

## The Japan Connections of Poultney Bigelow, Proponent of Japanese Immigration and Colonialism

AARON M. COHEN  
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THE EXPERIENCES, ACTIVITIES, AND WRITINGS OF POULTNEY BIGELOW (1855–1945) add to our insight into Japan's external relations as manifested at the micro level, from the early Meiji Period through the trying times of the interwar period.<sup>1</sup> Bigelow's "Japan connections" comprise his experience and contacts made in Japan in 1876, when Japan was still unstable and dangerous to foreigners, a second visit in 1898 when he also toured Japanese dependencies, and a third visit in 1921, as well as activities derived from those travels. Bigelow was a forceful, perceptive, and competent writer, whose work was published widely. At a time when Japan was becoming alienated from many nations and was viewed with antipathy by many citizens and the government of the United States, he supported Japan's colonial policy. Ancillary to this position, Bigelow advocated freer immigration of Japanese to the United States at a time when the nation was moving steadily toward attainment, in 1924, of complete exclusion. Bigelow's support of Japanese policy and practices had scant impact, but what he did is noteworthy because of his prominence as a writer, his social capital, and his first-hand experiences.

Part I examines the circumstances of Bigelow's first visit, made in 1876 during a leave from college. Matters related to the wreck of Bigelow's ship near port in Japan are examined, using contemporary records and Bigelow's manuscripts and published writings. Part II takes up later views on Japanese immigration and expansion, as expressed through publications and lectures.

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The author, an independent scholar previously associated with Reitaku University, Chiba, Japan, has been studying pre-WWII Japan and the Japanese in Western performing arts. He did graduate work at Seton Hall University and lived in Japan for about 37 years between 1960 and 1999. Earlier journal papers have been on Judith Gautier's Japanese dramas, musical and dramatic life in Restoration-era foreign settlements in Japanese treaty ports, Japan's first film actress, and the first European to teach singing in Japan. <WorkshopGroup@aol.com>

## I. Between a Rock and a Dangerous Place

### TIME OFF TO RECOVER HEALTH

Bigelow's father, John, was appointed by Abraham Lincoln to the post of consul in Paris after the start of the Civil War. In recognition of diplomatic work that included dissuading France from selling ships to the Confederates, he was elevated to chargé d'affaires. He returned to private life and the United States in 1867, going back to Europe in 1870 and living in Germany until 1873. Consequently, part of the early education of his son, Poultney, was in Europe and included in 1870–71 study at the same school as Prince William of Hohenzollern—later Kaiser Wilhelm. John, back again from Europe, sent his son to a preparatory school in Norwich, Connecticut, and then to Yale.

After two years in college, Bigelow was stricken with "nervous prostration," and it was decided best that he interrupt his education and go on a cruise. Through his father, passage to Japan was booked on a clipper owned by the A. A. Low and Brothers company. Abiel Abbott Low was head of the New York State Chamber of Commerce, and a prominent businessman who had been in China at one time. The *Surprise*, on which Bigelow was to travel to Japan, had been on the tea run before the Civil War, and was the last of the company's fleet of tea and silk clippers. Low's son, Seth, became a benefactor and president of Columbia University, mayor of New York, and an advocate of immigrant and minority interests.

While at sea, Bigelow kept up his studies, reading Homer and Horace, and working out problems in algebra, trigonometry, and geometry, when not playing his banjo, sketching, reading Richard Hildreth's *Japan As It Was and Is* (published in 1855, but still a common reference on Japan when Bigelow read it), learning about the ship, and talking with the others on board. In New Guinea he had the exciting experience of bartering with "savages" for their bows and arrows. He also kept a diary, which has survived, and later on in life wrote down recollections of the voyage, prior to publishing a short account of it.<sup>2</sup>

Sea voyages were perilous at this time. Steamers including sidewheelers were beginning to supplant sailing ships, and although they were faster than the tall ships they were not necessarily safer; boiler explosions were not uncommon. And Japanese waters were likewise risky. Marine surveys and charting, installation of buoys and markers, construction of lighthouses, harbor improvements, and organization of lifeboat brigades were underway, with the aid of foreign experts, but were far from advanced.<sup>3</sup> When charts existed, they were not always complete and reliable, and often there was insufficient knowledge of currents, spits, and other natural hazards that endangered commercial vessels, navy ships, whalers, and sealers. When the *Surprise*, with Bigelow aboard, ran up on a rock five miles from shore, it was far from the first or last to suffer damage or total loss in Japanese coastal waters.

## THE WRECK OF THE SURPRISE

The dangers of sea voyages were not confined to natural hazards, inclement weather, and inadequate charts. Human factors at times reduced danger, and at other times created more. The approach by the *Surprise*, 131 days out of port, was made more difficult by inadequate charts and high winds. On the evening of 3 February 1876, a pilot boarded, but the wind grew in strength the following morning, making it impossible to advance toward the intended anchorage. The captain, Frederick Johnson of Salem, suggested that they make for Mississippi Bay (Negishi Bay), but the pilot, named Shields, who claimed to have 10 years' experience, steered towards an alternate anchorage, Kaneda Bay on the outer side of Kannonsaki. Before reaching Kaneda Bay, the ship struck a rock near a known danger named the Plymouth rocks, and foundered. In writing up his adventures in Japan, Bigelow states that the pilot was an Australian who was thinly clad, despite it being early February, because he was warmed by "the internal heat from a generous flask." The inquiry did not establish that the pilot was drunk, but he did not come to the court inquiry held to determine the cause of the wreck.

