

**“The Procurement of Rarities is a Sign of Peace”: Yanagawa Shun-san’s *Yokohama hanjō ki***

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Travel and travel literature are familiar tropes of the Japanese experience. The religious pilgrimage was the archetypal journey, dating back as far as the Heian period (794-1185), but it was during the Tokugawa period (1603-1868) that pilgrimage and/or secular travel rose to the status of what Constantine Vaporis has characterized as “a national pastime” in Japan. The rise of a commercial economy and the extensive development of overland routes led, Vaporis says, to a “travel boom” that ushered in the “culture of movement” during the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Although travel was monitored and regulated by the Tokugawa regime, ordinary citizens still traveled in great numbers; by the nineteenth century secular spots were incorporated into larger pilgrimages, or else functioned as destinations unto themselves. Shrines, temples, famous spots (*meisho* 名所), and historical sites (*kyūseki* 旧跡) all served to feed the public appetite for travel.

Like travel itself, the literature of travel also has a long history in the Japanese experience, and by the mid-Tokugawa period, travel accounts, maps, and tourist guidebooks were published every year in great numbers. For tourist and ‘armchair traveler’ alike, print media proved an invaluable source of knowledge about the world beyond the city or village. Moreover, information about strange places and people helped Japanese define their own concept of Japan at a time when, as Marcia Yonemoto has noted, the “geographic consciousness” of the Japanese people was very much in flux. Works by authors such as Nagakubo Sekisui 長久保赤水, Furukawa Koshōken 古川古松軒, and Tachibana Nankei 橋

南谿 explored the relationship between Japan and the foreign world in a fashion that blended literary descriptions of *meisho* with empirical observations of Dutch, Chinese, Ainu, and others.<sup>2</sup>

Although the bakufu maintained limited contact with the world beyond the Japanese archipelago, the two and a half centuries of Tokugawa rule were anything but cosmopolitan in character. In 1853-4 and 1858, however, Western gunships and diplomatic pressure forced Japan to sign a series of unequal treaties that allowed foreigners to set up embassies and port facilities in five cities. The most crucial of these was Yokohama, a port close to Tokyo, envisioned as a hub of interaction between the Japanese government and people and the foreign community. In 1859, this new tourist attraction officially “opened” to the public. Yokohama was unique to Japan in that it hosted a community of foreign residents (perhaps a few dozen at most in the early 1860s, but significant nonetheless) living within a short journey of Japan’s largest city. While foreigners were not permitted in Edo, the Japanese—provided they checked their swords at manned entrance posts—were allowed to descend upon the settlement and see the foreign guests with their own eyes. “Word has spread in our country, and people gather nonstop to spend a night or two sight-seeing in Yokohama,” wrote the woodblock author and artist Hashimoto Sadahide 橋本貞秀 in 1862.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, literature related to Yokohama—guidebooks, maps, woodblock prints, and poetry collections—enjoyed great popularity in

<sup>2</sup> Marcia Yonemoto, *Mapping Early Modern Japan: Space, Place, and Culture in the Tokugawa Period (1603-1868)* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003).

<sup>3</sup> Hashimoto Sadahi 橋本貞秀, ed. Gyokuransai 玉蘭齋 (pseudonym of author), ill. Go’untei Sadahide 五雲亭貞秀 (pseudonym of author). *Yokohama kaikō kenbunshi* 横浜開港見聞誌. 6 fascicles; 2 vols. Vol. 1 (fascicles 1-3) published in 1862; vol. 2 (fascicles 3-6) published in 1865. Reprinted with an introduction by Kida Junichirō 紀田順一郎 by Meicho kankōkai 名著刊行会, 1967. For passage quoted above, see 1967 edition, p. 1.

<sup>1</sup> Constantine Nomikos Vaporis, *Breaking Barriers: Travel and the State in Early Modern Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Council on East Asian Studies, 1994), p. 218-219.

the waning years of the Tokugawa period.

