori informed Korea of his succession to the Shogunate, through Tsushima, in accordance with custom, but this time a separate letter was sent which explained Japan’s entry into relationship with the western countries. On the other hand, Korea conscientiously informed Japan of recent sufferings at the hands of French and American invaders.18) This report was received by Shogun Keiki in 1867, and it made him consider mediating between Korea and the western countries; Japan had realized through her bitter experiences of 1863 and the following year that stubbon resistance against the western countries was a result of ignorance of world affairs.

Shogun Keiki, negotiating with the French and American legations in Japan to get authorization as mediator between Korea and these nations, obtained the consent of the latter only.19) The government of Napoleon III had requested the aid of the Japanese envoys in Paris in opening Korea to French trade and residence in 1862,20) but the French minister in Japan, when asked about this by the Shogunate, flatly refused Japanese aid on the grounds that negotiations were being conducted through China at the time.21)

With the consent of America only, Keiki sent a letter to Seoul, suggesting the participation of the Japanese envoy. This was rejected by the Korean government, because there was no precedent for such a procedure.22) Keiki was thus on the horns of a dilemma, but he did not abandon the desire to mediate. Japan, at this time, was *en route* to modernization, and the old feudal system was deteriorating.

18) The Shogunate ordered several Japanese painters to depict the parade of the Korean mission in 1711, and the scroll painting has been reproduced as a photolithographic copy in the series of the *Korean Historical Source Publications* by the Government-general. *Shotoku chosen shins hi tojo gyoretsu-zu* 正德朝鮮估使登城行列陶 1 rl. (Seoul, 1938).

19) KNKK, I, 107-9.

20) Griffis, *op.cit*., p. 372.

21) KNKK, I, 108.

22) KNKK, I, 110-121.

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The samurai class was no longer powerful in society, and the *Chonin* was gradually rising through its accumulation of wealth. The tide of historical change had attacked the samurai financial base and loosened the feudal ties among them. Moreover, the Shogunate had to disappear with the Meiji Restoration.

The old relationship based on Pan-Confucianism came to an end with the downfall of the Shogunate, and a new one based on international law was inaugurated. The new government announced the new order through the old Tsushima channel. This letter was not received because of such terms as “Emperor,” “Imperial Decree,” and others, which were irreconcilable with the old relationship. Korean officials could not find any reason for the sudden change in diplomatic forms, which had been consistent until that time. An attempt to change the wordings was made on the Japanese side, but this attempt was undermined by the visit of the German warship, *Hertha*, which suddenly came into the harbor of Pusan with a Japanese interpreter on board. The Koreans understood that the Japanese interpreter guided the German warship into Korean waters to threaten Korea. Meanwhile in Japan, abolishment of the feudal *Han* system put foreign negotiations into the hands of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Still the misunderstanding was not cleared up, and the situation grew worse as time passed. Korea closed the market in Pusan, dismissed two Japanese liaison officers there, and blamed the whole deteriorating relationship on the extraordinary negotiations.23)

Since the Korean problem was important, the Japanese foreign office made great efforts to recruit strong members to its staff. The officials and ministers of this time, such as Sada,24)

23) KNKK, I, 206—222.

24) Sada Hakubo 佐田白芽 (1832—1907), Samurai of Kurume Han, strongly urged the conquest of Korea in 1869, and for that reason was appointed as an official in the Foreign Ministry. Sent to Korea to negotiate in 1870, thereafter he always prepared radical plans to conquer Korea. He preferred to fight with Korea rather than negotiate. Kuzuu Yoshihisa, *Tōa senkaku shishi kiden*, 東亞先覺志士記傅 (Tokyo, 1933-36), III, p. 631, cited as TSSK.

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Moriyama25) and other Satsuma-born ministers,26) belonged mostly to the War party (*Seikan-tō*), whose objective was the conquest of Korea. Moriyama originally had influenced Saigo to claim the *Seikan-ron* through his knowledge and experience in the negotiations with Korea.27) When the claim failed, he further suggested to the ministry the sending of warships to the Korean coast.28) Terajima (1822-1893), Minister of Foreign Affairs, having secured the approval of the “Prime Minister” and “Vice-Minister” of the Navy, and two navy captains (all Satsuma men) sent the warships, *Unyō* and *Teib*$ō$, to Korean waters as a demonstration in the guise of taking soundings along the coast. This plan was carried out secretly by the Satsuma group,29) because Itagaki and some others opposed any demonstration which might lead to war. Sanjo, the Prime Minister, who had secretly approved the demonstration, was attacked by Itagaki four times but denied all knowledge of it.30) Even Saigo criticized the illegal action of sounding the sea and the ensuing attack as contradictory to heavenly righteousness.31) This demonstration was proceeded by another one at Pusan, in which eighteen Korean officials of the Tongnae32) office were taken

