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Accounting for Transient Hopes: The French Involvement in Shimazu Nariakira's Plan to Open Trade with the West in Ryūkyū

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つかの間の希望： 島津斉彬の琉球・西洋貿易計画とフランスの関与について

パトリック・ベイヴェール

1857年、通商条約締結の前夜、明治期の富国強兵論の先駆けとなった薩摩藩主・島津斉彬は、西洋諸国との密貿易計画を側近の家臣に明かした。江戸幕府への対抗策となるこの大計画には、蒸気式軍艦や武器の入手以外に、西洋への留学生派遣や海外からの指導者招聘という目的もあった。計画の実施には、江戸幕府の監視外にあった琉球王国の承諾が必須であった。斉彬がフランスを貿易相手国として最適とした理由には、フランス人宣教師が琉球に滞在していたこと、1855年に国際協定（琉仏条約）が締結されていたこと、そして1846年に、フランスが琉球との間に通商協定を結ぼうとしていたということが挙げられる。目的の達成へ向けて、1857年秋に西洋科学技術の専門家である市来四郎が琉球へ派遣され、板良敷（牧志）朝忠などの有力人物を含む現地の協力者と共に、斉彬の命を遂行する重責を担った。1858年、琉球王国の執行部にも重要な変化が生じる一方で、市来四郎は、滞琉中のフランス人と連携し、その協力を得て1859年夏までに軍艦や武器の他、多種多様な装備品が那覇へ届くように手配した。しかし全く想定外なことに、軍艦が琉球に到着するまであと2週間というところで斉彬の死去という訃報が届いた。また島津の後継者は、この事業の即刻中止を通達した。本論文では、薩摩藩が着手しようとしていた対フランス貿易について、数少ないフランス側史料を英訳して解説すると同時に、その内容を日本側の史料と照合していく。

In about 1990, while searching through the archives of the Foreign Mission Society of Paris for the letters sent by the Roman Catholic priests who sojourned in mid-19th century Okinawa, I came across an odd anonymous and undated letter of seven pages. It contains

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no other chronological indication than “September 8” incidentally mentioned on the third page. For unknown reasons, the person responsible for the classification of the missionary archives, in the late 19th century, had ascribed the document to the year 1856 and indiscriminately credited the two priests then present in Okinawa, Barthelemy Girard and Eugène Mermet, with being its authors.

In addition to what are most unusual omissions in a missionary letter, no statement of authorship and no dating, its content was by no means quotidian priestly business. It relates the circumstances which led to the preparation of an order from the Kingdom of Ryūkyū, acting as a front for the fief of Satsuma, for the purchase of a steam warship and for various pieces of equipment from France. With but little knowledge of that period, the events reported in the letter, which extend over six months, could easily be connected to the negotiations conducted by a special envoy from Satsuma, Ichiki Shirō (1828–1903) with the French which took place in the year 1858, as often mentioned with more or fewer details in general histories of Okinawa, including George H. Kerr’s in an English-language account.¹⁾ It required more time, though, to understand the background of that episode in depth, and to assess the relevance of the missionary’s account by comparing it with the Japanese primary sources.

Familiar with the scripts and epistolary styles of the missionaries, I was soon convinced that the letter was in fact in the hand of Louis Furet (1816–1900), another missionary who, after a two-month sojourn in early 1855, returned to Okinawa on October 26, 1856, and stayed there continuously until October 1862.²⁾ The letter is addressed to the superior of the seminary of the Foreign Missions Society in Paris, François Albrand, under the seal of secrecy. Apparently started on September 8, if not earlier, it was probably completed on the same day, save for a short postscript, which was most likely added six weeks later, on October 20, or, in any case, between that date and the 25th, as explained below.³⁾ It should be stated that two other missionaries were present in Okinawa at the time, Barthelemy Girard, the head of the mission, whose name is the most often mentioned in the Japanese sources, and Pierre Mounicou.

While Satsuma’s scheme for purchasing ships from France has been thoroughly chronicled in various Japanese sources, Furet’s letter remains its sole record on the French side in the absence of any trace in the diplomatic or naval archives. This article first provides a full translation of that document and examines the political and technological context which determined the Lord of Satsuma, Shimazu Nariakira, to take action on the opening of trade with the West in order, most urgently, to build up a navy and an army which could counter foreign pressures. It then gives an account of Ichiki Shirō’s mission in Okinawa and confronts the content of the letter with Japanese sources. Finally, it presents extracts from Mounicou’s diary and other letters written by Furet at about the same time which also refer to the encounter with Ichiki Shirō. They present further details on their relations and show the state of mind of the French after the sudden cancellation of the whole deal.

Nafa.⁴⁾

Dearest and venerated Superior,

Here we are embarked on a great business, and we come to request you to be so kind as to embark with us, if your prudence deems that some good for the mission to Japan and our dear country may result therefrom.

With no further preliminaries, we tackle the subject straight away. First of all, it is most important to observe that the matter for which the supporting documents are enclosed herein — that the details, above all, into which we are going to enter — be *buried* in the Council, and, next, that you use them yourself only with utmost discretion.

At the end of the month of March, during which we had done a little exercise daily in honor of Saint Joseph, that great saint sent us two *true Japanese* from the Kingdom of Saxuma. First, they asked us for lessons in *French* and *medicine*. A little later, the Japanese envoy, together with the first interpreter, and one may say the factotum of Loochoo, asked us whether we would agree to do them a great service. They then told us about a screw-driven steamer, urging us to keep absolute secrecy in Loochoo and in our letters. It is only gradually that they expressed their wish to have a powerful steamer carrying guns, in a word a *war steamer*. The reason then given to us for that request was that the government of Tukara (by which they mean the Kingdom of Saxuma) wanted to come to the aid of the little Kingdom of Loochoo, of which it is a long-time friend, by providing it with a good ship that would prevent the loss of numerous small boats and above all the loss of men. “We want,” they said, “to address ourselves only to France, whose Emperor Napoleon is held in honor in Japan;⁵⁾ besides, there is a good reason, namely, that France and the Kingdom of Loochoo are on friendly terms.”

In that first meeting, [it was decided that] the price of the ship was to be paid in the harbor of Ushima Island (near Japan) on the conditions stated in the enclosed documents.

We agreed to the commission, believing it to be in the interests of the mission and of France. We hoped to get the Kingdom of Saxuma (which is said to be very powerful in Japan) to make direct contact with the French government and to establish commercial relations between the two countries. Therefore we made them understand that a warship for a foreign country could not, so we thought, be built in France without the Emperor’s permission; and apart from that, we ourselves had no official relation with the government, and that, in order to succeed more surely, it was necessary that the government of Tukara should make its request directly, and that we would arrange for it to be presented to the French government.

These two gentlemen found our remark reasonable and answered that they would consult the high mandarins.

The time supposedly needed to receive an answer from Japan having elapsed, our two friends (this is how they tell us to consider them) brought the matter up again. Then, Tukara was no longer mentioned: It was the Kingdom of Loochoo that wanted to buy that war steamer for itself. It has been impossible for us to get them to write directly to the French government. The Japanese and the Loochooans fear that the matter might be published and known in China and Yedo before the ship reaches its destination, and, for the same reason, they granted us the enclosed letter, bearing the seal of the Loochooan government, only because we asked for it as a *necessary guarantee* for the manufacturer who will take responsibility for providing the ship.

Today (September 8), we had the visit of one of the ministers. He begged us to see to it that the matter be known neither in Europe nor in Asia, etc.

For reasons of principle, when we hoped to get the Kingdom of Saxuma to make direct

contact with the French government, we had intended to send you a letter to be presented to His Majesty the Emperor of the French. We wanted to offer our humblest and most respectful homage to the Emperor, and to beg His Majesty to see, in his high wisdom, whether he could not use that opportunity to glorify God and France. We even thought of sending you three Japanese trays to offer them, on our behalf, to the three persons in whose hands divine Providence placed the destinies of France. To raise the price of that *missionary's present*, a small token of our respectful devotion, we would have added that these missionaries of Japan always persist in beseeching the Lord, God of the empires, to bless France, to bless those whom he specially entrusted with leading her on the path of honor and true glory.

The government of Loochoo also begged us to take responsibility for forwarding its presents to the Emperor and to Admiral Guérin.⁶⁾ But, as we have no political or official mission, and as, moreover, we are afraid to do something impolitic and disagreeable to the Emperor by accepting, we declined that commission.

Nevertheless, the Loochooans, adhering to their custom of offering presents when handling a matter, asked us what to do. "Send," we answered, "send a mandarin on the boat for Foochow, and have that mandarin go to Macao himself. There, he will be able to treat the matter with the minister plenipotentiary of France. — Oh, this cannot be! And the Chinese! They would notice that move. It is a great embarrassment."

Finally, they seem to be resolved to entrust their presents to the commanding officer of the first French warship that will come here.

However that may be, as we would be very grieved to do anything likely to offend our Emperor, we think it would be well if you were to take steps to approach His Majesty since we cannot do it ourselves in a matter of this kind. You could assure [him], dearest Superior, while urging great discretion on that point, that the ship, which must be *delivered at Nafa*, paid for at Nafa, and is ordered by the Kingdom of Loochoo, is in actual fact for the Kingdom of Saxuma.

In case the Emperor would not object to the construction of a *warship* such as requested in the enclosed document, then it will be acceptable, and our parishioners, still all heathens, will be pleased with it.

If there are disadvantages and impediments to the sale of such a ship, then we assume that there will be no objection to the construction of a *very large* screw-driven steamer, *prepared* inside and outside later to be supplied with armaments, but which would be delivered without guns. The government of Saxuma is above all keen to have a good steamer.

The company that would handle the matter could perhaps, in the latter case, load arms onto another ship and sell them at Nafa thereafter.