In the course of this short essay we will explore one such guide to Yokohama, entitled *Yokohama hanjō ki* 横濱繁昌記 (“A Record of Yokohama’s Prosperity”).<sup>4</sup> The work of scholar-journalist Yanagawa Shunsan 柳川春三 (1832–1870), *Yokohama hanjō ki* was likely composed in the decade of the 1860s, though the text contains no publication date. The style and appearance of the work—it is written in literary Chinese (*kanbun* 漢文) and very sparsely illustrated—seems to indicate that its main readership was the educated elite of Yanagawa’s own circle, rather than the public at large.<sup>5</sup> For contemporary readers, the title of Yanagawa’s work would have immediately brought to mind *Edo hanjō ki* 江戸繁盛記 (“An Account of Edo’s Prosperity”), a gently satirical look at the shogun’s city written by Terakado Seiken 寺門静軒 between 1832 and 1836. Seiken’s guide to Edo was “an album of whimsical, satirical, or straightforward sketches in *kanbun* of the key concentrations of Edo spirit,” written not so much to define the city’s role as economic metropolis but to point out “the conspicuous affluence and ostentatious leisure culture made possible by the radiation of wealth.”<sup>6</sup> This description also proves apt for Yanagawa’s work, as we shall see in the pages that follow.

*Yokohama hanjō ki* runs some fifty pages and is divided into nine sections: “Foreign Ships Entering the Harbor” (Banhaku nyūshin 蕃舶入津) “Foreigners Learning Language” (Bankyaku

go [o] mana[bu] 蕃客學語), “Miyozaki” (港崎), “Western Songs” (Yōjin kakyoku 洋人歌曲), “Foreign Officials” (Gaiban kanri 外蕃官吏), “Imported Books” (Hakurai shoseki 舶來書籍), “Foreign Paintings” (Yōga 洋画), “Glass and Diamonds” (Biidoro oyo Jiyamanto 玻璃及金剛石), and “Tigers” (Tora 虎). This essay will not treat each section at length; rather, we will examine representative samples of *Yokohama hanjō ki* to better understand Yokohama’s symbolic significance in bakumatsu Japan. First, was the presence of the “exotic other” Yokohama’s defining feature? Furthermore, did Yokohama represent—as one might assume, considering the port opened as a direct result of the “unequal treaties” signed in the 1850s—a humiliating loss of sovereignty, a source of cultural contamination, and/or a symbol of national shame in the face of imperialist aggression? Finally, how might Yokohama have been understood as a source of pride or “prosperity,” as indicated in the work’s title?

#### Yanagawa Shunsan

Yanagawa Shunsan 柳川春三 was the son of an Owari 尾張 tool-maker, born in Nagoya in 1832. Proficient in Chinese and Japanese at a young age, he also studied Dutch, English, and French, as well as a host of academic subjects such as mathematics, artillery, and traditional pharmacognosy (*honzōgaku* 本草学). At age twenty-five the talented Yanagawa left Owari for Edo and then Nagasaki, where he studied photography and compiled the first Japanese-language manual on the subject. He also established himself as a master of literary Chinese, as evidenced by his *kanbun* versions of popular Japanese songs and his punctuation work on the Japanese version of the *Zhihuan qimeng*, “a work comprising lessons on English, Christianity, and natural science, based on James Legge’s Chinese translation.”<sup>7</sup> In

<sup>4</sup> Kinkei Rōjin 錦溪老人 [pseudonym of Yanagawa Shunsan 柳川春三], (*Yokohama hanjō ki* 横濱繁昌記, ed. Taihei Isshi 太平逸士, revised by Kikka Senkyaku 喫霞僊客. Edo 江戸: Bakutensho-ya 幕天書屋, n.d. The author wishes to thank Fan Wei for her assistance in the translation of certain passages of this text.

<sup>5</sup> The absence of any publication information or colophon would seem to corroborate the argument that the manuscript did not receive wide circulation.

<sup>6</sup> Andrew Markus, “Terakado Seiken’s Blossoms along the Sumida,” *Sino-Japanese Studies* vol. 3 (1991), p. 9.