25) Moriyama Shigeru, 森山茂 (1842-1914), a Satsuma man, had special interest in Korean affairs. He once planned to occupy Ullŭng Island 鬱陵島 with his comrades in 1869 and declared that the conquest of Korea was inevitable. This gave him considerable prestige and assured him the post in the Foreign Ministry. He served as a diplomat in Korean affairs for long time and most of the plans relating to Korea were instigated by him. TSSK, III, 734-5.

26) Both Minister Terajima and Vice-Minister Samejima were samurai of Satsuma Han.

27) TSSK, III 734.

28) Itagaki Taisuke, ed., *Jiyūtō-shi* 自由黨史 (Tokyo, 1910), I, 211: and KNKK, I, 393-95.

29) Tokutomi Iichirō, *Kōshaku Yamagata Aritomo-den* 公爵山縣有朋傳 (Tokyo, 1933), II, 412-13.

30) Itagaki, T., *op.cit*., 212-13. The War party was out of the government in 1873, but those who were in power sympathized with them; hence, the defeat of the War party did not mean the adoption of 3 non-aggressive policy towards Korea but rather that Japan had to wait until she could build up enough to expand into foreign countries.

31) Nihon shiseki kyōkai, *Saigō Takamori monjo* 西鄉隆盛文書 (Tokyo, 1923), pp. 101-2, cited Sin Kisok, *Tongyang oegyo-sa* 東洋外交史 (Seoul, 1955), pp. 164-5.

32) Pusan was a small port under the jurisdiction of the Magistrate of Tongnae, which has been absorbed by the newly grown Pusan city.

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on board the warship where guns were demonstrated to show them the power of modern arms and Japan’s new status.33) This turned out to be very effective, as the interpreters of this office made great efforts in the signing of the new treaty.34)

The Meiji government became the continual target of criticism by the discontented samurai group whose living standards worsened during the process of modernization. Since their existence in the new society was meaningless, their last resort was to find an opportunity to fight for the good of the country as well as for themselves. They had no choice but to fight in an area that would bring about a change which would solve the problems of their standing in the new industrialized society.35) *Seikan-ron* was an attempt of this kind; and when this failed, they had recourse to behind-the-scene manoeuvring in which they had the cooperation of the rationalist diplomats and the help of Satsuma naval officers. However, this was for the discontented Samurai group an unsatisfactory compromise;36) they were determined to take up arms, even against their government, if necessary. The Satsuma group, descendents of the western Japanese who were experienced in trade with Korea, shouted for conquest of Korea. The forts of Kanghwa opened fire on the Japanese ships as they did on the ships of the French and Americans. The Japanese proudly occupied the forts, confiscated arms, and returned with prisoners to Japan.

Korea at this time was under the power of Queen Min who forced the stubborn Regent *Hungsŏn Taewŏn-gun*37) to retire. The downfall of the *Hungsŏn* meant that all his policies were being reversed. Queen Min and the Min clan had to eliminate gradually the *Hungsŏn* policy, dismissing

33) Kokuryū-kai, *Seinan kiden* 西南記傳 (Tokyo, 1910-11), III, 329-30.

34) Gaimushō chōsabu, *Dai nihon gaikō monjo* 大曰本外交文書 (Tokyo, 1940), IX, 26-139, cited as NGM.

35) Tanaka Sōgorō, *Seikan-ron, Seinan senso* 征韓論 • 西南戰爭 (Tokyo, 1939), p. 3.

36) Tanaka, *op.cit*., p. 190.

37) Taewŏn-gun is a title which was given to the non-king father whose son succeeds to the throne. The so-called ‘Taewŏn-gun” is the Hŭngsŏn, Yi Ha-ung 興宣 李是應.