In court, the captain testified that he went for assistance, first to the Yokosuka naval base and then to Yokohama. Bigelow's version has the pilot, captain, and a seaman making off in the captain's gig before others could escape. When the small boat began shipping water, he wrote, the captain, wearing a black broad-cloth frock coat, tried bailing with his silk top hat, until the crown succumbed. Bigelow and those remaining aboard managed to free a heavy cutter that had been stored above deck and launch it while the *Surprise* was heaving and listing. No lives were lost. Japanese families in Uruga put up Bigelow and those who escaped with him overnight without incident, according to Bigelow's account. The following day Bigelow was taken to Yokohama, a trip requiring nine hours.

Gale winds drove the severely damaged ship off the rocks and it drifted two miles to the north entrance of Uruga harbor, where it listed and lodged. Fifty Japanese sailors from the training ship *Fujikan* later salvaged the cargo, at the suggestion of a British Royal Navy boatswain aboard the *Fujikan* as an instructor.<sup>4</sup> The cargo consisted mostly of 10,000 cases of kerosene and some general merchandise (hardware, coal, slates, and copper). Much was salvaged, and was auctioned later in the month in Yokohama. The United States consul-general presented the captain of the *Fujikan* with the quite high sum of a thousand yen to be distributed to the crew in sign of appreciation.

After reaching land, Bigelow, with others, was able to return to his cabin, which had filled with enough water to float his trunk, and rescued his papers. The papers, including his diary, a letter of credit, and letters of introduction, enabled him to get by for several weeks in Japan and continue his voyage.

## SOJOURN IN TREATY SETTLEMENTS

On land safety was not much better than at sea. The country was far from stable in the early years following the Restoration. Foreign residents were by and large confined to the settlement areas, and they strapped on revolvers when they left the settlements for fear of renegade ronins. Samurai were still wearing two swords. Great Britain and France had troops garrisoned in Yokohama to protect their citizens and property. In his autobiography, *Seventy Summers* (1925), Bigelow wrote that when, upon approaching shore, Japanese were first sighted, "we saw a swarm of semi-naked savages brandishing tomahawks [elsewhere, he wrote "axes"]," and years later when he drafted a manuscript describing the voyage, he wrote, "Every man pined for a shore leave in Yokohama, but correspondingly dreaded meeting the natives anywhere save in a well protected treaty port."<sup>5</sup> Such fears proved unwarranted. Bigelow's personal experiences in the Uraga farmer's house and elsewhere gave him cause later to praise the ordinary Japanese for their good humor, cleanliness, courtesy, and helpfulness.

Bigelow's recollections of his early experiences also provide some informal views of the life and times of early foreign residents and visitors in the treaty settlements. Although anecdotal in nature, and suspect in content, they are still worth examining. Bigelow spent his second night and first few days in Japan in the Yokohama settlement where he obtained lodgings at a hotel owned by a Frenchman. The international settlements then were as rough-hewn as a typical frontier town in the North American West. Extraterritoriality provisions in Japan's treaties with other countries meant that foreign nationals in the settlements were subject not to Japanese law but to that of their own countries. An American marshal enforced law among Americans, and the consul-general sat as judge in consular courts when cases required dispensation of justice.

Attired in new Scotch tweeds from a Yokohama tailor, Bigelow made his first order of business to contact United States officials, starting with General Thomas B. Van Buren, the consul-general. He recalled their first meeting as follows.

Our Consul in Yokohama was an expansive and convivial spirit who bore himself with magisterial dignity, as benefitted one who combined many important offices in one person. I was presented to him in the bar room of the Oriental Hotel—but I hasten to add that this room also served as general writing room and social gathering place before luncheon and the late dinner. In those days there were scarcely any white women of respectable habits and the town was much after the fashion of a bachelor's club or an Indian cantonment. Everybody appeared to be rich; all spoke English or American; the club was homogeneous as though in Pall Mall or Tuxedo; entertainment universal and lavish; Mrs. Grundy had not yet made her appearance and female missionaries were looked upon as theological curios excavated from depths to which no healthy man had yet penetrated.

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Each [of the two men present, Van Buren and Burnside, paymaster of the U.S. flagship *Tennessee*] protested that he was taking a few drinks because of the prophylactical effect of Kentucky whiskey in a strange climate. Their medicine had at least immediate effect on their generous impulses and fluent expression of hospitable inclinations. The magisterial Consul embraced me because his family and mine came from the same section of the Hudson Valley and the rosy paymaster insisted on drinking a few more than usual because his family was from Rhode Island—the state in which I had attended the famous Boarding school conducted by the Friends' Yearly meeting. And when I told him that the head master had been Albert K. Smiley, he roared with delight and filled his glass again in honor of the man who founded Lake Mohonk [site of the Mohonk Mountain Lodge, a hotel in New Paltz, 30 miles south of Saugerties] and held wine in abhorrence.<sup>6</sup>

As Bigelow was to testify in consular court, Van Buren told him to be careful when with the marshal, Henry Willard Denison. There may have been at least one other reason for this warning, as there was some trouble between the two, as shown in Bingham's private papers, an indication of internal discord in the early years of American presence in Japan.<sup>7</sup> Bigelow, Denison, and Captain Johnson left to visit the site of the wreck, and Bigelow wondered if the captain might have "cherished a secret hope that I had not seen his undignified retreat." Bigelow and a second passenger appeared as witnesses in court on 22 February. The pilot, as mentioned, did not appear in court. On this, the correspondent for the San Francisco *Alta* reported, "Perhaps he has found it convenient to disappear, though for my own part I attach little importance to a rumor which has been circulated by his friends to the effect that he has committed suicide."<sup>8</sup> The press does not seem to have reported on testimony by Bigelow and the other passenger.