<sup>7</sup> Joshua L. Fogel, “Recent Translation Theory and Linguistic Borrowing in the Modern Sino-Chinese Cultural Context,” *Indiana East Asian Working Paper Series on Language and Politics in Modern China* 2 (Summer 1993),

1861 Yanagawa was appointed instructor at the Kaiseijo. 開成所, the Tokugawa shogunate's translation bureau, and in 1868 he was named its head. That same year, with a group of fellow translators known as the "Translation Association" (J. Kaiyaku-sha 会訳社), he edited the pro-bakufu *Chūgai Shinbun* 中外新聞, hailed as Japan's first Japanese-edited newspaper.<sup>8</sup> While many of his colleagues in the "Translation Association" went on to become prominent figures in the new Meiji government, Yanagawa did not enjoy such good fortune. He died suddenly in 1870.

### A Record of Yokohama's Prosperity

Yanagawa opens *Yokohama hanjō ki* with a general description of the establishment of trade and exchange:

The huge eastern continent of Asia is the place where those wise and kind first appeared. The people are many and prosperous, and the various grains are abundant. Atop the five continents is Great Japan, towering to the east of the sea.

Imperial favor extends continuously, and the common people are content. Since our founding in Genna 元和, the ocean has been calm and the winds silent. The artisans are all peaceful in their work, and tens of thousands of businesses all gain their shares of profit. Our domestic products are plentiful, and their excellence is without peer among the nations overseas: five grains, copper, steel, lacquer, mother-of-pearl, earthenware, crystal, glass, silk thread and fabric, silk crepe, paper, tea, sake, oil, wax, soy sauce, medicinal roots, camphor, wood, bamboo products, umbrellas, folding fans, color paintings, whale whiskers,

sea cucumbers, agar, and hundreds of other things, none of which is lacking. For this reason, various foreign countries from the western oceans come begging one after another to trade.<sup>9</sup>

This rhetoric should ring familiar to anyone versant in Japan's nineteenth century history. Yanagawa was one of many who composed portraits of Japanese superiority in broad strokes: owing to the munificence of the emperor, "Great Japan" is self-sufficient, but condescends to barbarian requests nonetheless. Thus before the reader has been told anything about the port itself, the context is already clear: first, Yokohama was not created at barbarian cannon-point, but rather as an act of imperial generosity; and second, the port served no real economic function domestically, given the fact that Japan already had everything it could possibly need. What, then, does Yanagawa tell us about the port itself?

### The Fishmonger and the Flatfish

Our initial look at Yokohama comes in the first major section of the text, entitled "Foreigners learning language." The section describes an account of a commercial transaction between a Japanese fishmonger and a recently-arrived foreigner, and the opening passage sets the scene:

The two sides of Hon-chō are lined with mansions, and directly to the east are the foreigner's residences. Foreigners routinely interact with the local merchants who come to ply their trades. One foreigner, in a navy wool coat, wearing a black hat and a pair of long leather boots, walks along in a leisurely manner. In front of him he sees a

[http://www.indiana.edu/~easc/resources/working\\_paper/index.htm](http://www.indiana.edu/~easc/resources/working_paper/index.htm).

<sup>8</sup> Albert A. Altman has written profusely about Yanagawa and the newspapers of the Meiji period. For example, see his "The Press and Social Cohesion During a Period of Change: The Case of Meiji Japan," in *Modern Asian Studies* 15 (1981): 865-876.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p. 7-8. Genna is a reign date for the period corresponding to 1615-1624. It was in Genna 1 (1615) that Tokugawa forces finally extinguished the Toyotomi clan, effectively ending the Warring States period and ushering in the Pax Tokugawa.

man carrying a fish basket slung on his shoulders. The fishmonger smiles, and sets down his baskets.

The ensuing discussion between the two men—while written in *kanbun*—is also transcribed phonetically in katakana *furigana* form, according to a unique glimpse into the quotidian conversation of these two Yokohama residents. The language used was a simplified Japanese known among the foreigners as the “Yokohama Dialect”; as we shall see, its speakers relied upon a very limited grammar and vocabulary (not entirely of Japanese origin, though further discussion of this point is beyond the scope of this essay) in order to convey meaning. The translation below, while awkward, is intended to give a sense of the ungrammaticality of the Japanese spoken:

- Fishmonger: Good morning you.  
 Foreigner: Good morning, Japan!  
 Fishmonger: Today I fish, very cheap. You buy?  
 Foreigner: You cheap, I buy. You expensive, I no good.  
 Fishmonger: Very cheap! I sincere.  
 Foreigner: This flatfish—one. How many *tempō*?  
 Fishmonger: I sincere. Two Japan *ichibu*.  
 Foreigner: You expensive! Japanese traders, Fuji mountain, the same.  
 Fishmonger: I will make it a little lower.  
 Foreigner: Seven *tempō*, okay?  
 Fishmonger: You okay, [but] I sincere no good. All one *ichibu*. Still you cheap.  
 Foreigner: I see. Ten *tempō*, okay?  
 Fishmonger: Okay okay.