In either case, you would see, dearest and venerated Superior, what would have to be done.

As for us, here are our views on this point: It seems obvious to us that the Kingdom of Saxuma wants to trade with foreigners. It can do nothing *officially* without the support of the government of Yedo, and it probably does not count much on that government to gain the advantage from seeing foreigners come to trade in its ports. This is why Loochoo would ask five or six years to pay . . . In that way, some trade could develop gradually and imperceptibly. For there is one thing to note: *all* that is mentioned as the payment for the ship — gold, copper, silks, china, lacquerware — all that must come from Saxuma or Tukara (as they say).

Things being thus, we think that a commercial company owning several ships would be extremely pleased to take charge of the matter of the steamer, and, in the interest of God's glory and of our mission, so difficult to start, we would be happy to see the *Marziou Com-*

pany take charge of the matter.⁷⁾ Thereby we would be sure to see religious men on its ships. It would be good, for the same reasons, to request the selection of religious men to board the steamer in question. If that company does not want to take charge of a commission which we consider to be profitable, the *Rothschild Company*, which now starts doing trade in China, would readily seize the opportunity that arises, so we assume, to come to trade with Japan, and especially with a part of Japan that perhaps will not be open to foreigners, even under the treaties. Each year, the ship that would come to receive the payment could be freighted with French goods which would be exchanged with gold or Japanese goods. On the first journey over here, when delivering the steamer, the captain would come to an agreement with the Loochooans, or the Japanese (for there are many of them here), in order to know what he should bring for certain sale.

We believe we can ensure that there will be no difficulty about the payment. As neither the Loochooans nor ourselves know the price of such a ship, the government relies entirely on *French loyalty*. We told our two friends that a frigate such as Admiral Guérin's (*La Virginie*) cost about *two hundred thousand piasters*; that a steamer would probably cost less in France, but, considering the insurance expenses and whatever else is involved in bringing it here, it could well rise to about 200,000 piasters. They did not look frightened by that price.

Besides, for the payment, they told us that they could give about half in gold, and moreover they are warned that, as regards the valuation of copper, tea, silk, etc., they must be very reasonable and not claim in excess of the trading price in China for the merchandise found there.

If one could *immediately* find a good ship, such as requested, to buy, even if it were not new, provided it be really solid, this would be preferred in order to save time. If one has to build it, it is expected that everything should be completed in the shortest possible time; this is something to which the mandarins attach much importance. As for the instruments which are to be fitted to the ship, such as compass, barometer, thermometer . . . you will do well to choose items of the first quality.

Dearest Superior, while you will take care of that important matter with all the wisdom and zeal with which we are very familiar, we will pray to God to bless your action . . . and to prepare a French *ship* and French *guns* that will perhaps open to us the way to Japan peacefully. Then it will rightly be the case to say: "God's finger is here!"⁸⁾

Oh, for the sake of our dear mission we count on some twist of Providence, for, if God does not get involved in a most special way, it is difficult to foresee when and how one will be able to bring the Good News to Japan. We entertain a presentiment that it is for *this very coup* that the good Lord is going to make the Emperor Napoléon a party to this matter. Please God that it may be soon! We end here in commending ourselves to your good prayers, we and our difficult mission. We have the honor to be, dearest and venerated Superior, your humblest and most obedient servants.

P.S. The Japanese in charge of handling the matter of the steamer has just died by falling from a horse. With his death all comes to a stop. The Loochooan government has begged us to return its letter and to do nothing until news arrive from Japan. Thus, steamer, commission (there was an outgoing of *20 thousand piasters* to undertake for the purchase of all kinds of French merchandise by way of *samples*, which was not bad for a start), everything has ended, at least for the time being. However, as the same matter may come up again in a year, we send you this letter, dearest and venerated Superior, so that you can see what should be done if need be. You might be so good as to give us a prompt reply so that we might be fortunate enough to have it by the Loochooan boat. You will understand that this matter must be kept secret as before.

1. Shimazu Nariakira's Secret Plan

On October 6, 1857 (Ansei 4–8–19), Satsuma's 28th lord, Shimazu Nariakira, summoned five of his close attendants to the Ni-no-maru tearoom of his castle in Kagoshima for the purpose of presenting a carefully nurtured plan to open secret trade with Western countries.⁹⁾ Among them was Ichiki Shirō (also known as Shōemon or Kōkan), aged 30, who was to play the leading part in the implementation of his lord's plan, along with Takahashi Nui, the newly appointed *zaiban bugyō*, or resident magistrate, in Naha. Four days later a new meeting took place, this time in the floral garden of the experimental foundry of the castle, in the course of which Shimazu Nariakira expanded further on several issues.¹⁰⁾

His plan comprised seven points: 1) The opening of commercial relations with Western countries in Ryūkyū or in Ōshima, firstly with the French or the Dutch, and with the further prospect of attracting them to Yamakawa, the port at the entrance of Kagoshima Bay; 2) The purchase of two screw-driven steamers from France, a warship and a merchant ship, to be delivered within a year, with naval equipment, various types of rifles, machine tools and a number of manufactured goods, along with an invitation to naval instructors and engineers who could be hired for three to four years; 3) Through the good offices of the French, the dispatch to their country of carefully selected students aged seventeen or eighteen, five or six from Satsuma, who would pretend to be Ryūkyūans, and three or four from Ryūkyū; from there, some of them would move on to England, others to the United States; the students from Satsuma were to engage in the study of gunnery, naval construction, navigation and of the present-day situation in Western countries, those from Ryūkyū in the study of languages, industrial techniques, chemistry and natural sciences; the expected length of their stay abroad was to be of five or six years; 4) The establishment of a conveniently located port of call in Taiwan where exchanges between Western merchant ships and Ryūkyūan ships commissioned by Satsuma could take place; 5) The possibility of choosing Fuzhou and other Chinese ports as alternative or additional locations to do business with Western merchants: to that aim, loosening up existing trade regulations, the Ryūkyūan warehouse (Ryūkyū-kan) in Fuzhou was to be enlarged and the number of Ryūkyūan ships traveling to China increased from two to five or six;¹¹⁾ merchants from Kagoshima, dressed as Ryūkyūans, could gradually take charge of the trade in the name of the latter; if necessary, Ichiki Shirō could go to China, disguised as a Ryūkyūan merchant, and enquire about Westerners, in the first place in Tianjin, Beijing, Shanghai and Kanton; 6) The recruitment of Ryūkyūan merchants as middlemen to sell small- and large-bore second-hand guns to the Chinese, who could be made aware that they would better protect their interests with the use of Western style weapons; 7) The notification to the Ryūkyūan government that it had to facilitate the removal of the *sanshikan* (one of the three top ranking ministers) Zakimi Seifu who, anxious about the disruption of the age-old balance between China and Japan, represented a hindrance to Satsuma's new policy.

A forerunner of the *fukoku kyōhei* (rich country, strong army) policy of the Meiji era, Shimazu Nariakira was following a rather singular path in those times of national crisis. On the one hand, he expressed no intent to challenge the political system based on the dual authority of the emperor and shōgun. Although he could pride himself on his personal relationship with Shōgun Tokugawa Iesada who had married his adoptive daughter Atsuhime in 1856, he displayed little confidence in the capacity and resolution of the latter's government to protect the interests of the nation seriously in the face of Western threats. With other lords greatly concerned with defense problems (in particular *tozama daimyō*, "outside lords," like himself), he was harboring the idea of being associated with the elaboration of government policy. For the same purpose of providing a strong leadership to the country, he also supported Hitotsubashi Keiki, born into the Mito branch of the Tokugawa family, to become shōgun on account of his reformist views and acknowledged competence on matters of defense. Nonetheless, he assented implicitly to the actual orientation of the Edo government towards an agreement with Western powers on commercial exchanges.

Three main considerations prompted the Lord of Satsuma to take action in the summer of 1857:

First, negotiations for a commercial treaty between the American consul Townsend Harris and the shōgun's government had started in June of that year. Informed of their progress, Shimazu Nariakira knew that, in all probability, an agreement would be reached in a short time (the text of the treaty was finalized by the end of January 1858), and he had no doubt that Britain and other European countries would quickly obtain similar agreements. Foreseeing, however, that Ōsaka and Hyōgo were unlikely soon to be opened to foreigners, as their proximity to Kyōto would "grieve the emperor's heart" (*shinkin no nayami*) and inevitably create tensions, his fear was that the Edo government, taking advantage of its monopolistic position to levy taxes, would profit from a limited opening of the country to reinforce its hegemony.¹²⁾ Moreover, the death of the *rōjū* (equivalent of Prime Minister) Abe Masahiro in August 1857, his long-time confidant and supporter in Edo, who had shared his concern about defense since the 1840s, as well as, lately, his views on the shogunal succession, left him with few illusions as to the possibility of the Edo government reforming itself in order to reinforce national cohesion.