Bigelow's assets at this time were his nimble mind, honed by a good-quality, cosmopolitan education and privileged upbringing, his letter of credit (that was honored), his letters of introduction, and the help of a Japanese friend. Van Buren introduced the young man to the American representative, Judge John A. Bingham, who was at the legation in Tsukiji, Tokyo, and this provided an incentive for Bigelow to travel to the capital. Bingham had been prosecutor when accomplices were tried for conspiracy to assassinate Lincoln, was a key figure in the impeachment of President Andrew Johnson, and for some years represented Ohio's Sixteenth District in Congress.<sup>9</sup> From 1873 to 1885 he represented the United States in Japan. This background notwithstanding, the Judge would have fitted neatly into a frontier town, considering that Bigelow recalled that the roses on the minister's carpet were well fertilized with tobacco juice, and opined that the Judge was "perhaps the last American Excellency to include cuspidors in his diplomatic baggage."

After meeting Bingham, Bigelow moved to the Tsukiji settlement (occupying an area corresponding to today's Akashi 1-chome). Domestic discord had prevented the settlement from being opened up on schedule. The first auction of

lots was held in 1870, but did not elicit a strong response owing to the setting of prices in excess of those in Yokohama. The United States legation had been built only three years prior to the stormy arrival of the *Surprise*, and many of the buildings in Tsukiji must have smelled of new wood when Bigelow arrived and secured a room in the Yedo Hotel, at lot No. 17. This, one of the first hotels in Tsukiji, was located across the way from the legation.

Bigelow spent his time at Japanese lessons, having bought James C. Hepburn's 552-page dictionary, read a borrowed copy of Frederick Victor Dickens's translation of *Chûshingura*, had a reunion with Yoshio Kusaka, a schoolmate from the Norwich, Connecticut, school both had attended, paid a visit to the *Nichi Nichi* newspaper office, witnessed the execution of several soldiers, shopped, wrote letters, and sketched. On 19 February Bingham invited him to dinner, an opportunity that proved to be valuable many years later. At the dinner Bigelow met Shigenobu Ôkuma, Toshimichi Ôkubo, a General "Kyzo" who had been with the punitive expedition to Formosa in 1874 (Bigelow later stated that he had met Tsugumichi Saigo), and two United States military officers in the employ of the Imperial Japanese Government. Young Bigelow was seated between the secretaries of the famous men.

Although Bigelow did not record details of that meeting, he later detailed his trip back to Uraga, made with the captain, two underwriters, and the marshal. He devoted one line to official business but many to a drunken party and geisha entertainment in an Uraga teahouse, as well as a water picnic he attended in Yokosuka, in the company of Van Buren and Johnson, at the invitation of the paymaster of the *Tennessee*. Also attending the picnic were Japanese women and "expensively dressed San Francisco women." As Bigelow recalled,

The ladies of easy manners and expensive dress took readily to the punch and sang snatches of song which left little doubt regarding their professional status. . . . It was bad enough that a party of drunken civilians should steam in here with a cargo of international harlots—but that the head & front should be an officer in the United States Navy, he more drunk than anyone! No wonder that the sailors of the Mikado made big eyes at the Amorous Armada. . . . The Navy of Japan was treated to an exhibition of American manners & customs that left a profound if not agreeable impression. The little tug was freighted with passengers who sang and yelled like a pack of savages. The gaudily dressed white women had been hoisted into the rigging and along the bulwarks where they waved their legs and ventilated their undergarments in a manner popularized by certain resorts of the French Bohemia.<sup>10</sup>

Following these exploits, Bigelow booked passage to Shanghai on a Mitsubishi ship, the *Tokio Maru*, which made port in Nagasaki and Shimonoseki en route to Shanghai. After returning to Yokohama in April, he met several more notables, including Hepburn, educator Yukichi Fukuzawa, and the scholar-parliamentarian Rinshô Mitsukuri, before returning to the United States on the *Colorado*.

The account of the Uraga frolic is not to imply that the young man spent all of his time in dissipation (if indeed touring prostitutes had called at Yokohama) or in the company of drunks. As Bigelow recorded in a notebook, after returning from Shanghai he visited a Roman Catholic mission operated by the French, and met a Sister Gregory there. Missionaries had been eager arrivals in the treaty ports. Townsend Harris had intended that the treaty he negotiated with Japan would open the country to Christianity; the religious motive that lay behind Europe's expansion eastward was shared by the Americans. Missionaries, who provided a good portion of the early scholarship on Japan as they had done in China starting centuries earlier, frequently were employed by foreign governments as interpreters and advisors. Bigelow met two of these men in Japan, Hepburn and the famous S. Wells Williams.

Sister Gregory showed him a piece of what she said was the "true cross," that had been brought to the Far East by Francis Xavier. "Of course," Bigelow later wrote, "I did not say *aloud* that I knew something better worth kissing than a desiccated splinter; but very solemnly raised the alleged chip of sanctity to my lips and—surely enough—my life has from that day on been remarkably free from trouble."<sup>11</sup> Bigelow, a staunch opponent of the Papacy, then related a half dozen or so reasons the "splinter" was not a former possession of the well-known missionary, but was fascinated nonetheless: "Little did I care how many converts followed Francis but I could have followed that enthusiastic nun to the ends of the Earth for the mere pleasure of her prattle about saints and relics and miraculous conversions."<sup>12</sup> Like his close friend Mark Twain, Bigelow was a vigorous opponent of missionary work abroad, and his manner in relating this event in Yokohama is consistent with that view.