At the close of the conversation, Yanagawa adds, “a black slave runs up to take the flatfish and carries it off in his hand.” The author concludes by noting that the foreigner “is some official who has recently arrived, and that is why the conversation is so difficult. One who has been stationed here a long time can carry on a conversation easily and there are no problems.”<sup>10</sup>

This first section—containing the only extended dialogue in the entire text—reveals that Yokohama was a place where international communication and commerce were possible. The next section, to which we shall now turn, develops this theme in a more intimate fashion.

### “Foreign Ships Entering the Harbor”

The second section of the *Yokohama hanjō ki* is titled, innocently enough, “Foreign Ships Entering the Harbor.” In fact, the title is a metaphor for sexual relations between Japanese prostitutes and the foreign community. Following its own precedent set in Nagasaki, the bakufu established a licensed prostitution quarter in Yokohama in time for the port’s opening in 1859. Yanagawa begins with a complex comparison between the seafaring ships and the life of a prostitute:

Some people say that large ships from such countries as the “flower flag” [i.e., the United States of America] range from twenty to thirty *jō* 丈 in length, and even the smaller ones are longer than ten *jō*. Small ships carry from seventy to eighty people up to two or three hundred, and big ones carry up to a thousand people. A courtesan from the “willow alley” [*ryūkō* 柳巷; euphemism for licensed prostitution district] may receive guests numbering in the tens of thousands within ten years in the bitter ocean of her profession. Small skin boats, only three *sun* 寸 in length, launch upon a pair of autumn waves.”<sup>11</sup>

In the last sentence in the passage, the author is making a pun in triplicate: “Autumn waves” [*shū ha* 秋波] is a literary conceit referring simultaneously to the calm ocean waves of autumn as well as the amorous glances of a demure young lady that such a scene suggests. The “pair of waves” may thus be interpreted both

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, pp. 14-17.

<sup>11</sup> One *jō* was roughly equivalent to three meters; one *sun*, roughly three centimeters.

as the waves themselves as well as the courtesan's alluring eyes. Furthermore—and given the context—the image of a “skin boat” [*hisen* 皮船] launching upon the “pair of waves” cannot but additionally suggest a reference to the penis and the *labia majora*, complicating the image even further. Yanagawa concludes the passage thus: the waves “[either] make a man's spirit venture forth, and his feelings grow stronger; or else they cause him to overindulge and sink. Despite a foreign ship's sturdiness and girth, are they not the same? Are they not the same?”<sup>12</sup> In contemporary parlance, Yanagawa is suggesting that “size doesn't matter”—in the final account, foreigners are no less susceptible than natives to the temptations of the flesh.

### Miyozaki

Yanagawa's lengthy treatment of the Miyozaki red-light district—the subject of the third section of *Yokohama hanjō ki*—is at once descriptive and literary, perhaps the most vivid rendering of the area that exists in prose:

Miyozaki—also called the “New Yoshiwara,” after the Yoshiwara of Edo—is connected to the settlement via a single road. There is a bridge outside the gates, and a moat flows around it. Willow trees hang down thread-like branches, forever beckoning guests to arrive. Upon entering the gates, the scenery is altogether different than that of the mundane world—tiles of red mansions align, while tea-house rafters run parallel alongside. The music of stringed instruments, the sounds of singing and laughter; serving girls sending off patrons, young courtesans and their apprentices accepting visitors; iron rods and wooden clappers clanking during the evening rounds; blind persons shouting offers for massage and acupuncture—all varieties of sound mix and mingle, and one's ears simply do not

have enough time to listen to all.<sup>13</sup>

Added to this quotidian detail is a rather more poetic description, which betrays the author's knowledge of Chinese folklore:

Courtesans appear by request, attended by apprentices and young men carrying umbrellas. It is as though Chang'er 嫦娥 had descended from the moon, or a lake goddess appeared in the ordinary world. Such a sight truly resembles a real-life version of the heaven of Penglai 蓬莱 Island. . . . Flowers are planted along the main avenue, and there are plants in blossom all year round.