Secondly, through contacts at the Naval Training Center (Kaigun denshū-jo) in Nagasaki, set up with Dutch assistance in 1855, and to which sixteen men from Satsuma were attached, Shimazu Nariakira had previously tried to establish trade contacts with the Netherlands by offering its representatives a rerouting of some of their ships to Ōshima, Okinawa or even to Satsuma. The Dutch had seemed at first reluctant to jeopardize their special relationship with the Edo government, but, with the foreseeable weakening of their position, they eventually did not remain impervious to his proposal. On February 25, 1857, the head of the Dejima factory, J. H. Donker Curtius, observant of Japanese regulations, had officially enquired of the shōgun's officers in Nagasaki whether the Netherlands would be allowed to conclude a commercial agreement with Ryūkyū.¹³⁾ The issue

was no doubt an embarrassing one for a Japanese government that desperately tried to prevent foreigners from gaining the least possible hold on the country. Pros and cons were weighed carefully, and the answer arrived weeks later stating, in substance, that Edo had no jurisdiction over the Ryūkyū Islands.¹⁴⁾ Such a position could only make Shimazu Nariakira feel even freer to use the Ryūkyū Islands as an international trading place. As for trade with the Netherlands, however, it would be of little avail. A reconnaissance mission which the Dutch hurried to send to Ōshima and Unten met with local officials who were unprepared to welcome them. For lack of instructions too, another occasion was missed when a Dutch ship called at Naha on November 9, 1857 (Ansei 4–9–23), to return the twenty-seven crew members and passengers of a Dutch ship which had been wrecked off Tarama Island earlier that year.¹⁵⁾ Still, determined to omit no opportunity, Shimazu Nariakira again sent officers to Nagasaki in November 1857 to resume talks with the Dutch and encourage them to return to Ōshima and Okinawa with the signature of a convention with Ryūkyū in view and for the opening of commercial exchanges.¹⁶⁾ The signing of a convention would eventually take place in July 1859, too late to derive any advantage from it.

Thirdly, pressed for time as foreign powers were tightening their grip on Japan, Shimazu Nariakira, like the Edo government, whose naval development was entrusted to Katsu Kaishū, thought it more effective to acquire ships and weapons from the West than to rely on a domestic industry still in its infancy. Introduced by his grandfather at an early age to *rangaku* (“Dutch learning,” Western sciences), he himself had always evinced a great curiosity for Western techniques and civilization, going as far as occasionally to use the Latin alphabet for private notes. His accession to power in March 1851 ushered in a period of intense, if not frantic, demand for Western manuals of all sorts and for skilled translators. Under his leadership, Satsuma pioneered the introduction of Western technologies at a brisk pace, a challenge on which only a few other fiefs, but none on the same scale, had seriously embarked.¹⁷⁾ With no foreign physical involvement, and only pieces of equipment obtained from the Dutch, it had tenaciously invested much of its income in the development of a small proto-industrial complex, the Shūseikan, located at Iso, on the periphery of Kagoshima, and a shipyard on Sakura Island.¹⁸⁾ By 1857 the Shūseikan employed as many as 1,200 persons. Along with metallurgy, shipbuilding and weapons production were understandably the two most crucial domains of activity. However, experimental production developed at the Shūseikan, accompanied by the use of chemicals and electricity, covered an amazingly diversified range of items, some potentially intended for commercialization. Although it remained elementary, the technological expertise so acquired would provide a sound base for a fast appropriation of Western sciences and techniques in the wake of the Meiji Restoration.

Shimazu Nariakira himself most closely supervised progress in shipbuilding. For years, he had been fully aware that the possession of a navy was of vital importance to ensure the defense of the country, as shown by the great number of his letters devoted to Western naval techniques. In 1852, because of its technological advance, the Edo govern-

ment ordered Satsuma to build a Western-style warship, although the two-century-old ban on the construction of large-scale ships would not be rescinded until mid-1853, two months after Commodore Perry's first visit. By April 1854 Satsuma proved its capability with the launch of Japan's first Western-style sailing warship, the *Shōheimaru*, a twenty-seven meter long and three-mast vessel equipped with ten guns.¹⁹⁾ Others soon followed, with gradual improvements, so that the Edo government soon commissioned a bold program of construction for twelve ships from Satsuma.

Although five ships, including the *Shōheimaru*, had been completed by 1855, the engine technology — in particular the question of the propeller (*naisha*) — nevertheless presented difficulties hard to overcome, as the emphasis placed on the acquisition of a “screw-driven” steamer — as opposed to a paddle steamer — in Furet's letter bears witness. Realizing that there was still a long way to go before the ships built in Japan could match those of the West, Shimazu Nariakira lowered his ambitions and decided instead to save time and efforts by acquiring ships from Western countries. As early as 1855, he asked the Ryūkyūan authorities to lend their support to the implementation of his project on account of their frequent contacts with foreigners.²⁰⁾ But the latter at once showed reluctance and fear, and eventually, a year later, declined in no ambiguous terms to take charge of so embarrassing a matter.²¹⁾

Consequently, Ryūkyū, through the mediation of which Satsuma had made profitable exchanges with China for over two centuries, now appeared as a suitable place to start trade with the West and to counter the Edo government's self-interested policy. International trade and travels abroad being still prohibited, retaliations against Satsuma were not to be totally ruled out, although this remained most unlikely considering Edo's growing political and military weakness, not counting the fact that Ryūkyū had always escaped its direct surveillance. A greater fear was the possibility that, Ryūkyū being officially its tributary, China would protest to Western powers over the opening of commercial exchanges in a place that was not included among those authorized by the treaties. In practice, then, secrecy had to be the key word so as to ensure the project every chance of success.

2. Shimazu Nariakira Turns to France

As to Shimazu Nariakira's decision to approach the French, a second choice, as we have seen, after the Dutch, apart from their being present in Okinawa, two previous events could make him think that the French authorities might favorably consider his trade proposal.

The first were the pressures exerted in mid-1846 by the French navy on Ryūkyū to sign a treaty of amity and commerce. On that occasion, through the active and thoughtful mediation of the *rōjū* Abe Masahiro, the heir presumptive, Shimazu Nariakira, and his father, the then Lord Shimazu Narioki, had been authorized by Shōgun Tokugawa Ieyoshi, in a private audience that took place on July 23, 1846 (Kōka 3–6–1), to engage in

commercial exchange with the French if they proved unbending. Although this authorization represented a first breach in Japan's two-century old seclusion policy, Edo had no intention of being officially involved with it, in the same way as with Satsuma's Chinese trade.²²⁾ This was understood rather as a precautionary step for fear that an outright rejection of the French demand might entail reprisals against Japan proper. In no time, though, Zusho Hirosho, Shimazu Narioki's right-hand man and the Finance Minister of Satsuma, had made preparations to trade with the French in Unten. But the latter, tired of one and a half months of vain discussions, had already left Okinawa with no intention of coming back soon.

The second event was the conclusion — in fact under the threat of arms — of a French-Ryūkyūan convention by Admiral Guérin on November 24, 1855. The following year Guérin even took care to call at Okinawa again to check the enforcement of the convention as regards the missionaries. Not formally a trade agreement, although its first and second articles allowed for commercial transactions and the construction of a warehouse, it was possible that it could provide an official basis for the establishment of trade relations through the agency of Ryūkyū.

In the face of that repeated expression of interest in Ryūkyū, Shimazu Nariakira could realistically count on the willingness of the French to respond positively to his commercial proposal, all the more so as, the subjection of Ryūkyū to Japan being no longer a secret to them, it would be viewed as a first step in the opening of the market of Japan proper.²³⁾ As to the Roman Catholic missionaries, whose mission in Ryūkyū, which had started in 1844, remained so far totally fruitless, all the odds were that they would see it as an opportunity to break with their seclusion on Japan's fringe.

3. Ichiki Shirō's Mission in Okinawa

Born in 1828 to Terashi Masakata, a samurai who would take charge of the construction of the Western-style ship *Irohamaru*, Ichiki Shirō had been adopted into the Ichiki family.²⁴⁾ At the age of sixteen, he joined the service of the Satsuma government. Soon after his nomination as *daimyō*, Shimazu Nariakira directed him to the study of Western armaments. For that purpose he was sent to Nagasaki in 1854. He also took part in the construction and adjustment of Satsuma's reverberating furnace. By 1857 he had become an expert in gunnery and an appreciated servant of his lord's innovative policy. In that year, only weeks before his departure for Okinawa, he led the small group of *samurai* who took the famous portrait daguerreotype of Shimazu Nariakira, the first Japanese-made photograph, an event with which his name remains associated.²⁵⁾

About three weeks before the audience in the Ni-no-maru tea room, on September 12, 1857 (Ansei 4–7–24), Ichiki Shirō received, together with the announcement of his elevation to a higher rank and function, an order to prepare secretly for a journey to Ryūkyū where he would have to gather intelligence on the situation and make contact with “foreigners” (*ijin*).²⁶⁾ This also meant dressing his hair in the manner of Ryūkyūan officials,

but because of a chill he had caught he obtained a postponement. At his request, he was authorized to take along with him an engine specialist from the Shūseikan, Kisanuki Genkai.

On November 17, 1857 (Ansei 4–10–2), Ichiki Shirō and his associates left Kagoshima on a Ryūkyūan ship in the company of the *monobugyō* Onga *uēkata* Chōkō, a high-level Ryūkyūan official who had arrived one month earlier and in whom Shimazu Nariakira had confidence. Previously informed by Yamada Sōemon, one of the corresponding officers for Ichiki Shirō’s mission, Onga Chōkō was aware of the import and impact of Shimazu Nariakira’s plan. Before taking to the high seas, the ship made a one-night call at Yamakawa, where Ichiki Shirō received the most recent instructions.

The crossing was rough. On the 22nd, the ship met with a violent storm which spoiled the cargo and made Ichiki Shirō believe that his time had come.²⁷⁾ Eventually, though, all the passengers reached Naha safely in the evening of November 25 (Ansei 4–10–10). Soon after his landing, Ichiki Shirō was greeted by Satsuma’s retiring *zaiban bugyō* Suwa Kazuma and *metsuke* (“overseer”) Yanase Gen-no-Susumu, and, on behalf of the Ryūkyūan government, by Kanegusku *pēkumi*.