He completed his studies at Yale and practiced law before concentrating on writing and publishing. It was more than 20 years before he made connections again with Japan.

## II. Bigelow as an Influential Writer and Proponent of Japanese Policy

### TRUE TO FAMILY FORM

Bigelow returned from his voyage, his eyesight and general strength recovered. He completed his studies and while at Yale was associated with the university newspaper. This extracurricular activity was consistent with his father's business. John Bigelow for a number of years had been co-owner and co-editor of the *New York Evening Post*, with William Cullen Bryant. Like his father, Poultney Bigelow was admitted to the New York bar after graduating from university, but practiced law only briefly before turning to writing. He contributed many articles to a wide variety of magazines and newspapers, from the organ of the New York State Troopers to national-circulation periodicals such as *Harper's Monthly*.<sup>13</sup> More than any other subject, Bigelow was called on to write about Germany.

His insight into and knowledge of Germany were respected, and his childhood association with the Kaiser provided additional credentials. The two exchanged letters and information and were close for many years. The friendship continued, according to Bigelow, until the American-published *History of German Struggle for Liberty (1806–1813)* in 1896. In this book he provided opinions and judgments that his friend would not be able to accept.<sup>14</sup> The volume and range of his output, in German as well as English, were considerable. Then, in 1906, he turned his attention to other activities and decreased the time he spent writing. In all, eleven books by Bigelow were published.

Evidence of the extent of Bigelow's influence can be seen in the aftermath of a critical article he wrote for *Independent* in 1906. Titled "Our Mismanagement at Panama," it stirred Roosevelt to the extent that the president made an inspection trip to the site. No American President had left the country while in office prior to this instance. Among the accomplishments of Bigelow was his publication of the first American magazine devoted to outdoor sports and recreation, *Outing*. This early 20th-century monthly was consistent with the times, supporting the degeneration- and Darwinist-inspired advocacy of a "strenuous life" by Theodore Roosevelt as much as it was consistent with Bigelow's way of life.

Publications do not enable a sufficient evaluation of Bigelow's work and influence. He also made speeches and was a vigorous correspondent. His papers include thousands of letters to and from well over a hundred notable persons, including numerous letters to or from Mark Twain, Israel Zangwill, Henry George, the Ringling family (of circus fame), Frederick Remington, publishers George Haven Putnam and James Gordon Bennett, Admiral George Dewey, sopranos Geraldine Farrar (a German sympathizer until the United States entered the Great War) and Amelita Galli-Curci, poet Edgar Lee Masters, British author G. A. Henty, German sympathizer George S. Viereck, and New York naturalist John Burroughs.

Another way whereby Bigelow was true to family form was his store of social capital. He lived for a period in England, travelled extensively in Europe, and everywhere was very frequently in the company of important people. Far from being glued to a chair and writing desk, Bigelow was obtaining privileged information and insight from the best sources. To give an example related to Japan, in his *Prussian Memories / 1864–1914* Bigelow recounts that only Lord Roberts, the British military commander, took seriously an unusual Japanese military officer.<sup>15</sup> Bigelow met this Lt. Fukushima in Berlin, after Fukushima had been there as military attaché during 1887–92. Fukushima became a national hero after riding across Russia on horseback, collecting strategic information for Japan. This officer, Bigelow wrote, did not mix, and did not share information. When "the little yellow dwarf for whom the Emperor had to provide a toy horse for fear of an equestrian tragedy" met the British attaché, the following conversation ensued:



"I say, Major, how does your breech block work compared to this Mauser?"

"Yes," answered Fukushima, "I think it is a fine day."

"No," protested the Colonel. "I mean, what sort of a rifle have you got?"

"Oh yes," answered Fukushima. "A little rain will do much good."

"I'm afraid I don't make my meaning clear," said the kindly Briton.

"Perfectly," answered the pleased Samurai, "it will lay the dust and. . ."<sup>16</sup>

In today's terms, Bigelow had a very fat Rolodex. He exploited introductions, bombarded acquaintances with letters, invited them to his home in Malden, and sent them gifts, including a dress made by his wife. In Japan, he concentrated these efforts on nobles, diplomats, and high officials, and they complied. To name, for example, some of the Japanese he associated with, there were financier and industrialist Ei'ichi Shibusawa, Tokyo Imperial University president Kenjirô Yamagawa, Governor General of Chosen S. Shimada, Ambassador to the U.S. Naomichi Hanihara, Viscount Nobuaki Makino, Count Ushiji Kabayama, Foreign Minister Taneomi So(y)ejima, Secretary of War Tarô Katsura, Yukichi Saji of the Dai-Ichi Bank, Dr. Masaharu Anesaki of Tokyo Imperial University, and I. M. Tokugawa.