Yanagawa's prose is exhaustingly descriptive, and one cannot but feel that Miyozaki must have been quite a spectacle to behold.<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, one is intrigued by the initial absence of foreigners in the author's description; was not the area built to service the needs of Yokohama's foreign community? We will return to this theme later on, but for the present it will suffice to consider the possibility that the attractions of Miyozaki (and Yokohama in general) were not necessarily coterminous with that of foreign exotica.

After the author has described the courtesans and scenery (and treated the reader to a wistful verse, not included here), Yanagawa at last turns his gaze to the Western visitors to Miyozaki. Foreigners were only permitted to patronize one particular establishment in the district, the Gankirō 岩亀樓, a frequent subject of woodblock prints in the early 1860s.<sup>15</sup> As we shall see, Yanagawa's

<sup>13</sup> *Yokohama hanjō ki*, p. 17-18.

<sup>14</sup> Compare this to the descriptions provided by Harold S. Williams (“the first of Yokohama's many ‘Dirty Villages’”) or Pat Barr (a “swampy area behind the town” which housed the “expansive and expanding” [?] Gankiro Tea-house”). See Williams, *Tales of the Foreign Settlements in Japan*, p. 41; Barr, *The Coming of the Barbarians*, p. 147.

<sup>15</sup> There are numerous volumes in which such prints appear, both in Japanese and English. The most comprehensive in English is Anne Yonemura,

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

emphasis was not so much on the visual element, but rather on the financial and business side of the operation:

When Miyozaki first opened, the Gankirō moved here from Shinagawa—it was the first in the whole region to do so. The mansions are in half-imitation of Western style, and are absolutely magnificent. Among all the houses of ill repute, it is the only one where Westerners can enjoy their revelry and pass the evening. Several other places are by no means inferior in terms of their magnificent surroundings, but they only allow Japanese patrons, and never let foreigners in. If a foreigner wants to contract the services of a courtesan from another house, he must go himself and look at all the beauties. If one suits his tastes, he takes her hands and touches her lips, tugs on her dress and then she stands up. With translators leading the way, and attendants following behind, all are sent directly to the Gankirō.<sup>16</sup>

This conjures up a striking mental image, but merely hints at the treatise to follow. Yanagawa next addresses the practice of overcharging foreigners for the procurement of sexual satisfaction. We will let the author speak for himself *in extenso*:

Prominent courtesans are commonly referred to as *oiran* 花魁, and the cost of an evening's pleasure is four or five Western silver dollars. Courtesans next in rank cost two dollars; and for the next, one dollar. The cheapest prostitutes stay in row houses and cost two *shu* 朱 (In Edo, such places are referred to as 'cutshops' or the 'gunshops' and usually charge two *zeni* 錢). The prices quoted above are for foreigners;

if the patron is Japanese, the prices are the same as those in Yoshiwara [in Edo].

The reader therefore may rightfully wonder: it is the law of impartiality that the ten thousand things under Heaven do not differ in price. However, the practice in this region is to charge two different prices when peddling sex—does this not contradict the law of impartiality? I will explain it to you: under Heaven, it is only law that can control emotion; if there is no law established, greed and selfishness cannot possibly be restrained. However, because the licensed houses of this area sell sex and peddle emotions, they must accordingly establish law according to emotion.<sup>17</sup>

Yanagawa thus argues, very likely with satirical intent, that it is the *ethical* duty of the red-light district to regulate prices for sexual services; without such regulations, emotions would predominate, and personal greed (and prices) would spiral out of control. Laws are guided by emotion, but also serve to control those who would sell emotion. He continues:

Every person has his own tastes. Do not the sayings go, 'two of a kind go together'; 'even a broken jar has its own lid for a companion'; and 'the demon has his demoness to match'? The elegant young lord from Edo is not necessarily loved by a Kyōto beauty, and a high-ranking courtesan from Yoshiwara has every right to look down on some fellow from the countryside. Accordingly, why should we expect that the hundreds of famous Miyozaki beauties would be willing to share the same quilt with some patron with a hawk's head, long moustache, emerald eyes and a lofty nose? Only the power of almighty cash could make someone do something against one's will. . . . [Therefore] isn't the difference in

*Yokohama: Prints from Nineteenth-Century Japan* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21-22. The *shu* was a rectangular silver coin equivalent to one quarter of an *ichibu*. The *zeni* was the least valuable coin in circulation during the Tokugawa period, with a value that varied between 1/100th and 1/250th of an *ichibu*.

prices appropriate?<sup>18</sup>

In other words, Yanagawa argues that the “law of impartiality” which regulates (and is in turn regulated by) emotion may be circumvented if the appropriate conditions are not met. And those conditions were guided, no doubt, by neo-Confucian precepts that equated morality with maintaining one’s proper role in society. A high-ranking courtesan was no match for a country bumpkin, so for her (or her employer) to charge a higher fee was not at all unethical—nor a violation of the “law of impartiality”—but rather a means to maintain balance and propriety. How much more so, the author says, if the courtesan was forced to service a creature whose description suggests some sort of half-animal/half-human ogre. To charge a higher fee in such a case was not only fair, but essentially an ethical mandate. Yanagawa continues his justification as follows:

In addition, I have heard that the cost of prostitutes in other countries is extremely high: prominent courtesans cost twenty or thirty dollars, while less prominent ones cost between seven or eight and fifteen dollars. Even the lowest-ranked prostitutes are not less than one dollar. The cost for prostitution in Miyozaki is the least expensive of all those among the ten thousand countries; therefore, Westerners enjoy the beauty of the ladies as well as the cheap price. The brothels are happy because they can charge three times more than they do in Edo, and the courtesans also enjoy the lavish tips of the foreign patrons. Since there is no one unhappy with the situation, the price differential neither violates propriety [J. *ri* 理] nor does it interfere with emotion.<sup>19</sup>

In other words, charging foreign patrons for sexual favors was not simply a matter of simple profit, but was rather part of a larger debate about the propriety of action according to one’s proper station. Since the foreigners were not considered

on a par with beautiful Japanese courtesans, to charge them more was fair and impartial; and since no one was dissatisfied with the situation, the norms of propriety were not violated. Yanagawa’s argument neatly absolves Japanese brothel owners from the sin of greed, while simultaneously asserting the inferiority of the hawk-headed foreign patron—they are like broken lids, demonic spouses, backwoods rubes with big noses and long beards. Japan might have to share her quilt with the foreigner, but she could also overcharge him; to fleece the foreigner was ethical.

### Trampling on the Buddha: An American Goes Native

Our next look of *Yokohama hanjō ki* comes from the section entitled “Foreign Officials.” Yanagawa here invents a fascinating account of an American official who has “gone native” and refused to return to the United States. In order to fully appreciate his point, we must first understand his initial reference to “stepping on images” [J. font ok?>*fumie* 踏絵]. The images in question were those of Christian figures (or of the cross) used during the Tokugawa period to identify adherents of Christianity, which had been proscribed in 1613. Suspects were ordered to trample on the images, presuming that those who refused or hesitated would reveal themselves to be Christians. The author begins:

In the current epoch there is a practice of stepping on images; it is written into law as a protection against Christianity. I have heard that there was a certain American official stationed in Yokohama who did not return home for a long time, nor did he send any correspondence. His wife waited for him forlornly, and his son cried for him bitterly. Someone slandered this official to the president, saying that ‘this official has eaten so much rice that he no longer desires to come home. How is it that one can stop caring about his family at home, not to mention you?’ At first the President did not believe this, but after hearing it over and over even a lie becomes the truth, and the President became even more confused. One

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p. 22.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p. 23.