For the weeks and months to come, Ichiki Shirō was faced with a tight agenda and a limited assistance. He and the new *zaiban bugyō* Takahashi Nui were authorized to correspond only with the Satsuma officers who were in charge of providing answers on technical or financial questions and of mediating with Shimazu Nariakira: Yamada Sōemon, already mentioned, Katayama Hachirō, Katayama Buhē, Enatsu Jūrō and Nagoe Hikodayū. Apart from the *zaiban bugyō* and a few men from Satsuma, his closest associates in Okinawa for the implementation of Shimazu Nariakira’s plan were to be Onga Chōkō and, in the first place, Ōwan *pēchin* Chōchū.

The latter, an outstanding figure of the latest period of the kingdom, was born in 1818, under the name Itarashiki Chōten, in a low ranking family of the Shuri aristocracy.²⁸⁾ His official position within the state administration was that of “interpreter” (*tsūji*). Trained as a scholar of Chinese learning at the Kokugaku school of Shuri, he had spent several years in China, where he happened to meet Russians. Thereafter, he devoted himself to the handling of relations with foreign visitors and missionary residents — Furet calls him “the factotum of Loochoo” — trying his hardest to learn English, following in the footsteps of Maehira Bōshō and Aniya Seiho, and probably some French too. A talented and tactful man, he meanwhile keenly served Shimazu Nariakira’s interests in maintaining peaceful relations with foreigners and did his best also to satisfy his thirst for information about them and their ships. In addition to various material rewards, his application earned him, in 1855, promotion to the lordship (*jitō*) of Ōwan village and the privilege of changing his name to Ōwan *pēchin* Chōchū. Only three days after his arrival, Ichiki Shirō demanded his elevation to the status of *hichō-nushidori* (higher secretary, assistant superintendent), which allowed him to sit among the *omote jūgonin*, the governing board, just beneath the *sanshikan* (“three councilors, or ministers”) which was composed of the fifteen superintendents and assistant superintendents of all the administrative departments.

He was thus in a position to play a key role in forwarding injunctions from Ichiki Shirō or the *zaiban bugyō* to the Ryūkyūan government, as well as in reporting back the discussions and difficulties to which they gave rise in Shuri. His status remained “provisional” (*kari*) until a vacancy occurred on January 6, 1858 (Ansei 4–11–22).

So extraordinary a promotion, which was putting someone of comparatively low extraction on an equal footing with the *uēkata*,²⁹⁾ was approved by the government with the support of the *sanshikan* Oroku Ryōchū who sided with Satsuma. On the same day, the retiring *zaiban bugyō* Suwa Kazuma also gave notice, as decided in Kagoshima, of the necessary removal of the *sanshikan* Zakimi Seifu. The latter, who harbored an unceasing hostility to Shimazu Nariakira’s policy of change and was liable to an accusation of having mishandled the murder case of an American sailor of Commodore Perry’s squadron, found it wiser to withdraw immediately from the scene for reasons of health. The promotion of Ōwan Chōchū and the required dismissal of Zakimi Seifu were but the first interference in the Ryūkyūan executive and had the aim of forming a government which would respond to Shimazu Nariakira’s directives without demur.

On December 11 (Ansei 4–10–26), Ichiki Shirō, who had now changed his dress and hairstyle to those of Ryūkyūan officials, passed on a copy of Shimazu Nariakira’s instructions to the *sanshikan* Ikegusuku *uēkata* Anyū, Onga Chōkō and Kanegusuku *pēkumi*.³⁰⁾ A week later, on the 18th, he summoned the *sessei* (regent) Ōzato *ōji* Chōkyō, the two *sanshikan* Ikegusuku Anyū and Oroku Ryochū, Onga Chōkō and Ōwan Chōchū to his residence. Ōzato’s younger brother, Tamagawa *ōji* Chōtatsu, and Tomigusuku *aji* Chōson, both favorable to Satsuma, were also present. Flanked by Suwa Kazuma and Yanase Genno-Susumu, Ichiki Shirō explained each point of Shimazu Nariakira’s plan in detail. The instructions he was carrying, which only echoed more firmly the latter’s earlier missives to the Ryūkyūan executive, made it clear that Shuri would now have to consent unconditionally, should the opportunity occur, to the conclusion of commercial agreements with the Netherlands, France, Britain or the United States. It ought to be understood that one had to come to terms with the changing of times (*jisei yamu wo ezaru no baai ni tachi itari*) and that the kingdom, as a dependency of Japan, had itself to contribute to the security and prosperity of the whole country.³¹⁾ Opening trade in Ryūkyū for the purpose of acquiring ships and armaments was meant to play for time in order to strengthen Japan in face of the growing threat of Western powers.

That radical disruption of the kingdom’s traditional ways, which aimed at maintaining a balance between Japan and China along with a limited but respected internal autonomy, came as a shock to most members of the Ryūkyūan executive. Lively debates ensued, in which Tomigusuku Chōson and Tamagawa Chōtatsu took part on Shimazu Nariakira’s orders. Despite the pressure, ten days were necessary to obtain the full agreement of the government to endorse Shimazu Nariakira’s plan and provide support for it. The commercial opening of Okinawa, which included the purchase of ships and armaments from the French, but also implied, more globally, giving all foreign visitors a courteous reception, the enlargement of the Ryūkyū-kan in Fuzhou and the creation of a trading post on

the Taiwanese coast were rather easily accepted. But two points would have been unlikely to get through without Ichiki Shirō's unbending stance: The presence of men from Satsuma in Fuzhou, albeit under Ryūkyūan disguise, and the dispatch of students to Europe. The government officials met again several times, and, eventually, on December 28, 1857 (Ansei 4-11-13), the two *sanshikan* Ikegusuku Anyū and Oroku Ryōchū, accompanied by Onga Chōkō, Tomigusuku Chōson and Ōwan Chōchū, went to Ichiki Shirō's residence and let him know that the implementation of Shimazu Nariakira's instructions had all been approved officially.

Since his arrival in Okinawa, Ichiki Shirō kept inquiring about the state of mind of the French and the chances that they would welcome his request to serve as intermediaries with their government. He himself even happened to brush against them several times in the streets of Naha's Wakasa district. But before making contact with them, the content of the order for which they would be approached had first to be more precisely defined. The plan expounded by Shimazu Nariakira in Kagoshima remained a general framework for action which needed further clarification and technical specifications. These came in a letter from Shimazu Nariakira, dated March 5, 1858 (Ansei 5-1-20), mainly concerned with the order to be placed with the French.³²⁾ A warship and a merchant ship, both propeller-driven steamers, were again mentioned, with the expected length of each, but the first was made a high priority. As it was feared that ordering both might engender complications, the matter had to be submitted to the French for a decision. The power of the ships, the number and weight of the guns for the warship, which ought to be of a recent model, were specified. Various pieces of naval equipment, along with rifles, pistols and ammunition, were also listed with quantities, along with the necessity of inviting instructors for three or four years and interpreters. Details were given on the amount of money to be spent on each item, the priorities and terms of payment, as well as on the non-monetary means of payment available. Most importantly, the warship had to be delivered, either to Unten or Ōshima, by the summer of 1859 at the latest. Courtesy with foreigners, celerity, adaptability and responsiveness to circumstances were once again urged on the men charged with the implementation of Shimazu Nariakira's plan. Secrecy, too, was imperative, and in order to avoid any leak to China or Edo, the matter had to be kept scrupulously hidden from all subalterns.³³⁾ In case the French missionaries refused to be involved in the transaction, Itarashiki (Ōwan Chōchū) was expected to travel to Fuzhou and negotiate an order with foreigners present in China.

4. The Commercial Agreement with the French

On March 31, 1858 (Ansei 5-2-17), Ichiki Shirō was presented to the French by Ōwan Chōchū — the “first interpreter” in Furet's words — in their house on Matsuo hill in Kumemura, on the fringe of Naha proper.³⁴⁾ He introduced himself as Ichira *pēchin*, a physician from Tokara Island, and as one eager to take French lessons. Tokara Island was traditionally used as a cover for Satsuma with Chinese and Western visitors. By the

1850s, however, Westerners had become aware that it was an archipelago of no importance, and one is to believe Furet when he writes, in a separate letter to Albrand (see below), that he and his colleagues “had no difficulty in recognizing him as a true Japanese,” and that, on his second visit, he himself did not conceal the fact of his coming from Satsuma. But his true names most probably remained unknown to the missionaries.

Curiously enough, in the opening of the above-translated letter, Furet reports the visit of “two true Japanese” on March 31. As neither the other passages in his correspondence nor the Japanese sources mention the presence of another man from Satsuma on that day, one could take the mention of a second “true Japanese” as a careless mistake, or, perhaps, as a confusion with later visits during which Ichiki Shirō was accompanied by Kisanuki Genkai, Sonoda Jittoku, other men from Satsuma (the latter of whom returned to Satsuma in May), or even, albeit less plausible, by the *zaiban bugyō* Takahashi Nui. However, as the presence of two negotiators is thereafter repeated three times in the letter (“two gentlemen,” “two friends”), one could also assume that either Ōwan (Itarashiki) Chōchū or the *monobugyō* Onga Chōkō, who both had stalwartly assisted Ichiki Shirō in the preparation of the order, were seen by Furet and his companions as also originating from Japan. But it should be noted that the second sentence after the one referred to above no longer mentions two Japanese but only one “Japanese envoy,” along with “the Loochoo interpreter” or “factotum of Loochoo,” that is, Ōwan Chōchū. Furet himself had earlier described him as a “Japanese minister.”³⁵ This would lead us to think that it is more likely Ōwan Chōchū who was perceived as also hailing from Japan on Ichiki Shirō’s first visit.

We lack details of the progress of the talks between Ichiki Shirō and the French. According to the Japanese sources, their relationship started with an exchange of language lessons. Yet, both Furet and his colleague Mounicou mention medicine in addition to French in return for instruction in Japanese. It is Furet who was asked to impart knowledge of medicine, a matter about which, together with botanic, he had frequent conversations with Ōwan Chōchū. He was further expected to give instruction in mathematics at a later time (see below). The request obviously flattered him — Furet humorously depicts himself as suddenly “appointed to a professorship” — and gave him the opportunity to take advantage of his former professional experience. But even instruction in medicine had to be postponed to a time when their mutual understanding would have improved, so that they actually never went beyond answering the Japanese visitor’s questions about remedies and plants.