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the loyal *Hungsŏn* men. Gradual steps were taken in both domestic and foreign affairs. The Japanese policy was one which had to be re-examined by the new regime of Queen Min. Three *Hungsŏn* men were blamed for opposing relations with Japan.38)

In addition to this, a critical situation arose upon the arrival of a report from China. According to this report, Japanese troops were postponing the conquest of Korea, pending the return of a Formosan expedition. Furthermore, it said that French and American troops would assist the Japanese in the conquest of Korea.39) Two of the three *Hungsŏn* men responsible for the relationship with Japan were imprisoned, and the remaining one was executed. Though this was a shocking event, it remained unknown to the Japanese because of the decreased activities of liaison officers. In Japan, new plans for negotiations in the old-fashioned way were made. Moriyama, who was sent under this plan, instituted a new change in the negotiations. A new official on the Korean side, Hyŏn Sŏg-un40) was met for the first time as an equal. Friction arose at this time caused by the unprecedented wearing of Western clothes and the return of the seals by the Japanese.4l) It was at this point that Moriyama suggested the demonstration by the warships. Hyŏn was one of the eighteen taken to the warship at Pusan, and he was very much impressed by what he witnessed.42) He must also have been overwhelmed by the execution of his predecessor. This psychological factor drove him later to make strenuous efforts in the signing of the treaty.

38) *Ilsŏng-nok*, 日省錄 1874/1/3, 10: cited KNKK, I, p. 332.

39) *Ilsŏng-nok*, 1817/6/29; cited KNKK, I, 334.

40) Hyŏn Sŏg-un 玄昔運 was an interpreter who had been replaced after the fall of Hungsŏn Taewŏn-gun. He served in the negotiations of Kanghwa treaty of 1876 as well as in the mission.

41) Western clothes were considered to be barbarous by the Koreans as well as the Chinese. The seals were originally issued by the Korean government to the authorized Japanese feudal lords for their identification. These seals were used for centuries by the Japanese lords and some of them were given official titles by the Korean government. The sudden return of the seals meant the nullification of the old relationship.

42) NGM, IX, 39-40.

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**III. Entry to New Relation**

After the *Unyō* episode, Japan decided to send a special plenipotentiary mission to Korea as a coercive measure. Kurota, another Satsuma man, was selected as the plenipotentiary, and Inoue, a Chōshu man, as the vice-plenipotentiary. The government of Japan wanted a peace treaty with Korea, but determined to declare war in the event that Korea would not agree to their demands. The Japanese planned to open Korea in the same way that Japan had been opened, but actually resorted to much harsher methods. She prepared warships to imitate the precedent of Commodore Perry, but did not have as many of them as she needed. She was able, however, to prepare three warships and three cargo ships two of which were furnished with foreign captains. At this stage Japan did not have a real naval fleet and it had difficulties in sailing because of the different speeds of the various ships.43)

Moriyama, who had arranged the whole procedure for the conference at Kanghwa, attempted to pave the way psychologically by insisting upon the plenipotentiary’s dignity. He said that the plenipotentiary had honour guards to the number of 1,500, and the same number of escort soldiers. He further threatened that 2,000 more honour guards and 3,000 more escorts would be expected to land in a few days. Korea, in accordance with her traditional policy, did not want to fight. Four hundred honour guards armed with modern rifles landed with the plenipotentiary mission and stayed together in the hotel provided by the Korean delegates.44)

The conference took place. But before this mission had been sent to Korea, another mission had been sent in advance to China to ascertain the relationship existing between the Ch’ing dynasty and the Chosŏn dynasty. Korea had been an independent nation in this relationship, as judged by modern international law. This point was more or less

38) KNKK, I, 434； NGM, IX, 1-24.

39) NGM, IX, 58-65.

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cleared up by the conference between Mori Yūrei and Li Hung-chang.45) But Mori’s conference did not turn out to be a successful aid to Kurota’s conference.

Unexpectedly, Yi Yu-wŏn, who had been sent to China to announce the nomination of the Korean Crown Prince just before the *Unyō* plot, attempted to interview Li Hung-chang in vain and left a letter for him. An answer from Li to Yi had arrived prior to Kurota’s landing at Kanghwa. This letter suggested that indiscreet resistance to Japanese power might prove dangerous and recommended a peace treaty with Japan.46) This letter led the Korean court to adopt a decisive attitude at this moment.

At the beginning of the conference Japanese delegates accused the Koreans of having attacked the Japanese warship. This point had been raised at the conference between Mori and Li. Li responded that the attack was caused by the Japanese, because the Japanese warship had invaded Korean territory, since three miles of sea territory is assured in international law.47) But the Korean delegates, unaware of any idea of international law, tried to express their regret with an explanation of Korean foreign policy. The next point of discussion was the treaty itself. The Korean delegates did not see the reason for a new treaty, because Korean-Japanese relations had been conducted for more than two hundred years without any kind of bilateral treaty.48) The other points raised in the discussion were almost all related to non-customary practices. Here Korea still stood as a nation based on customary law rather than on the international law of western society. Korea unwillingly signed the treaty in response to Japanese threats, without understanding the significance of international law.