#### IMMIGRATION, IMPERIALISM, AND ADVOCACY OF JAPAN

Japan's expansion and formation of an empire was an issue that the United States viewed as being related to the presence of Japanese people in the United States. These combined issues dominated American attitudes towards Japan from the end of the Russo-Japanese War through the Great War, when Japan was an ally and active in the Pacific region (and to a much lesser extent in the Mediterranean), through the Versailles Peace Conference, the Washington Conference, and the remainder of the 1920s and 1930s. Romantic images of Japan did not disappear, but they were overshadowed by exclusionist legislation and geopolitical challenges. The Japanese in America inherited all if not more of the animosity and discrimination that had been the lot of the Chinese. Antipathy towards Japanese became linked to Japan's external policy after Japan's victory over China (1895), impressive military showing in northern China at the time of the Boxer Rebellion (1900), and then Japan's victory over a white, Christian European nation, Russia (1905). In 1907 military strategists in both the United States and Japan identified the other as the hypothetical enemy in the next war. The Japanese in the United States came to be viewed as spies and latent saboteurs. Stage productions, films such as the silent features starring Sessue Hayakawa, popular literature including science fiction, and the machinations of the Hearst papers alienated and marginalized the Japanese. Bigelow's views on the Japanese, however, were not those of many North Americans (particularly on the West Coast) holding an opinion on the subject, nor of the United States government.

In the draft introduction to the story of his voyage, Bigelow wrote, "Let us encourage the best class of Japanese to make their homes here; to rear families here and to spread amongst our people the Gospel of smiling courtesy and physical cleanliness." In his *Japan and Her Colonies / Being extracts from a diary made whilst visiting Formosa, Manchuria, Shantung, Korea and Saghalin in the year 1921*, telling of his earlier visit to Japan in 1898, Bigelow mentioned his meeting with Kentarô Kaneko. This is the Harvard graduate who was in 1898 a viscount, member of the Privy Council, and president of the Japan-America Society, and who, at the time of the war against Russia, was dispatched to the United States to generate support for the Japanese cause. Kaneko, Bigelow writes, "deplored the attitude of our Government which opened American doors to Semites and Africans without a murmur, yet slammed them in the face of his fellow Japanese."<sup>17</sup> Elsewhere he asserts, "Our exclusion laws are as weak as was the Great Wall of China: they are an insult to a great and friendly neighbor."<sup>18</sup> In his autobiography, he went further:

Even after the glorious war with Russia, the then President Roosevelt could not resist the temptation of bullying Japan into signing a disadvantageous peace. No one bullied Germany out of her treaty with France after 1870, much less intervened in favour of the American Southern States in our long and bloody War of Secession. But as soon as Japan had valiantly fought her giant enemy to a finish, in steps our noisy Theodorus [who] protects Russia from paying her just debts, robs Japan of Saghalin, and makes a peace highly satisfactory to Russia—but unfair to Japan. . . . We persistently violate our own treaties with both China and Japan by encouraging legislation for their exclusion. . . . At a public meeting called for the purpose of aiding the sufferers in the great Japanese earthquake of 1923, I was called upon to speak, and urged that we immediately invite over here ten millions of Japanese—offering in exchange an equal number of Jews! This raised a storm! In America we dare not speak of a Jew menace or a negro menace or any menace except that from a nation famed for its cleanliness, its morality, its happy families, its honesty, its courage—in short every quality that should make them dear to us.<sup>19</sup>

He lacked similar praise for the Chinese, with whom he had much less contact. In the draft, unpublished introduction to his voyage, he wrote. "[L]et us treat kindly the Chinese and Japanese now laboring in our midst. Let us merit their affection by treating them with Justice and Christian fraternity." Among his notes we read, "The Celestial whom we see most of in America is the day laborer. . . . He seems to have little in common with the Chinese merchant," and "The relatively small emigration of Chinamen is no more sign of overpopulation than is the Emigration of American farmers from Michigan into Canada a sign that there is overpopulation in the United States." Elsewhere he stated, "It is a long and costly job, this taming of savages."<sup>20</sup> The Chinese were savages to Bigelow, as they were to the Japanese, so statements such as these resonated warmly in Japan, where Formosans had been placed on display before the gen-

eral populace. For Bigelow, the proposed trade would have been a double success, as it would have replaced Jews with a subservient ethnic group suitably dominated by the whites. Bigelow may well have believed the Japanese to have many desirable characteristics; there is no reason to doubt this. But he saw them not as equals but as a higher-level group among inferiors. Between Bigelow's lines we can read a perceived hierarchy among the Orientals, with the Japanese superior to the Chinese and hence fitted to be colonial masters. Like Kaiser Wilhelm, he was an anti-Semite. New York's *The Herald* published his letter of 25 October 1911, in which he wrote,

Personally I love the Jew as I love my fellow man, and, indeed, all God's creatures; but, like garlic in a salad, a little of the Jew goes a long way.

These United States are becoming so rapidly Jew ridden that while every other nationality or race can be freely discussed the Jew alone sets up a howl of persecution whenever a criticism touches him.

*The Herald* [is] in my opinion one of the few surviving papers not owned by a Jew. . . ."

In 1921 Bigelow linked racism with imperialism, stating:

All white men have a common interest in successful colonialization; and nothing is more important than that the experience gained in one colony should be shared by all. Has the time not come for the entire white race to organize, and to march forward united for the better administration of the yet uncivilized parts of the Earth? Has the time not arrived for an International Colonial Congress on the broadest lines of Peace, Free Trade and Goodwill amongst Nations?<sup>21</sup>

At the Versailles Peace Conference Japan had been unsuccessful, when her proposal that the Charter of the League of Nations include a clause banning racial discrimination was rejected. Woodrow Wilson, acquiescing to Great Britain, which in turn was under pressure from an Australia and a Canada that had become fearful of Japanese power, overrode conference precedents to defeat the motion. In the United States, Japan tried to resist the anti-immigration movement and sought Bigelow's support, despite his white-supremacy views.