How many days or weeks elapsed before Ichiki Shirō broached the matter of the screw-driven steamer remains unclear. Furet only says “a little later.” Such an unexpected reversal of policy plunged the three men into doubt for a spell. Furet’s letter further shows that Ichiki Shirō, together with Ōwan Chōchū and possibly Onga Chōkō, took their time in sounding them out and in gaining enough confidence before specifying that the steamer should indeed be a warship (a “powerful steamer carrying guns”). The motives put forward for purchasing that type of ship were that it was intended as a present, or a loan, from Tokara to the Kingdom of Ryūkyū, so that it could ensure the protection of its fishing

boats and fishermen, and of its ships voyaging to China, against the dangers of both typhoons and pirates. The explanation apparently raised no question in the minds of the missionaries. They expressed more astonishment at the choice of France rather than the Dutch whose age-old relations with Japan would have likely put in a better position to satisfy the request. The high esteem in which Ichiki Shirō and the authorities behind him held France and its emperor, as Furet's letter says, was perhaps not sufficient a justification, but the missionaries, aware of the tensions resulting from Edo's restrictions on Satsuma's foreign relations, also realized that the latter was now resolved to take a separate course of action. In December 1857, a Dutch ship coming from Nagasaki had already brought the news that Japan was about to open some of its ports, and they could guess that it would be mainly to Edo's advantage ("[Satsuma] probably does not count much on [Edo] to gain the advantage from seeing foreigners come to trade in its ports").³⁶⁾

Past the stage of mutual probing, the three missionaries embarked willingly, as expected by Shimazu Nariakira, on the preparation of a commercial order. However, their suggestion, some time at the outset of the discussions, that the order being for a warship the government of Tokara should rather apply directly to the French government caused sudden confusion among their interlocutors and an interruption of the discussions. In Furet's perception, their interlocutors had to "consult the high mandarins" located in Japan. This episode may in fact have coincided with another direct intervention of Satsuma into the functioning of the Ryūkyūan executive.

At the beginning of May 1858, the *sanshikan* Zakimi Seifu, already "voluntarily" removed from governmental activities, was dismissed and forced to hand his title of *sōjitō* (overlord) of Yuntanza (Yomitan) on to his eldest son. Thereupon, an election was organized in order to fill the vacant post. There were three candidates. Voters, who belonged to the core of the state apparatus, from princes to Kumemura officers, placed Yonabaru *uēkata* Ryōkyō in top position. Nomura *uēkata* Chōsen came second.³⁷⁾ For different reasons, however, both candidates were found insufficiently reliable, in view of the role that the kingdom had to play in the opening of trade. After two months of hesitance among Ichiki Shirō's associates, and on the insistence of Shimazu Nariakira himself, it was the candidate who came third, with only one vote, Fukuyama *uēkata* Chōten (also known as Onaga Chōchō) — a man with experience of fifteen months of being resident in Kagoshima — who was eventually chosen as the replacement for Zakimi Seifu. Adding to the incomprehension that had met the latter's removal, that new piece of interference at the heart of Ryūkyūan politics roused extremes of discontent among the officials of a conservative persuasion. Nevertheless, the *sanshikan* council, now comprised of Ikegusuku Anyū, Oroku Ryōchū and Fukuyama Chōten — all of whom were well disposed towards Satsuma — had fallen into line in aid of the recasting of the kingdom's foreign relations.

Meanwhile, Ōwan (Itarashiki) Chōchū continued his exceptional social ascent. On May 24, 1858 (Ansei 5-4-12), he was promoted *jitō* (lord) of the district of Makishi, with the title of *satonushi pēchin*, as a reward for his services with foreigners, either during the

visits of Commodore Perry and Admiral Guérin or with the resident missionaries, most notably with the zealous Bernard Jean Bettelheim.³⁸⁾ For the occasion, he also received presents from Shimazu Nariakira.

When the discussions resumed, “Tokara was no longer mentioned,” as Furet relates, and it was the Kingdom of Ryūkyū that now appeared in the forefront as being the buyer. Ichiki Shirō and his associates had no doubt realized that Tokara could not be accepted as a liable partner in international trade. Accordingly, the delivery of and the payment for the ship were to take place in Okinawa, either in Naha or Unten, instead of Ōshima, a location to which Shimazu Nariakira probably gave preference, for it was closer to Satsuma and under his direct administration. Incidentally, the priority first accorded to Ōshima may explain why Mounicou in his diary and Furet in another letter (see below) allude to Ōshima as Ichiki Shirō’s place of origin. Even so, it seems that the Tokara fiction was maintained throughout the preparation of the order by a shared understanding of the necessity of keeping Satsuma’s name off-stage in the absence of approval from Edo. Tokara would also appear eventually in the preamble to the order as a financial supporter.

It should be noted that the missionaries tried, in vain, to convince their interlocutors that the normal way for Satsuma to engage in trade relations with France would be to make contacts with its government first. Neither was it possible for them to have Ryūkyū take that step after it became seemingly responsible for the purchase. In their minds, the operation would surely have had better chances of success with Satsuma’s name appearing on the order in place of the name of the frail Kingdom of Ryūkyū. They finally had to content themselves with the idea of underscoring to their government, through their religious or lay correspondents, that the order was in actual fact coming from Satsuma — the “kingdom,” *i.e.* the feudal domain, “said to be most powerful in Japan,” writes Furet.

The determination on the part of their interlocutors to remain discreet was again challenged when the Ryūkyūan authorities begged the missionaries to forward their gifts to the French Emperor and to Admiral Guérin, the signatory of the convention with Ryūkyū. Declining the request on the grounds that they had no official mandate, the missionaries suggested instead that the Ryūkyūan government send an envoy to meet the French authorities in China. But this was promptly refused on grounds that the envoy would not go unnoticed by the Chinese, an attitude all the more surprising in that the Ryūkyūan executive had consented to the dispatch of merchants to do business with foreigners on the Chinese coast. The embarrassment was eventually removed with the decision that the gifts would be entrusted to the captain of the next French warship putting in at Naha.

According to the accounts of both parties, the discussions were conducted in a most friendly atmosphere. Once agreement had been reached on the outline of what Shimazu Nariakira expected to obtain from France, we can imagine that the necessity of inscribing in precise French every technical detail accounted for much of the time spent in the preparation of the order. The number and amazing nature of the gifts made by the missionaries to their Japanese and Ryūkyūan interlocutors during that period clearly reflects their strong commitment to the success of the project. Among these, one finds an “astro-

nomical” telescope, a gilt-silver ceramic vase, musical instruments (probably two trombones and one cornet, in addition to a flute and some kind of accordion), two pocket watches, a sextant, some unidentified electrical device (*denki-ki*), two bottles of wine (one of which was a bottle of champagne), two books on Japanese geography, and translations of the Old and New Testaments in *katakana*.³⁹⁾ All these items were forwarded to Satsuma for Shimazu Nariakira’s attention. In return, the missionaries were offered lacquered containers, earthenware, silk fabrics, pictures and Japanese books.

On August 11 (Ansei 5–7–3), Takahashi Nui, in response to a request from the missionaries, obtained a letter of guarantee (or “letter of commitment,” *ukesho*) for those responsible for construction bearing the seal of the Ryūkyūan government and signed by Prince Regent Ōzato Chōkyō and the *sanshikan* Ikegusuku Anyū, Oroku Ryōchū and Fukuyama Chōten. By August 18, the drafting of the order had been completed. It then took two weeks, until September 3 (Ansei 5–7–26), for the highest Ryūkyūan executive to have the order put in due form and to endorse it officially. Prior to that, on September 1, the government had raised Ōwan Chōchū from the office of interpreter to the even more strategic one of *takushikan* (accounting officer). The same day, Tomigusuku Chōson had been appointed to assist Regent Ōzato Chōkyō, whose links with Zakimi Seifu cast doubt on his reliability.

The order comprised a screw-driven (*nenshi*, or *sukurino*, *shikake*) wooden steamer of about sixty-two to sixty-four meters (thirty-four to thirty-five *ken*) in length, capable of reaching speeds of four to five *ri* per hour (between nine and eleven knots, or sixteen and twenty kilometers), with two or three masts, and all the necessary equipment for the functioning of the ship and for navigation.⁴⁰⁾ Among these were included six anchors, chains, ropes, sails, and measure and positioning instruments. The steamer was to be armed with twenty heavy guns of about eighty pounds, two of which to be placed at the bow and stern, and eighteen guns of thirty pounds. The order also included one thousand rifles, five hundred carbines, with plenty of ammunition, cannonballs by the hundreds and bullets by the thousands (five hundred for each rifle). All the weapons had to be of the most recent model. Furet informs us that the possibility of delivering an unarmed screw-driven steamer first, to be thereafter equipped with weapons carried to Okinawa on a French ship, had also been considered. The purchase of a merchant ship was provisionally discarded as too expensive, but also because ordering two ships at the same time would more likely embarrass the French authorities and delay the delivery of the warship. No machine tool to make guns appears on the order either, contrary to Shimazu Nariakira’s earlier instructions. According to the missionaries’ estimate, the total expenditure amounted to 185,000 *ryō*, a sum that had to be paid in five or six yearly installments with gold and silver, but also copper and various Japanese goods, such as silk thread and fabric, camphor, earthenware, golden folding screens, lacquerware, high quality paper, lithographs, as partly stated by Furet.⁴¹⁾ The delivery was expected to take place at Naha and at the latest in the summer of 1859, an unrealistically short time in consideration of the distances, the novelty of the operation, especially if the ship had to be built, and the political

decisions involved. In fact, although Furet mentions nothing of it, it was the harbor inlet of Unten, a safer moorage than Naha, which was preferred by the missionaries for organizing the transactions.