After the signature, Kurota and Inoue returned to

45) NGM, IX, 140-187； KNKK, I, 529-556.

46) *Ilsŏng nok*, 1875/12/16; 1876/1/13； cited KNKK, I, 552-53.

47) NGM, IX, 173.

48) Several agreements had been made in the past, but all the negotiations were conducted according to customary regulations. No stipulations regarding a treaty had ever been made up to this time.

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Japan with the glorious fruits which the guns of the invading warship *Unyō* had produced. This treaty was supposed to have been based on equality, but only the Japanese acquired privileges: e.g., extraterritorial privileges, freedom of sounding the Korean coast, and various freedoms at the ports which would be opened to Japan.49) These were not bilateral but unilateral Of course, the Korean side had no desire for the same privileges, as they did not think that they would need to engage in trade in Japanese ports. The sovereignty of Korea seemed to be clearly stipulated in the first article; yet this did not concede anything to Korea, since she already had been an independent nation. The Japanese at this time were suffering greatly from the unilateral treaties with foreign countries signed when they were ignorant of international law and custom. The details of the treaty with Korea were similar to those that Japan had made with the west. This was the “good-will” of Japan for the Koreans in those days.

Furthermore, Miyamoto50) asked the Korean delegates that a Korean envoy be sent to Japan to return the visit of the Japanese plenipotentiary mission and to make the equal treaty permanently effective. This was a device to eliminate future difficulties which might block fulfillment of the treaty. Apparently, it was also an imitation of the United States invitation for Japanese warriors to visit the U.S.51) For the Japanese, it seemed to be necessary to show the semi-modernized Japan to Koreans.

But the envoy mission was not to follow the custom

49) Articles 8 and 10 of the treaty defined the extra-territorial privileges; Article 7, the freedom of sounding and drawing maps of the Korean coast by Japanese; and Articles 4 and 5, the residential and trade freedom of Japanese.

50) Miyamoto Koichi, 宮本小一 (1836-1916), Samurai of Bakufu, participated in the treaty negotiations of 1876 and stayed in Korea to negotiate for the sending of Korean envoy mission after Kurota and Inoue had left for Japan. He was chief entertainer to the envoy and became the chief delegate in the negotiations for opening ports in Korea.

51) Tabohashi Kiyoshi, “Heishi shūshin-shi to sono igi” 丙子修信使 とその意義 *Seikyū gakusō*, 靑丘學叢 XIIL (Seoul 1933), p. 39, cited HSI, hereafter.

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of previous missions, as it was based on a new treaty. Moreover, the economic situation no longer allowed either country to have an expensive mission. The Japanese wanted not a Confucian scholar as in the old days, but a man who “understood things” [one who has a receptive mind] sent as Korean envoy to Japan. In addition to this, reimbursement of all the expenses incurred by the Korean mission was to be made by Korea. [Actually, Japan did not claim it after the mission was over.] There was also a clear distinction even in the exchange of gifts and letters. But to the Koreans this new treaty was merely an expedient extension of the traditional formalized relations with Japan.52)

Miyamoto, in further defining what the Japanese wanted in a return mission, stipulated that the envoy should not be a high-ranking man. By this evil device, he barred an envoy of equal rank with the Japanese plenipotentiary, Kurota. The Korean court, therefore, selected from a junior group of officials a Confucian scholar who “understood Confucianism” well Kim Ki-su, (born 1832) the First Compiler of the Office of Lectures and Historical Compiliations, was the man selected (to understand things) and was promoted one rank to be senior official The term “understanding things” in Korea meant to understand Confucian classics and theory. A series of preliminary negotiations regarding the programme of the mission took place, as was the custom, between the interpreters on the Korean side and the officers of Japan.

**IV. Conflict Between Old and New**

The Korean envoy had always lived within the bounds of Confucian doctrine and had never stepped outside it, even an inch. It was with this background he challenged all the new ideas with which the Japanese confronted him. The only way by which he could justify a new civilization was to find a place for it in the framework of Confucian ideology. His greatest efforts were devoted to denying the validity of new situations. He was free and safe as long as he stayed within the familiar

52) Carl Bartz, *The Korean Seclusion Policy*, unpublished Ph.D, dissertation for the University of California, (Berkeley, 1953), P- 157.

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Confucian territory. When he was on his own grounds, he was strong in his responses to the embarrassing situations caused by the Japanese.