#### ADVOCACY OF JAPANESE COLONIALISM

Bigelow had naught but praise for Japanese colonial policy. In *Seventy Summers* Bigelow declared, "Her [Japan's] great work is but in its infancy; she has occupied Formosa."<sup>22</sup> He sympathized with the new imperialists who were accomplishing "wonders in colonial administration": "In the case of Japan, each of her colonies has its own customs and ethnological peculiarities—no law can be made in Tokyo that fits the people of all her islands. . . . Consequently she has to exercise great patience in regard to local institutions or prejudices."<sup>23</sup> Elsewhere, regarding Taiwan, he has "No sooner did the Japanese flag float over this isle of beauty (in 1895) than a Shinto shrine made its appearance. . . . Wherever colonial Japan has pushed forward its railway and police force there it also repaired

the Chinese temples of Buddha and erected noble shrines to Shinto. Christianity is tolerated along with every other cult."<sup>24</sup>

In making such evaluations, he was speaking from authority, as his bona fides include an honorary professorship at the École Colonial in Paris and a post in 1904–1905 as Professor of National Expansion, in the Department of Law, Boston University. In 1899 he delivered a paper, "Colonial Administration in Different Parts of the World."<sup>25</sup> In short, Bigelow was a proponent of colonialism, regardless of the identity of the colonial power. It must be emphasized that there were many people outside Japan who gave that country high marks as a colonial administrator, though in so doing they were turning a blind eye toward repression and resistance in Korea.<sup>26</sup>

The critical remove that he demonstrated in commenting on the status of the American military in Cuba or the work that was being done to construct the Panama Canal was forgotten when it came to Japan. Bigelow knew that the Chinese on Taiwan and the Koreans desired independence but was not sympathetic. A more reliable view of shrine construction demonstrates the difference between the eyes of a shrewd observer on the go and the insider. In 1919 the *Japan Weekly Chronicle*, published in Kobe, noted that the shrine in Tsingtau (today's Qingdao) "places [the dependency] under the protection of all the gods of the Japanese pantheon and of the Japanese Imperial Family and its deified ancestors."<sup>27</sup> The deity enshrined there was Amaterasu-ô-mikami, the Sun Goddess, placing the land directly under the control, so to speak, of the emperor, who was taken to be a descendant of this goddess. As postcolonial studies have amply shown, there were many aspects to Japanese colonial administration that were resisted by the colonized people at the time and were condemned at least by some outsiders (Christian missionaries in Korea, for example), but Bigelow had nothing to do with such people.

If anything, Bigelow would have preferred further expansion of the Japanese Empire. In 1907, in *Open Court*, he recognized in the Philippines what he could not see in Korea. He wrote,

The Filipinos hate us, and with ample reason. From the moment that Admiral Dewey left Manila Bay, they have been the sport of American politics and our alleged "protectionism." They are of cognate race with the Japanese and the day when the flag of the rising sun shall take the place of the stars and stripes, will be hailed as a day of deliverance throughout that lovely archipelago.<sup>28</sup>

In reviewing German colonial policy, Bigelow was able to criticize where he saw fit, although in net terms he consistently gave Germany high marks.<sup>29</sup> This was seen in an analysis of the colony at Tsingtau. Some time after his second visit to Tsingtau, after the Japanese had taken over by dint of their role in World War I, he wrote,

The German Governor told me [in 1898] that he was plagued by merchants coming to ask his permission to start business. Well, I felt like saying, what is a colony for? . . . His idea of a colony was only a place where he could have a

nice government house and a nice parade ground for his soldiers. . . . Only a few days ago I re-visited Tsingtau [;] that place has doubled in population, doubled in area, and . . . building activity. . . . [W]hen we read in the papers that the Japanese are strangling Shantung, well, all I can answer is, I wish I had such strangles about me.<sup>30</sup>

As a professional writer, Bigelow was glad to extol the Japanese accomplishments in print, for a fee. Late in 1921, after his third Asian voyage, Bigelow was in contact with the English-language *Japan* magazine, published in San Francisco by the Toyo Kisen Kaisha, a Japanese shipping line, but apparently with active intervention by the Japanese government.<sup>31</sup> It had been a Japanese colonial official who introduced Bigelow to the magazine. The editor, James King Steele, wrote on 17 November 1921, that he would be glad to have a monthly contribution of 1,500–5,000 words; on 5 December he was disappointing, writing that the \$50 per article that Bigelow expected was not possible but that Bigelow should send 3,500 words for \$25. On 9 January 1922, Steele wrote again, that

we took a liberty,—perhaps too great a one,—of changing your title “Colonial Japan” to “Japan and her Mandatories.” This was at the suggestion of the consul here and some of the other Japanese with whom I discussed the matter who felt that Shantung and Korea for the present did not properly come under the head of colony and also that the word “Mandatory” is being so much flung about now that it might sound more interesting.”<sup>32</sup>

Bigelow sold about twenty articles to *Japan*, and there was some further correspondence, including one letter that may have irritated Bigelow with its acute salutation. Typed on plain paper unlike the letterhead used for the letters cited above and sent from San Francisco on 31 October 1922, it starts “Dear Prince of Publicists.”<sup>33</sup>

The last public event in which the statesman-educator Shigenobu Ôkuma participated was a series of lectures by Bigelow at the Tokyo University of Commerce (now Waseda University). He delivered three lectures, which the school published. In the third lecture, “Japanese Colonial Expansion,” Bigelow indicated his awareness of underlying realities and precedence-taking realities, when he stated:

I can imagine some Chinaman coming into my room with a knife in his hand and anger in his eye and exclaiming: “. . . We want self-determination.” . . . But [to] anyone who knows Formosa as it was twenty years before, . . . the island has been developed from a nest of pirates into a paradise for the farmer and merchant and the manufacturer.<sup>34</sup>

Thus, Bigelow lauded Japan’s colonial administration, and *in extenso* he approved of her imperialism. But it was because he was a colonialist first, and a writer with firsthand knowledge of Japan second.