In addition to the order proper, the document also provided for the invitation of up to some twenty instructors (*kyōshi*, *shishō*) in navigation, mechanics, gunnery, shipbuilding, metalwork and astronomy, for a period of three to four years. Instruction manuals for navigation and shipbuilding, and world maps, were among the accompanying requests. The Japanese sources allow us also think that the project of dispatching students to France, which was part of Nariakira's plan, was also discussed with the missionaries and had received their support. Three Ryūkyūans had already been selected, among whom was Makishi Chōchū's elder brother, and a first departure was envisaged as taking place in spring 1859.

On September 8 (Ansei 5–8–2), the very day when Furet apparently started his letter, Ichiki Shirō, Makishi Chōchū, Onga Chōkō and Oroku Ryōchū went as a delegation to the house of the Frenchmen and handed them the document. It bore the signatures of *sōridaijin* (“Prime Minister”) Shō Keihō and *fuseitaiifu* (“government steward”) Ba Kokushō, the Chinese names of Motobu *aji* Chōshō and Oroku Ryōchū respectively, with fictitious governmental functions,⁴²⁾ acting as representatives of the government of Ryūkyū (Ryūkyū-koku Chūzan-fu).

5. Tomorrow Never Knows

A French naval vessel was expected to visit Okinawa in the autumn of 1858. The two parties involved in the preparation of the order were now cherishing hopes that the French authorities would receive the trade proposal favorably, and diligently perform the whole operation.

Against all expectations, on October 8 (Ansei 5–9–2), like a thunderclap in a serene sky, the news of Shimazu Nariakira's sudden death arrived at Naha. He had fallen ill on August 16 (Ansei 5–7–8), apparently from food poisoning, during a military exercise in preparation for a march on Edo which had the aim of putting pressure on the *tairō* Ii Naosuke, the head of the government. The latter had aroused his anger for having managed to have Tokugawa Yoshitomi appointed *shōgun* (under the name of Tokugawa Iemochi), instead of Hitotsubashi Keiki, certainly the ablest candidate to respond to foreign threats. Moreover he had signed a commercial treaty with the United States without imperial sanction. Shimazu Nariakira's death occurred on August 24. The strong man in Satsuma was now Shimazu Hisamitsu, Nariakira's half brother and the biological father of the new lord, Shimazu Tadayoshi, aged only eighteen, whom his uncle had designated as his successor on his deathbed.

The two brothers had been latent enemies since the days of the so-called “O Yura disturbances” (*O-Yura sōdō*), from the name of Hisamitsu's mother, a bloody episode which has shaken Satsuma's ruling class in 1849–1850 and eventually hastened Nariaki-

ra's rise to power through the mediation of the *rōjū* Abe Masahiro. For the time being, Shimazu Hisamitsu opposed Nariakira's project of opening up to commerce, and, together with the announcement of Nariakira's death, instructions were given for immediate cancellation of the operation, which could otherwise bring complications with a foreign country.

Thrown into such a predicament, Ichiki Shirō and the *zaiban bugyō* Takahashi Nui lost all appetite and sleep. Faced with the collapse of his mission, Ichiki Shirō himself considered committing suicide. Two days after the announcement of Shimazu Nariakira's death, the men involved in the preparation of the order held a meeting at the residence of the *zaiban bugyō* to decide on how to deal with the situation. There was no other choice than to retrieve the now compromising order as soon as possible. It seems that it was Makishi Chōchū who then suggested a pretence that Ichiki Shirō had died by falling from a horse, and to make that a pretext to have the commercial operation called off, a scheme that met with the approval of the participants.

With Ichiki Shirō going into hiding, Makishi Chōchū and Oroku Ryōchū took on the task of informing the Frenchmen of his tragic end. The latter were of course dumfounded at the news and expressed their sincere sorrow, although the Japanese sources lead us to think that it was almost immediately tinged with incredulity. Soon after, it was explained to them that Ichiki Shirō's death entailed the interruption of Tokara's financial support, and thereby the immediate cancellation of the order, which they were asked to oblige by returning. The operation could possibly resume, so they were also told, when Tokara had appointed a successor to Ichiki Shirō.

Unconvinced by these arguments, and determined to take advantage of the commercial opening, for both their country and themselves, the missionaries expressed an adamant refusal to the request. They maintained the same unflinching attitude during the repeated visits of Ichiki Shirō's Ryūkyūan associates, whose distress was however palpable, and tried to identify arrangements which could help the Kingdom of Ryūkyū to sustain its commercial commitment.

To lend more credit to Ichiki Shirō's death and overcome the missionaries' doubts, a tomb, with an inscription, was set up (or an existing tomb renovated) near the Gokokuji, in the district of Nami-no-ue, and the missionaries were invited to go to see for themselves where his remains supposedly lay. They did so, inquiring from the neighbors on the occasion, and this led to a softening of their attitude. On October 20 (Ansei 5-9-14), Makishi Chōchū, Ikegusuku Anyū, Onga Chōkō and Nomura Chōsen went to the Frenchmen's residence and, by dint of renewed supplication, eventually succeeded in securing the return of the order and the letter of guarantee.⁴³⁾ The two parties also agreed on a forfeit of 10,000 *ryō*, a sum paid from the money that Ichiki Shirō had brought to Okinawa.⁴⁴⁾ The men from Satsuma and their Ryūkyūan partners could at last enjoy some relief. For the missionaries it was a sad day, as reflected in Furet's dramatic postscript. Only five days later, on October 25 (Ansei 5-9-19), the *Prégent*, of the French Navy, called at Naha. It departed the next day at 1 p.m., carrying away Barthelemy Girard and the mis-

sionaries' correspondence, among which Furet's letter, the only evidence, outside Okinawa and Japan, of Satsuma's aborted opening to commerce.

Ichiki Shirō left Okinawa with the documents on November 13. After some time spent on the way as a precaution, he arrived back in Kagoshima on February 10, 1859 (Ansei 6–1–8), where he soon assumed important positions in the service of his domain.⁴⁵ In his later life, he would devote his time to compiling documents relating to the life and achievements of Shimazu Nariakira.

The fate of his Ryūkyūan associates was less enviable. Shimazu Nariakira's death and the ending of his policy opened the field for a return to power of Zakimi Seifu's faction, and they caused the bitter resentment stirred up within the ruling class by Satsuma's interference to be unleashed against those who had served him. Onga Chōkō, Oroku Ryōchū and Makishi Chōchū were the main victims of that change of fortune. In March and June 1859, Onga Chōkō and Oroku Ryōchū were successively dismissed under false accusations of corruption and soon put in gaol, where they were submitted to torture. They were eventually sentenced to exile on some outer islands for periods of, respectively, six years and five hundred days. Onga Chōkō died after only three months of exile. In October, Makishi Chōchū was in turn arrested and sentenced to a ten-year exile on Kumejima. However, he was soon taken back to a gaol on Okinawa for fear that Westerners might come to rescue him. One of the charges used against the accused was that of conspiring to replace King Shō Tai with Prince Tamagawa Chōtatsu, an ally of Satsuma. That crisis, known as the Makishi-Onga *jiken*, created a lasting fracture in the élite, still alive at the time of the annexation of Ryūkyū by Japan, up to the 1880s, between the conservatives, attached to a supposedly balanced dependency on both China and Japan, and those who favored Japan's influence.

The fate of Makishi Chōchū, often better remembered as Itarashiki Chōchū, was to remain exceptional until the end. In July 1862, the Ryūkyūan government received the order from Satsuma to release him immediately and to have him sent to Kagoshima in the company of the *zaiban bugyō*. Shimazu Hisamitsu was now following in the footsteps of his half brother in a policy of commercial opening, and his domain was in urgent need of men having some command of English. Apart from Sonoda Jittoku and Ōkubo Hachitarō who had travelled to Okinawa in 1853 to study with the then Itarashiki Chōchū, there was almost no one in Satsuma with even a limited knowledge of that language. That was the reason for Makishi Chōchū's being summoned to Kagoshima where he was expected to teach to young men what he had patiently gathered of English through years of contacts with British or American visitors. But, for reasons which we are left to imagine, he then decided not to comply. On August 14 (or 10), 1862, shortly after his departure from Naha, near Iheyajima, he chose to jump into the sea and to drown. He was aged only forty-four.