When the Japanese officials inquired concerning his opinion about the adoption of western dress, explaining that the Japanese people were frivolous about it, the envoy counter-questioned the officials as to whether they themselves liked the costumes and wore them or not.53) Nor did he welcome very much the Japanese suggestion that he be shown the new arms which they had acquired, because the Confucian doctrine despised implements of war. Miyamoto, the chief entertainer of the Japanese foreign ministry, urged the envoy to take up the slogans of “strong army” and “wealthy nation,” but the envoy simply thanked him and flatly refused further invitations to see the munitions factories and new agricultural instruments, saying that his party did not include any technicians. He added that the objective of his mission was mainly to renew the old friendly relationship between the two countries, and that his stay should not exceed fifteen days according to the order of the King.54)

A few days later Inoue tried to awaken the envoy to the necessity of national defence by explaining the approaching danger of a Russian invasion. He further insisted that Koreans not open fire in case the Russians appeared in Korean waters. The envoy asked how the “insular barbarians”55) could have become so strong; he firmly added that, although the adoption of new armament might be good for the national defence, his country would not follow the barbarians’ way of building modern arms unless this were in accord with Confucian doctrine. Furthermore, he emphatically expressed his opinion against dependence upon arms in such terms as these:

53) KIK, 3b (unpaged, pagination my own).

54) KIK, 4a, 7a.

55) The envoy understood the Russians to be inhabitants of a small island in the Black Dragon River (Amur), KIK, 7b.

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We have been following the Confucian way for more than five hundred years; though we die or decay, we do not want to fight with strange arts of war, nor with dirty tricks.56)

His belief in Confucianism was as obstinate as Faust’s opposition to Mephistopheles.

One day he was asked to visit the new schools in Tokyo, but he firmly refused. Japanese officials finally added the Confucian Shrine to the programme and by this addition obtained the consent of the envoy for the tour. But this plan for showing the new school system failed, because the envoy took so much time at the shrine, bowing and performing the proper Confucian ceremonies, that only a short time was left for the new schools. The envoy was not impressed much with these, as his diary carries only the simple fact that he saw them, while he wrote a few lines about the Confucian shrine. Thus, the envoy cared little about the new institutions and ideas of modernization. His attitude was very different from that of the Japanese samurai mission in the U.S. in 1860.

But the envoy had to undergo many unexpected embarrassments and challenges, since the Japanese had prepared a number of tricks from the beginning of the programme. He encountered one grave challenge when he paid his visit to the foreign ministry on the day following his arrival. Upon his visit to the foreign ministry, he was suddenly given a list of the Emperor’s gifts. This puzzled the envoy very much. He remarked that in the pre-arranged programme which had been agreed to bilaterally by both governments, no letter from the king to the “Emperor” was to be carried and that, therefore, no gift should be accepted by the envoy. But the Japanese insisted that the envoy accept the list of the Emperor’s gifts so that they could establish the precedent of official acceptance of the Emperor as “Emperor.” This was a serious matter which had interfered with the Korean-Japanese relations ever since the Meiji

56) KIK, 8a.

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Restoration. This term had been carefully avoided in the treaty. The envoy was wary of the implication which attended his acceptance of the gift list. However, an implacable rejection of the repetitious Japanese urging was contrary to his Confucian bearing. Many times he argued, but finally he gave in. Thus, as a victim of the persistent strategy of the Japanese, Kim became the first Korean to acquiesce in the use of the term Emperor in diplomatic relations with Japan. However, in yielding, he qualified the implication of his acceptance of the list by responding with a personal gift list rather than an official one.57)

The envoy was entertained with another trick. He was urgently requested to an unscheduled audience with the Meiji Emperor. He was appealed to by the Japanese officials on the grounds that Meiji had a fervent desire to see the Korean envoy, counting the days of his arrival, etc. The envoy could not avoid the dilemma, as he knew that he had to acquiesce if he was invited many times. Finally, he had an audience with the Emperor after a long argument about the date, because it was a Korean tabu day. But at the time of the audience the Emperor, who had had a “fervent desire to see the envoy,”58) did not speak a single word to him. This was simply a device to set up another precedent for the acceptance of the term “Emperor” by the Korean envoy.

The third trick concerned the visit to the ministries. The following conversation was recorded between Moriyama(vice-entertainer) and the envoy:59)

Moriyama: “According to the *law of our country and the law of every nation* the mission of each country must visit the eight ministries upon its arrival, and when any minister is not available for interview, the rite is for you to leave your name card only....therefore another day should be arranged for performing these rites.” (Italics mine)

57) KIK, la.

58) KIK, 2a.

59) KIK, 2b-3a.

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The envoy: “This is a rite which has never been observed.”