## Afterword

Poultney Bigelow was a prominent person with first-hand experience in Japan and excellent contacts there. He made it a point to read books about Japan, such as James Murdoch's *A History of Japan*. He was a supporter of Japanese policy and Japanese interests when it was unpopular to do so. What were his motives? Why was he ineffective? Subsidiary questions arise: Was Bigelow catering to the Japanese in supporting them while American opinion was strongly anti-Japan and anti-Japanese? Was he a Japanophile or a publicist? Was what he did in Japan's best interests?

Bigelow's career indicates that he was a headstrong, persistent man who stood by what he said and strenuously defended his views, whatever they were. For a long period his major sources of earned income were his writings and the lecture circuit. By the time he wrote about Japan, he was producing little for periodicals. When we read his correspondence with Steele, and see that he counted every word of every chapter of his draft account of the first voyage to Japan, we are led to conclude that he was a journalist before he was a Japanophile.

As a well-placed, influential journalist, a long-time friend of Wilhelm, and an authority on Germany, Bigelow was a valuable contact for Japan. His first-hand experience lent credence to his writings on Japan in Asia, and these writings made him much more valuable. Nevertheless, in the United States it was only on German affairs that his opinion was valued, and by the 1920s he was less influential and less active in public life than necessary to really be of help to the Japanese cause. He spoke much on Japanese issues, but mostly to the Japanese themselves, and late in his career. As a colonialist, Bigelow had no difficulty in supporting Japanese colonialism. Without probing into the affairs of the colonized, as he had in Cuba and Panama, he had little difficulty in approving Japanese colonial rule. It was the principle that was important to Bigelow, not that colonialism was being practiced by a specific nation, Japan.

When we examine his views on ethnicity or race, we find that they conform to the Social Darwinism that prevailed during his times; we find that he placed the Japanese above the Chinese, but he stopped short of positioning them as equals with whites. His advocacy of immigration of Japanese was a fanciful choice of the lesser of two evils, as the Japanese were more welcome to him than the Jews, whom he believed controlled newspapers. Japan hardly needed a supporter who would not accept them as equals.

Bigelow thus was, in a sense, a danger to the Japanese. He would have been happy to see more Japanese in America, but without welcoming them as equals, although if they converted to Christianity it would merit his approval. His support for colonialism in itself was no threat, but he went beyond that, to the detriment of Japan's interests. He wrote the following:

Japan is not likely to attack the United States—much less is China. India, however, is also Asiatic, and a few more Labour and Socialistic Governments in Westminster may cause another 400,000,000 to come under Japanese leadership—and so make a grand total of nearly 900,000,000 humans capable of tilling the soil, running machinery, or, if God so wills, manning warships and setting squadrons in the field. All this is hypothetical—but the East has in the past half-century offered the West so many shocks to preconceived notions that we might as well brace ourselves for the next. Democracy is influenced by sentiment rather than reason, and a passion for war is as easy to create as one for the massacre of heretics. The moderation of Japan may not last always; Congressional arrogance may go just one step too far.<sup>35</sup>

Bigelow did not damn the Japanese with faint praise, he did it with paeans, for what he was saying here was a reinforced revival of *die gelbe Gefahr*—the Yellow Peril—that the Kaiser had used decades earlier as a tool of political strategy to foment war against the Japanese and that the Hearst papers had revived with vigor. The anti-Japan, anti-Japanese forces at work in North America from the closing years of the 19th century through the early 1920s when Bigelow made his last Japan tour were too strong for Bigelow to have any effect in pleading the Japanese case. Japan had nothing to lose by extending a welcome to this man and by giving him a forum, even if it was sensed that their friend had a different order of priorities than what was nominally presented. For the United States as well, Bigelow was a danger, as he supported the Axis powers. His experience was vast, his knowledge impressive, his activities vigorous, and his major judgments on the enemies of the United States gravely erroneous.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> This paper makes use of materials in the Poultney Bigelow Papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, the New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations, use of which is heartily acknowledged. The web site <http://www.ulster.net/~rdragon/bigelow.htm> also has information on Poultney Bigelow and his family.

<sup>2</sup> His diary for 1876, written in a British-made Lett's No. 35 Rough Diary or Scribbling Journal, is among his papers at the New York Public Library. The references to his first trip to Japan given in this paper are primarily from his longhand draft, written in 1921 (see note 5 below), that was the basis of, but substantially differs from, the versions published in *Outing* from May 1886 to February 1887 or in "Wrecked on the Shores of Japan" in *Harper's* magazine. Certain matters in the draft cannot be independently verified and are suspect. Press reports, however, substantiate or tend to support Bigelow's statements regarding loss of the ship (see *Japan Weekly Mail*, 4 Mar. 1876, pp. 214f.). Where significant information from sources other than the holograph draft is used, the source is indicated. A small notebook with his memoranda has also survived.