As to the missionaries, principally Furet who stayed in Okinawa until October 1862, they seem never to have heard of the arrest of their long-time acquaintance "Itarashiki," and even less of his self-inflicted death. A letter of Furet, though, dated October 28, 1858, shows that they had been informed of Makishi (Itarashiki) Chōchū's advancement to the

position of *takushikan*. It also states that he will soon become a “minister.” The same letter reports that on October 27, one day after the departure of the *Prégent*, Makishi Chōchū told the missionaries that “he would be glad to see French ships coming from time to time, [and] that it was a good thing to communicate that way.”⁴⁶⁾ In a letter of June 1859, addressed to Paris, Furet mentions again his coming nomination to the position of minister, and he requests “six fine, large and very clear maps” of the five continents and of the whole world, to be marked for his attention. These maps “must be large enough to allow *our friend* to inscribe the place names in Chinese.”⁴⁷⁾ In another letter of the same month, Furet repeats that Makishi Chōchū “expressed the wish to see a French ship coming every year”, and he asks his correspondent, Napoléon Libois, to invite the Marziou Company to send one of its ships with “samples of fabrics and French accessories” to open trade in Okinawa. A “member of the royal family,” with whom the missionaries were in communication, also wished to encourage the French to take that initiative. As for Satsuma, Furet describes it as “one of the richest regions in Japan for copper” and explains that it had wanted to grant France, not long ago, a monopoly on that metal. Now, he continues, the Dutch are trying to get hold of it, but he is confident that there is still time for the French to start negotiating with Satsuma, provided it is carefully kept as a secret from Edo.⁴⁸⁾

These are the last references to Makishi Chōchū which can be found in the missionaries’ correspondence. He was eventually dismissed and imprisoned on October 20, 1859 (Ansei 6–9–25), but one may assume that, prior to that date, after the arrests of Onga Chōkō and Oroku Ryōchū, he himself felt most insecure and chose to withdraw from the front line. This situation seems to be reflected in the journal of Lieutenant John Mercer Brooke, the commander of the U.S. schooner *Fenimore Cooper*, who visited the missionaries in July 1859. On July 9, as he enquired why “Itarashiki,” whom he had met during a call at Naha five years earlier, could no longer be seen anywhere, the missionaries answered that “[Itarashiki] was not sick but that having been promoted (next in rank to the Governor of Napa), he felt it incumbent upon himself to be more secluded.” On the same occasion, they told him that “in their rambles they frequently met Japanese soldiers wearing two swords,” and that they were “under the impression that there [was] no King of Loo Choo” and that Ryūkyū was a “colony” or a “dependency” of Satsuma.⁴⁹⁾ Although there is no indication that the missionaries had become aware that the sudden cancellation of the commercial transaction on which they had placed high hopes had resulted directly from Shimazu Nariakira’s death, Furet heard in July 1859, from the commander of the Dutch ship *Bali*, that the “Prince” of Satsuma had died and that his successor, still very young, was under the tutelage of a “hostile parent” who opposed to the innovative policy of the late ruler.⁵⁰⁾

6. Furet’s Lingering Sorrow

No direct reference to the negotiations over the purchase of a warship and the establishment of commercial relations between France and Satsuma, alias Tokara or Ryūkyū,

can be found in the missionaries' correspondence other than in Furet's unsigned and undated letter to Albrand. However, the scanty diary of his companion Pierre Mounicou and other contemporary letters from Furet also record their most unusual encounter and relationship with the Japanese Ichiki Shirō, without disclosing, though, what was really at stake behind the scenes.

Mounicou's diary only records Ichiki Shirō's first visit. No other entry in the diary mentions him again, or alludes to any event surrounding his presence in Okinawa:

“31 March 1858: [. . .] Today we were agreeably surprised to receive the visit of a Japanese who was introduced by the first interpreter. He wishes to learn French and medicine; in return, he will teach us his language. If this man keeps his promise, he will be of immense assistance, both in helping us to understand the books we find and in practicing the spoken language. Although he claims to come from Oshima Island, he appears to have been sent from Nagasaki. I believe so because he knows some Dutch words and talks about things he could have learned only from Europeans, things like the barometer, quinine, gum arabic, etc.”⁵¹⁾

For Furet himself, always a prolific writer, it proved somewhat difficult to part with all hopes which the opening of Satsuma to commerce could hold. In letters to three other correspondents, likewise entrusted to the *Prégent*, he does not conceal his frustration, but also gives additional information on Ichiki Shirō's visits and his personal exchanges with him.

a) “[March 19, 1858] Although I am neither a doctor nor a graduate, nor even a health officer, I now have a *student in medicine*, and, moreover, it is a *true Japanese* from the Kingdom of Saxuma, who spent some time in Nagasaki. The other day he showed me a book of anatomy with plates. It is an old French one written in the time of Louis XIV and translated in Chinese. It is difficult to guess the author's name as it is in that language. Despite that, I think it is Buchart, Burgard, something like that.”⁵²⁾

That Japanese man was introduced to us one day by the chief of the local interpreters as a man from Ushima (a dependency of Loochoo).⁵³⁾ We had no difficulty in recognizing him as a true Japanese, and, on his second visit, he did not conceal it from us. Thus, he was coming, we were told, to deal with us as friends, to learn French and medicine about which, it was said, I know well.

Since then, he comes from time to time to take instruction in French. Medicine is postponed to the time when we can understand each other well. However, he sometimes asks questions about remedies or plants. That Japanese man comes with another Japanese, a true artist in drawing, and in cutlery and mechanics. [. . .]

October 10 [1858]. I am now crushed regarding my promotion to professorship. The Japanese, who belonged to a rich and powerful family, killed himself yesterday by falling from a horse. I am sorry, for we would have done good business. We were to order on his behalf a medical case n°1, an electric machine, a graphometer, a sextant, etc. God has his own designs; let his holy will be done! [. . .]

I am raided: I have neither trombone nor cornet any more. I gave them to the Japanese with the hope of going to Japan and finding them there.”⁵⁴⁾

b) “October 12 [1858]. Since our Japanese from Saxuma had made contact with us,⁵⁵⁾ I

was already appointed *professor of medicine*; soon, I would have become *professor of mathematics* . . . An electrical machine, two graphometers, some sextants were noted down as orders, this time in Paris, on the account of that Japanese man. We had already been doing our calculations on how to use the electric telegraph that I am expecting, and we did not despair of getting into Saxuma in the end. But then, that poor young man, very kind and frank, who belonged to an important family, found it wise to kill himself by falling from a horse . . . God does not want us to arrive in that way. Let his holy will be done!”⁵⁶⁾

c) “[October 24, 1858] Mr. Libois and Mr. Mermet [. . .] will tell you that I nearly managed to become a professor of medicine and mathematics . . .⁵⁷⁾ One month ago, my pupil (for these subjects) found it wise to kill himself by falling from a horse, and here am I, still simply a poor student. How true to say that man proposes and god disposes.

With the electric telegraph that you may have received for me, we had made plans . . . But then, ‘go for a walk!’ as we say in my home region. It is all over!”⁵⁸⁾

In January 1859, Furet acknowledged receipt of an electric telegraph in “very good condition”, which had been sent by Father Charles Paumard, a former seminary colleague and long-time friend. On that occasion, he again regrets that their “pupil and friend from Satsuma is dead” as he “counted on him and the telegraph to push on towards that kingdom that Francis Xavier had started to evangelize.”⁵⁹⁾

Although these passages seem rather to betray the secrecy Furet had asked his superior to maintain about the commercial agreement, the project of purchasing various technical instruments is in fact presented as being intended for the sole purpose of satisfying Ichiki Shirō’s own curiosity. Besides Furet’s insistence on his failed promotion to professorship⁶⁰⁾ and on Ichiki Shirō’s purported death, these passages also reveal several noticeable elements which are found neither in his unsigned and formal letter to Albrand nor in the Japanese sources.

First, apart from the French lessons, which could be given by any of the three missionaries, Furet was required, as already mentioned, to give instruction in medicine and mathematics. Secondly, despite the long-nurtured fiction of his being a physician from Tokara, and twice associated with Ōshima in the above passages, Ichiki Shirō disclosed his true origin as early as his second visit. He also told the missionaries that he had been trained in Nagasaki, which may have led them to believe, for a short while, that he could hail from there. Thirdly, the missionaries encountered difficulty in communicating with him because of their lack of fluency in Japanese, which, so far, they had studied only from books. Fourthly, Ichiki Shirō was accompanied by another Japanese “a true artist in drawing,” also skilled in “cutlery” and “mechanics.” This description would likely fit Kisanuki Genkai, a specialist in mechanics at the Shūseikan, whom Ichiki Shirō had obtained to take with him to Okinawa. We may assume that his drawing skill and his professional abilities were of great value during the discussions in helping the two parties to understand each other on the technical details.

We may notice that the last paragraph of the first extract mentions the brass instruments which Furet gave to Ichiki Shirō as a present, and that it corroborates the list drawn

up by Takahashi Nui and Ichiki Shirō which was quoted above. Both instruments were from the famous Parisian manufacturer Sax and had been bought by Furet in 1852, during his stay at the Foreign Missions Society seminary, for the sum of 50 Francs.⁶¹⁾ The other musical instruments belonged to his two companions. Although priests are not supposed to concern themselves about material possessions, those gifts tell us how deeply the missionaries were committed to the success of the commercial operation.

A separate and shorter letter from Furet to Superior Albrand, written on October 25, the day when the *Prégent* dropped anchor in Naha, reverts allusively to the past events and makes mention of a most unexpected gift brought by Ichiki Shirō:

“For some time, we thought that the matter which is the subject of another letter would bring some good result (we have already been able to obtain Japanese books), but it appears that God’s time for mercy has not arrived yet. [. . .]

The Japanese with whom we were in contact gave us a rather curious book: it is about the Trinity, the creation of Adam and Eve, those teachings of the Western masters that are hard to understand, but must however be believed It says that the Chinese religion is false, fabricated by men.”⁶²⁾

The latter paragraph is the subject of a comment by William L. Schwartz, the son of the Methodist missionary Henry B. Schwartz who settled in Okinawa in 1906, in notes published eighty years later by Edward E. Bollinger. W. L. Schwartz read the text of Furet’s letter in Francisque Marnas’s history of the Roman Catholic revival in 19th-century Japan, and plausibly suggests that it could be the work of Arai Hakuseki, either his *Sairan Igen* (A look at the world in a foreign language), written 1713 on the basis of information gathered in Nagasaki, including Matteo Ricci’s views on China, or his *Seiyō Kibun* (Hearing about the West) of 1715, which draws upon his conversations with the Jesuit Giovanni Battista Sidotti whose untimely penetration in Japan cost him his life.⁶³⁾ Whoever might be its author, such a book could not but excite the missionaries’ curiosity, and one may think, considering their eagerness to resume the evangelization of Japan, that Ichiki Shirō definitely knew that. But in a context of a strict ban on Christianity, the presentation of that book raises questions. Was it meant to reassure them as priests, and to instill a friendly atmosphere and win their trust? Did Ichiki Shirō himself choose to bring the book or was it a gesture decided beforehand with his associates, either in Kagoshima or in Okinawa? So far, none of these questions finds an answer in the Japanese sources.