Moriyama: “This is the *regulation* which every country follows and there is nothing wrong in doing it; moreover, there is precedent that the former *T’ongsin-sa* [Communicatory mission in earlier relations] also visited *Gakuro* [minister of the Shogunate].” (Italics mine)

The envoy: “I was never in such a mission, but they used to submit the national letter to the *Kanpaku* [Shogunate] and stay at the reception hall a few days and upon receiving the letter of reply, return. If some visited the *Gakuro*, it was merely a visit to a friend as a friend, and is not a ritual. Our country has all the documents of our foreign relations since the Silla period....and not a single precedent of paying such rites can be found....My mission, as ordered by our king, is to visit your foreign ministry directly to render thanks for your previous mission of last spring, and nothing more. Never was I instructed to visit other ministries; therefore, I could not dare to take the liberty of observing another custom.”

Arguments followed. Moriyama stated, furthermore, that his foreign ministry could not explain to each ministry in turn why the Korean envoy would not pay a visit to each separately. But the true story was different. The foreign ministry had anticipated that the Korean envoy would do whatever was asked and had requested all ministries to show some startling modernized institutions to the Korean mission, in order to demonstrate the success of the Korean-Japanese treaty to each ministry as well as to show off Japanese modernization to the Koreans.60) Because of the arrangements made by the Japanese foreign ministry, Moriyama tried to fool the envoy by using the terms “law of our country”

60) HSI, 61.

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and “the laws of every nation,” but his efforts failed. The envoy did not pay any visit to the other ministries during his stay.

In many things, however, the envoy had to follow the Japanese plan. He had to go out to see the museum, the hall of the council of elder statesmen, warships and arsenals. He was also invited to parties three times, twice by official arrangement and once by Inoue.

These were all he attended; however, he refused many more invitations by making excuses on grounds of health, or by sending out his men instead. He did not like to be pulled around to the factories or other institutions, because he may personally have thought all technical training improper for the *yangban* to learn. This was natural for the *yangban* of Korea, as they despised all techniques and manual work as lower-class occupations.

When he was returning from his audience with the emperor, he was made to walk too far, so he stopped in the garden, and the Japanese fetched a *jin-rikusha*.61) Another time, he was irritated because he had to wait for his return passage. He had come on a Japanese steamer, and he could not return until the Japanese provided the passage. On another occasion he became very angry. A Japanese official asked him to see the Elder Statesmen’s Hall, stressing that the second-rank prince wanted to see him. He replied gravely:

“The envoy may not be a great man, but he is the man who represents his country, and he who wants to see the envoy should come to see him and not attempt to summon him.”62)

The Japanese official apologized and explained what the Elder Statesmen’s Hall was.

In all he did, his manner was reluctant, as throughout his stay he reacted against modernization. But his answers

61) HSI, 54.

62) KIK, 9b.

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and responses to the diplomatic negotiations were discreet enough to avoid all pitfalls and concessions which the Japanese were trying to get for the benefit of future diplomatic relations. Whenever any serious questions or problems arose, he avoided making commitments, saying that this time the mission’s purpose was merely to extend thanks for the previous mission of the Japanese and to renew the old friendly relationship.

When Miyamoto referred to the problems of the treaty and the slow procedure of Korean diplomatic negotiations’ the envoy explained that no hope of any quicker measure could be anticipated because of the Korean system of politics. When Miyamoto persisted in attemping to get the envoy to elicit a quick decision concerning future relationships, the envoy refused to commit himself.

Inoue, again on another occasion, explained Japan’s great efforts to modernize and to make preparation against foreign invasion, presenting a world map on which the envoy could see the geographical proximity of Russia. But the envoy simply said that he would report this to the court of his country. Inoue further tried to get some commitment from the envoy regarding special treatment in case Inoue should come to Korea after six or seven years. To this the envoy also said that nothing could be guaranteed.

At the farewell party, Miyamoto tried to secure some words which might be of benefit in negotiations six months later concerning the opening of ports. Miyamoto explained to the envoy that Japan was accustomed to take action immediately on whatever she promised and to refuse immediately in case of non-agreement; hence, quick decisions could be made in future negotiations. He further explained:

“If negotiations should take one day, we could return next day, and if they should take two days, the next day we could return.”63)

63) KIK, lib.

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To this the envoy answered that the government structure of Korea was different from that of Japan, and no quick action could be taken, regrettable though it was.

On his departure, the minister of the Japanese foreign ministry made this cordial statement:

“One strong nation is by no means better than two strong nations’ alliance. And Japan and Korea are like teeth and lips. So Japan is willing to help Korea when Korea needs help.”64)

This elicited another careful answer calculated to avoid acceptance of a “good-will” gesture:

“We cannot help you in the slightest manner, and how could we alone want your help?”