day he convened a meeting of all his officials in a public hall in Washington to discuss the official's integrity; some decried the official, while others praised him, but there was no agreement reached. The President grew even more worried, so one of his advisors offered the following piece of advice: 'have you not heard? The Japanese have a law of stepping on images in order to determine the rectitude of the populace, and this is a truly smart method. I once saw a large Japanese ship in Nagasaki, and am quite familiar with the scene on board. At the base of the large mast there is a sacred image referred to as the Ship's Exquisitely Radiant Deity; the image is of a heavenly princess known in Chinese as *pusa* 菩薩. . . . I secretly think that we should send someone to Japan to ask for this great Buddha [image], and then order the official to return and trod upon it. If he does so, then he is loyal; otherwise, he is a traitor. Loyalty deserves commendation, and treachery deserves punishment. By this one move we can tell if he is a stone or a piece of jade.' The President praised him and all those seated could not stop admiring the idea.<sup>20</sup>

The tale, of course, is surely apocryphal, but that should not prohibit us from delving further. First, there is the matter of "stepping on the images," or *fumie*. This practice was originally introduced by the Tokugawa regime in response to the ideological threat (perceived or real) posed by Christian belief. What, one might ask, was so threatening about Christianity? Quite simply, the possibility that loyalty to a higher power might undermine the Tokugawa state: the bakufu was predicated on the belief, derived from Neo-Confucian philosophy, that the world is organized according to a systematic hierarchy, so it was a moral imperative that ruler and ruled maintain and respect the division between them. Christian belief in a higher source of loyalty than the ruler

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p. 34. *Pusa* is in Japanese rendered as *bosatsu*; in Western languages, the Sanskrit term *bodhisattva* is most commonly used. The image on board the ship is probably a statue of Kannon.

(whether the ruler was daimyō or shogun) was perceived as a threat for the new regime, which, as we have seen, went to great lengths in order to extirpate all traces of Christian belief in Japan.

Therefore, for a Japanese to step on a Christian image was at once to reject the foreign and to swear allegiance to bakufu rule. Yanagawa provides the reader with the reverse image of that original: rather than a Japanese trampling on a Christian image, we have a foreigner (presumably intended to be a Christian) trampling on an image of the Buddha in order to proclaim allegiance to the United States. The foreign official, in fact, is so attached to living in Yokohama and eating rice that he has apparently forgotten his own wife and children, and forsworn allegiance to his home country. If one extrapolates from Yanagawa's story and assumes that the foreign official in fact refused to step upon the Buddha image, he would then be a traitor to his homeland—but by that same logic, he would also be loyal to Japan. When considering the overlapping narratives of the imperialist experience, we would do well to remember Yanagawa's short narrative. Japan, he tells us, is not only able to resist the foreign intrusion, but can actually win over converts—and high-ranking Americans converts at that.

### Tigers

The fishmonger and the courtesan have shown us that Japan might profit from the foreigner; the apostate American carries us one step further along in the narrative of Japanese exceptionalism. *Yokohama hanjō ki* closes with a final short passage that drives the point home, simply entitled "Tigers"<sup>21</sup>:

The four seas are calm, and there is no manner of article which does not arrive [in Japan]; even tiger-hide seat cushions or leopard-hide knife sheaths are not at all difficult to obtain, and hardly worth consideration [i.e., because they are so commonplace]. Even in Western countries,

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, pp. 48-49.



however, catching a live tiger is difficult—but despite this, foreign ships sent a leopard last year and brought in a tiger this year, and together they are shown at the exhibition grounds at Edo. These are my private thoughts: if something as difficult as tigers and leopards have already come, then the *kirin* and the *hō* must soon be next.<sup>22</sup> I have heard the current theory of traditional pharmacognosists that the *kirin* belongs to the category of deer (newly classified as a ‘giraffe’), the *hō* belongs to the category of fowl, and that both animals exist in foreign countries and their appearance does not necessarily portend the coming of the sages.<sup>23</sup> This

saying seems to make sense—but if there was not peace under Heaven, then guests speaking different languages would not have arrived; and if distant guests had not arrived, then exceptional things would not have arrived, either. Therefore it is not at all unusual to say that the procurement of rarities is a sign of peace, and a fortunate symbol of a sagely epoch.