<sup>3</sup> These *o-yatoi* included the Scot Richard Henry Brunton, the “father of lighthouses” in Japan; Brunton departed in 1876, after eight years of service.

<sup>4</sup> *Japan Gazette*, 8 Feb. 1876, p. 2; *New York Times*, 26 Mar. 1876, p. 9, the latter copying from a Yokohama dispatch with a 23 February dateline to the *Alta*, a San Francisco paper; *Japan Weekly Mail*, 11 Mar. 1876.

<sup>5</sup> Holograph, “The Last Voyage of the *Surprise* (Being the Diary of a Trip Around the World by a College Boy)” (hereafter cited as “Holograph, ‘*Surprise*,’”), Chapter XXV, p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> Holograph, “*Surprise*,” Chapter XXXI, pp. 1–3, 5. The reported opulence is likely to have been relative to the surroundings more than a characteristic in actual terms.

<sup>7</sup> Seiro Kawasaki, “On the John Armor Bingham Papers,” *Tokyo Kasei Gakuin Tsukuba Joshi Daigaku Kiyô* 2 (1998): 38 (in Japanese); accessible as a pdf file at <http://www.kasei.ac.jp/library/kiyou/98/3.%E5%B7%9D%E5%B4%8E.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> *New York Times*, 26 Mar. 1876, p. 9 (see note 4).

<sup>9</sup> Bingham’s papers, brought back from Japan, are extensive. Microfilm copies are in the possession of the Ohio Historical Society, in Columbus.

<sup>10</sup> Holograph, “*Surprise*,” Chapter XXII, pp. 10–11, 14–16.

<sup>11</sup> Holograph, “*Surprise*,” Chapter XXX, pp. 3f.

<sup>12</sup> Holograph, “*Surprise*,” Chapter XXX, pp. 6f.

<sup>13</sup> Several are accessible as facsimile images at the Cornell University “Making of America” website (<http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/moa/browse.author/b.78.html>). Clippings, offprints and drafts of many are at the New York Public Library.

<sup>14</sup> Bigelow accompanied Wilhelm to Constantinople in 1899, so their friendship had not been destroyed by publication of the book.

<sup>15</sup> Poultney Bigelow, *Prussian Memories / 1864–1914* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1915), p. 16.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 155.

<sup>17</sup> Poultney Bigelow, *Japan and Her Colonies* (London: Edward Arnold, 1923), p. 30f.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>19</sup> Poultney Bigelow, *Seventy Summers*, vol. 2, p. 213 (New York: Longmans, Green; London: E. Arnold, 1925). The speech was before a meeting of the American Geographic Society.

<sup>20</sup> Bigelow, *Japan and Her Colonies*, p. 85.

<sup>21</sup> Poultney Bigelow, “The Colonial Expansion of England, America and Japan,” pamphlet published by Tokyo University of Commerce, 1921, based on his lectures there.

<sup>22</sup> Bigelow, *Seventy Summers*, vol. 2, p. 216.

<sup>23</sup> Bigelow, *Japan and Her Colonies*, p. 63.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>25</sup> The paper was delivered at the International Geographical Congress in Berlin, and published by Wilhelm Greve, of Berlin, in 1900.

<sup>26</sup> For a summary of Japanese colonial administration, see *The Cambridge History of Modern Japan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), vol. 6.

<sup>27</sup> *Japan Weekly Chronicle*, 6 Nov. 1919, p. 698.

<sup>28</sup> “A Japanese PanMalaya Suggested by Lafcadio Hearn and Formosa,” *Open Court*, XXI:10 (Oct. 1907): 627. The editor of the magazine appended a comment after Bigelow’s article, stating, “It goes without saying that we do not side with Mr. Bigelow in his main contention [that the Japanese have a racial right to govern the Filipinos, but] he has something to say” (p. 635).



<sup>29</sup> Poultney Bigelow, "Official German Colonization," *Overland Monthly and Out West* 36 (Dec. 1900): 552-57; facsimile accessible at <http://www.hti.umich.edu/cgi/m/moajrnl/moajrnl-idx?notisid=AHJ1472-1403OVER-98>. In general, he continued to praise Germany, to the extent that in a 1939 letter to a New York newspaper, *The Sun*, dated 9 Dec. 1939, he stated his opinion that "Never in the world's history has any ruler added so much to an empire as Mr. Hitler—and above all, never with such small sacrifice of life." (Undated clipping in the Poultney Bigelow Papers.)

<sup>30</sup> Bigelow, *Japan and Her Colonies*, p. 31.

<sup>31</sup> Owing to deterioration of relations with the United States and the adverse implications of that change for policy in Asia, Japan was at this time undertaking a number of efforts to influence American opinion through publications. But see the following note.

<sup>32</sup> After Bigelow's work appeared in the magazine, the editor asked Kenneth Saunders, an Englishman who had lived in the Orient for eight years and then was at the Oriental Department, University of California, and president of the Pacific School of Religions, to respond in a four-part series. He defended the missionaries roundly criticized by Bigelow.

<sup>33</sup> Poultney Bigelow Papers.

<sup>34</sup> Bigelow, "The Colonial Expansion of England, America and Japan," pp. 25f.

<sup>35</sup> Bigelow, *Seventy Summers*, vol. 2, p. 213.