This might have been a wise avoidance of obligation to Japan, but it was also the spontaneous reaction of his Confucian mentality.

A last talk was held between Miyamoto and the envoy. Miyamoto said that he would fully trust and completely rely upon the envoy regarding the future negotiations for opening ports, but the envoy’s last answer before he left the port of Yokohama was that the future of a man is not to be counted, so how could a man like him have any influence?65)

All the attempts by the Japanese to secure some sort of guarantee for future negotiations failed.

In spite of all reluctant actions, embarrassing situations, and obstinate behaviour, there were some occasions for serious reflection even oil the part of the Confucian scholar-envoy.

Once he was faced with a ridiculous situation, one which provides a revealing contrast between the mentality of Tokugawa Shogunate (as shown in the order of 1711) and that of the modern period. He was asked by Inoue about

64) KIK, 12b.

65) KIK, 12b.

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Korean women in the following terms:

“We are not miserly even in showing women’s music, but why do the Korean women hide themselves when we go to Korea? We won’t bite them, nor beat them, neither will we spoil them: why do they hide themselves as soon as we appear?”

The envoy answered in a joke, “They would hide themselves again if you appear again.”66) But a few days later the envoy was asked by Miyamoto again about the Korean women. Miyamoto asked the reason for the Korean women hiding themselves; then the envoy realized that the Japanese were serious about the problem and answered that the Korean women were supposed to stay at home and not to meet men in the street He further explained that Korean boys and girls over ten years of age were not allowed to sit together, and even widows of the lower classes never remarried.67) This was true to a great extent until the beginning of the twentieth century.

**V. Appreciation of the New and Justification of the Old**

The Korean mission had noticed many new developments taking place in Japan, but they were able to gain very little from them. Some items were brought back to Korea by the non-*yangban* members of the mission (but not by *yangban*). Several agricultural instruments, welding irons, etc, were purchased by one of them; specimens of vaccine and a book about vaccination were acquired by another member, Pak Yŏng-sŏn, who in turn raised up the “Jenner of Korea” after his return. Vaccination and other surgical treatments were offered to some of the Koreans at Pusan by a Japanese naval doctor stationed in the steamer which was waiting for the Korean envoy.68) These modern treatments impressed some Koreans in Pusan, including the interpreter Hyŏn.

66) KIK, 8b.

67) KIK, 12a—b.

68) NGM, IX, 203—204

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For the Koreans to bring new knowledge home from Japan and not from China was a reversal of the traditional direction of transmission. This was a challenge to the Confucian scholars. Even the die-hard Confucian scholar-envoy as last found himself in a similar situation to that which Faust was dragged into by Mephistopheles. The Confucian doctrine began to shake in the face of modern science. The envoy noted down appreciatively the startling operation of the naval manoeuvres, but most impressive to him was the arsenal operation. He could not go by without making some attempt at justification of modern mechanics in terms of Confucian philosophy. After a detailed and precise description of the arsenal operation, he noted:

“This [mechanical process] applies the utilization of things to human welfare; beneficial use and welfare are to be studied, not only speaking of seeing them. It was quite right for me to see them.”69)

Thus, he at last reached the point of justification. The last line of his description runs:

“His invitation to see this is by no means against the Way and my seeing is not by my will.”70)

By this last phrase he referred to three pieces of advice given to him on his departure by three different friends. Two of these recommended refusal of and restrictions on the anticipated Japanese invitations to study new institutions. The third recommendation, which he appreciated very much at this point, was that he should act in an uncompromising, though conciliatory, way. This meant that the envoy should not go beyond the Way and or exceed his jurisdiction, being wary of the Japanese counteractions to his behaviour. This friend further instructed the envoy not to initiate any action but to let the Japanese act first.

Seeing these new things and having made a justification in his mind for them,

69) KIK. 17a.

70) KIK, 17a.

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the envoy returned. In his official report submitted to the king he discusses many things in general terms. Most notable are the following: 71)

1. The ratio of men to women in Japan is 2 to 3.

2. Almost all the Japanese smile when they meet others, and no one deserves to be disliked，

3. Schools are attended by children of both literati (samurai) and peasant class when they are 7 or

8 years old.

4. In education, Japanese give more emphasis to utilitarian learning than to Confucian learning.

5. Japanese are most interested in the arts of promoting the wealth and strength of the nation. The

 increase of production amounts to ten times more than before and the prices are rising also.