With this *Yokohama hanjō ki* draws to a close, and we would do well to consider this final passage in detail. Yanagawa tells us the “four seas are calm.” Most historians consider the time this text was written—that is, the decade of the 1860s—anything *but* calm; even the casual student of modern Japanese history connects this period with *naiyū gaikan* 内憂外患, or “trouble within, disaster outside.” The “disaster outside,” of course, was the opening of Japan to foreign trade. Yanagawa, like many of his pro-bakufu contemporaries, understood this development in another way: Japan was not unwillingly pulled into the world of global capitalism, but rather deigned to allow the barbarian pleas for trade. Furthermore, the author saw foreign trade not as a “disaster,” but as just the opposite—a boon, a “sign of peace,” a “fortunate symbol” of better times to come. This is not to say that the author’s view was unique in this respect, since *kaikoku* 開国 advocates had been making their voice heard for decades by this point. Rather Yanagawa’s tiger tale suggests that Yokohama might be understood as a source of national strength and pride, rather than simply as a tourist destination.

### Conclusions

What might a hypothetical reader have learned about Yokohama on the basis of Yanagawa’s work? First, there is the matter of Yokohama’s reputation as “exotica central.” It would be inherently Eurocentric to assume that the primary draw for Japanese tourists was to encounter first-hand foreigners and foreign exotica. However, it is surely commonsensical to make that same assumption: the creation from whole cloth of a

<sup>22</sup> Written as the compound *rinpō* 麟鳳. *Kirin* 麒麟 refers to a mythological beast said to portend the appearance of sages according to Chinese legend. The kirin was said to have had the body of a deer (but larger), the tail of a cow, and the hooves of a horse. Although the same word has come to mean ‘giraffe’ in modern-day Japanese, Yanagawa means the beast of myth in this context. Unfortunately, the most common English translation of the original (non-giraffe) *kirin* is ‘camelopard’; as neither camels nor leopards figure into the equation, however, it has been avoided here in favor of the Japanese term. *Hō* (usually appearing in compound form as *hō’ō* 鳳凰), usually rendered in English as ‘phoenix,’ is equally problematic; for our purposes it will suffice to note that it was legendary bird of Chinese myth with a similarly complicated physiognomy.

<sup>23</sup> Traditional pharmacognosists: Literally, the “study of primordial herbs” (J. *Honzōgaku* 本草学), traditional pharmacognosy as an academic discipline dates back to ancient China. Its original focus was medicine, but later expanded into the study of living things. Traditional pharmacognosy was introduced to Japan during the Nara period but attained its greatest popularity during the Tokugawa period. As a young man Yanagawa studied with the discipline’s most prestigious scholar, Itō Keisuke 伊藤圭介.

large foreign community, not twenty miles' ride from the largest and most sophisticated urban center in all of Japan, would seem to have been a natural attraction for curious Edoites. As we have seen, however, this was certainly not the whole story. Our reader would have learned that Yokohama's foremost attraction was not the foreign district, but rather the bustling streets of the native quarter and the licensed prostitution district. The familiar, it seems, still held sway over the foreign.

Moreover, our reader would also have taken away from the text some sense of Japan's economic prosperity and global prestige. Yanagawa's pro-bakufu interpretation of Yokohama as both *source* and *symbol* of economic pride is evident on nearly every page. triple space here In the author's view, Japan was the most munificent, prestigious, and powerful nation on the face of the globe, and the barbarians who came begging to Yokohama were there only by virtue of "imperial favor." While such assertions were certainly inaccurate—Japan in the 1860s was a shaky federation of agrarian states, rather than any sort of wealthy global power—that does not rob Yanagawa's text of its ability to inform and entertain. Far more than mere loyalist rhetoric, Yanagawa's *Yokohama hanjō ki*, much like Terakado Seiken's *Edo hanjō ki* before it, deftly combined the satirical and the straightforward into a complex portrayal of affluence and leisure culture. While the author's contention that "the procurement of rarities" would bring peace did not hold true—Japan lapsed into civil war within a short period after the text's composition, and Yanagawa himself is said to have died as an indirect result of the Tokugawa collapse<sup>24</sup>—we are at least the richer for having access to this remarkable document.

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<sup>24</sup> James L. Huffman, *Creating a Public: People and Press in Meiji Japan* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), p. 47.