

Surveying in Japanese Waters and Tokugawa Diplomacy in the Early Nineteenth Century

Atsushi GOTO, Osaka University of Tourism

This paper investigates the characteristics of the survey endeavors of Western nations in Japanese waters, and the characteristics of the diplomacy of the Tokugawa *bakufu* (government) in the early nineteenth century.

From 1840s to 1860s, many Western vessels entered Japanese waters to survey the area and make charts. In the history of chart making, Japanese waters had been “unknown waters” for a long time. However, most researchers in Japanese political history consider these survey endeavors merely as a form of external pressure by Western nations. This view probably formed during the U. S. expedition towards Japan commanded by Commodore Matthew C. Perry. Having entered the Edo (Tokyo) Bay deliberately for surveying, Perry successfully put pressure on the Tokugawa *bakufu* and negotiated effectively to conclude a treaty with Japan.

However, it was not only Perry’s expedition that surveyed Japanese waters in those days, and the charts made by Perry’s squadron were inadequate for practical use. Therefore, the U. S. North Pacific Surveying Expedition, which was dispatched by the U. S. Navy in 1853, visited Japan in 1855 during its voyage across the North Pacific Ocean, and complemented Perry’s survey endeavors in Japanese waters.

This paper focuses on the U. S. North Pacific Surveying Expedition, and examines the following two points regarding the historical significance of Western nations’ survey expeditions in Japanese waters.

First, it will be examined how Western survey missions cooperate with each other when their vessels surveyed Eastern Asian waters, including Japanese waters? There were instances of cooperation between Western nations surveying the unknown waters at the time when the U. S. North Pacific Surveying Expedition complemented Perry’s survey endeavors. An analysis of these cases will shed light on the characteristics of the international situation surrounding Japan in the early nineteenth century.

Second, it will be investigated how the survey endeavors led by Western nations affected the policy and diplomacy of the Tokugawa *bakufu*? As in the case with Perry entering the Edo Bay, officials of the Tokugawa *bakufu* arguably felt under external pressure from the surveying vessels and repeatedly considered improving its foreign policy towards Western nations. Such an examination will show the characteristics of Tokugawa’s policy and diplomacy during the transition to the modern era.