His general observations were quite accurate and objective. He did not mention the embarrassments that he had to face, but evaluated the entertainment as similar to that of the old communicatory missions. Perhaps he did not regard all the embarrassment as serious.

The king asked the envoy whether he had anything to say in addition to the written report The envoy, who on his departure had been asked by the king to examine the changes in Japan carefully, had more to say about what he had seen.72) The major interest of the king was the problem of importation of new techniques. To this the envoy responded that Japan’s main emphasis in matters of development was laid on “telegraphy” “steam-power,” and “agricultural implements.” He expressed the view that those were the three items which Japan considered the most urgent problems. “Whether these could be learned and adopted” was the next question to answer. His opinion was that Korea had better learn these techniques, late though it be. This recommendation, however, was not based on an understanding of the techniques in question but on a retreat to the traditional

71) *Kin Gyoku kin* (Kim Ok-kyun) *Den* 金玉均傳 ed. by Kogin (Kogyun) kinenkai, 古萄記念會 (Tokyo, 1944), I, PP. 83-85f hereafter cited as KGKD.

72) HSI, 63

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Confucian domain. His actual recommendation was that the study and adoption of modern technology could be pursued in a segregated port area where the Japanese would be allowed to come and engage in trade.73) This answer was nothing more than a traditional policy which would not entail any danger of being attacked by the *yangban* class.

However, this must have stimulated the king, since it induced him to give his personal order that the talented and promising young reformist, Kim Ok-kyun, go to Japan and study the Japanese developments.74) However, Kim’s scheme to modernize the country had a sinister connection with Japanese political intrigues and was dealt a deadly blow by the die-hard conservative *yangban*. The report of the envoy at least accomplished some crucial change in the frame of mind of the king. He realized that his country had to learn something from Japan, which had been regarded as inferior in Confucian culture. Moreover, the lower officials in the mission were much more interested and receptive to the adoption of modern techniques, such as agricultural implements and vaccination; the latter had made its thorny but triumphant way in Korea.75) Vaccination was probably a revolutionary act from the standpoint of Confucian doctrine which had long been a barrier to cutting the top-knots off; through it modern education was opposed by the die-hard Confucian yangban.

The struggle of the old and the new started in this period has been a very serious problem, but it took a different course in Korea as the rigid intellectuality of the Confucian *yangban* class interplayed with the political situation and doubled the confusion on the traditional scene of Korean history. It was not like China; even more unlike Japan.

**VI. Conclusion**

The envoy’s actions are explicable to us only with an

73) KGKD, pp. 72-80.

74) KGKD, pp. 101-102.

75) Small pox and other diseases were considered by the Confucian Koreans as a heavenly punishment.

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understanding of the psychology of the *yangban* class of the Chosŏn dynasty. But it is evident that the envoy was too deeply Confucian-oriented to give a stimulating answer or report in favour of the new norms and values of modern civilization. He recognized that modern mechanical power was beneficial for the people, but his adjustment to new norms and values within the conservative, tradition-bound Confucian society was a different matter. He must have been fully aware also of the vivid historical fact that the new norms and values of Catholicism had been tragically victimized in his rigid society.

As a result of the Hideyoshi invasion, most of Chosŏn’s technicians had been taken prisoner to Japan and had subsequently been barred from repatriation because of their technical training. Neither commerce nor industry of considerable size had emerged since that time. Yet society was in the process of change, albeit gradual and slow. Land and taxation systems became lax, slave holdings were practically deteriorated, and the competition among the evergrowing *yangban* population became intense. Hence, there was an increasing tendency to observe the Confucian doctrine on its theoretical level only, while underneath its socio-economic foundation had crumbled away.

There were some progressive scholars who urged the need for practical measures such as land reform and social justice, as well as the adoption of the convenient tools of modern civilization. But since they were out of power, their ideas did not gain a foothold in society. Under such social conditions, the envoy’s inhibited behaviour must have been appreciated by the yangban in power, since he was promoted to the post of magistrate of Tŏgwŏn (now Wŏnsan).

Once Korea had been opened by the Japanese, strict adherence to Confucianism—a product of exclusive bureaucratic *yangban* society—had to wither away. And when the Japanese embraced western industrialization, their superiority over Korea was assured. Cultural transmission after this mission was from Japan to Korea, not in the reverse as [page 128] formerly. China also lost its cultural superiority over Japan. Modern diplomatic relations had come into being; the old style exchange of missions in terms of Confucian friendly relationship vanished from history. The turning point in Korean-Japanese relations was not a simple one; it provided the stimulus for the breakdown of the class structure of the conservative *yangban* society.