7. Conclusion

Shimazu Nariakira’s policy of opening to commerce remained limited in scope, as compared to what was going to occur just a few years later in Yokohama, Nagasaki or Kōbe. Although he fostered technological development associated with foreign exchanges, along with a moderate reshaping of the political system, he was probably not prepared to accept the fast growing presence of foreigners on domestic soil or the remodeling of Japanese society. His representation of Japan was more that of a fortress in need

of reinforcement than of a market open to competing international interests.

Despite his image as a hardliner of the *sonnō jōi* (Revere the emperor, expel the foreign barbarians) movement — due mainly to his involvement in the Namamugi incident, rather than to his role in the civil war that led to the fall of the shōgunal regime —⁶⁴ his rival and *de facto* successor, Shimazu Hisamitsu, soon implemented the same policy. In Kagoshima, the Shūseikan complex continued its activities aiming for mastery of Western industrial processes. By 1862–63, Satsuma had already bought four second-hand warships and a batch of ten thousand Minié rifles. Commercial exchanges with the West did not take place in Ryūkyū as previously planned, but in Nagasaki and other Japanese ports, or in China, and Satsuma merchants made important profits by exporting a large share of the Japanese production of cotton.⁶⁵

In 1864, Godai Tomoatsu, a navy specialist who had been captured during the British attack on Kagoshima in August 1863,⁶⁶ took up Shimazu Nariakira's idea of sending students to Western countries and presented a project along similar lines to Shimazu Hisamitsu. The project was carried out in the following year, although the edict prohibiting travel abroad was still in force, with the dispatch of nineteen young officers from Satsuma (as well as a refugee from the Tosa domain) to Britain with the aims of studying Western sciences and acquiring technology.⁶⁷

If we allow ourselves indulgence in speculative history, we may wonder what would have happened if Satsuma had actually started trading with France in 1859, an assumption that includes both Shimazu Nariakira's escape from an untimely death and a modicum of optimism as to the French reaction to his pressing request. A logical consequence of that new situation would have been that the French government would have followed a different policy towards Japan through the 1860s. Instead of siding blindly with the shōgunal regime and condemning all those, Western diplomats or French merchants, who established contacts or did business with dissident domains, in particular with Satsuma, as its representative Léon Roches did from 1864 through 1867, its posture would certainly have been more careful, and not unlike Britain's.

As for the Edo government, which would probably have been deprived of the French technological assistance, and notably of the construction of the Yokosuka arsenal, its fate could hardly have been different, save if Satsuma, made even stronger and more dynamic by engaging in international trade from an earlier period, had managed to forge an alliance with it in time, instead of embracing the cause of its most resolute opponents and of the imperial restoration. That the French would not have been so thoroughly committed to the continuation of the Edo government would have been of no real consequence indeed, as compared with the constant weakening of its authority, for right or wrong reasons, since the 1850s. Despite its policy of military modernization, which in fact owes much to Shimazu Nariakira's pioneering steps, it was too embedded in its routines and not sufficiently permeable to domestic or foreign advice to undertake serious reforms within a short time.

The opening of Satsuma to Western trade in 1846, as a result of the pressure exerted

by the French on Ryūkyū, would of course have been far more consequential for the future, provided that Edo, under the enlightened guidance of Abe Masahiro, had followed the same path. With greater probability, we are left to think that if Satsuma had been involved in international trade as early as the end of the 1850s, the xenophobic movement would have been of a lesser intensity. The bombardment of its capital by the British Navy would have been unlikely to occur, and a number of Japanese and foreigners would certainly have been spared the swords of uncompromising patriots.

*The author wishes to express his deepest thanks to Professor A. P. Jenkins (Okinawa Prefectural University of Arts) for his careful reading of this article, and especially for his kind assistance in rendering the translation of Furet's letter, with all its ambiguous turns of phrase, as faithful as possible to the original.

Notes

- 1) Kerr (1958), pp. 345–347.
- 2) On Furet's life and missionary work, see Beillevaire (1999).
- 3) The date "September 8" appears in parentheses, following "Today", at the beginning of the third page of the letter, but the lack of variation of ink or writing compared with the previous page leads us to think that the author started that page after a lapse of time. The deictic word "Today" more likely involves the first two pages.
- 4) Archives of the Foreign Missions Society of Paris (hereafter AMEP), vol. 569, pp. 283–289. The occasional ellipsis and italicized words, employed in place of underlings, are Furet's. A Japanese translation by Professor Kawahira Hiroichi (University of the Ryukyus) appeared in the issues of January 4 and 5, 1995, of the *Ryūkyū Shinpō* with comments by Professor Haraguchi Izumi (Kagoshima University) in a subsequent series of articles. The entirety was thereafter published in Haraguchi (1997). On the French presence in Okinawa, see Beillevaire (2001).
- 5) Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte, who ruled over the French under the title and name of Emperor Napoléon III from 1852 to 1870.
- 6) Admiral François Nicolas Guérin is the signatory of the French-Ryūkyū convention concluded on November 24, 1855.
- 7) The Marziou Company, or "Marziou et Cie. Union maritime" (Marziou & Co. Maritime Union), was created in 1855 by Victor Marziou, a ship owner in Le Havre. A man of faith and a friend of the missionaries, Marziou is known for having opened the first St. Vincent de Paul circle in his town. In 1845, associated with Auguste Marceau, a former commander in the Royal Navy and his probable inspiration, he had founded the "Société de l'Océanie" (Oceania Company), which aimed both at improving the contacts between the Catholic missions scattered throughout the Pacific and at establishing new trading posts, thus profitably combining religion and commerce. Eventually, two ships, the *Arche d'alliance* and the *Stella del mare*, were chartered thanks to various sources of financial support, among which those of the King of Sardinia and of the chambers of commerce of Rouen and Amiens. But the three ventures they undertook ended in failure. Weighed down with debts, the Oceania Company was legally dissolved in 1854. Meanwhile, on January 29, 1847, Marziou had already set up another company, "Marziou et Cie. Union maritime", which he managed himself. A new company, bearing the same name, was registered on August 4, 1855. Their records having disappeared, the links between those companies remain obscure. See O'Reilly (1930), Montalembert (1997).
- 8) *Digitus Dei est hic*, an often-used expression which has its origin in *Exodus* 8: 19.
- 9) For the sake of harmony, all the dates are given with reference to the Western calendar. When appropriate, the Japanese date is also indicated in parenthesis. The primary sources for the following presentation

of the objectives, background and course of Ichiki's mission in Okinawa are (pages given hereafter center on the conduct of the mission proper): Ichiki Shirō (1995), *Shimazu Nariakira genkōroku* (Records of Shimazu Nariakira's words and deeds, documents compiled by Ichiki Shirō), pp. 79–146; Ikeda Toshihiko (1994), *Shimazu Nariakira-kō den* (The legacy of Lord Shimazu Nariakira), pp. 449–455; Kagoshima-ken ishin shiryō hensanjo (1983), *Kagoshima-ken shiryō: Nariakira-kō shiryō* (Historical documents of Kagoshima Prefecture: Documents relating to Lord Nariakira), vol. 3, pp. 374–399, 472–483 (both of the two latter sources refer to *Sekishitsu hikō*, Ichiki Shirō's private compilation of personal documents); Ichiki Shirō (1980), *Ichiki Shirō kun jijoden* (Ichiki Shirō's autobiography); Ichiki Shirō's succinct journal, limited to the year 1857 (Ansei 4), published by Matsumoto Ryōta (1997); Kokkō-sha hen (1899), *Terukuni-kō kankyūroku* (Past records of Lord Terukuni, Nariakira's posthumous name), pp. 77–82. Important pieces of the correspondence on the subject are also quoted in Kōshaku Shimazu-ke hensanjo (1968), *Sappan kaigun-shi* (Naval history of Satsuma), vol. 1, pp. 963–1006, and Kagoshima-ken hen (1939), *Kagoshima-ken shi* (History of Kagoshima Prefecture), vol. 3, 1939, pp. 179–189. Other works were consulted with interest: Kanbashi Norimasa (1993), *Shimazu Nariakira*, pp. 168–186; Uehara Kenzen (1981), *Sakoku to han bōeki: Satsuma-han no Ryūkyū mitsubōeki* (National isolation and domania trade: The fief of Satsuma and the secret trade with Ryūkyū), pp. 291–300; Sameshima Shimeta (1989), *Shimazu Nariakira no zenyō* (A full portrait of Shimazu Nariakira), pp. 320–322, *passim*. Although a fiction for its invented dialogues and mental portrayal of the protagonists, *Nangokuki* (literally, Relation from a southern gaol) by Yonami Takeo (2009) is a remarkable work, focusing on Itarashiki Chōchū's involvement in the 1857–58 crisis and its consequences, which gathers a wealth of data drawn from primary sources. In his comments on Ichiki Shirō's journal, Matsumoto Ryōta points out minor inconsistencies between that document and *Shimazu Nariakira genkōroku*, and also, secondarily, with Ichiki Shirō's autobiography, as to both the chronology of Ichiki Shirō's activities in Kagoshima and Okinawa, and details of the instructions given to Ryūkyūan officials. These inconsistencies, however, are of no significance for this presentation.

- 10) Ichiki Shirō (1995)
- 11) Yamada Sōemon and Katayama Hachirō who both attended the meeting in the Ni-no-maru tea room on October 6 were responsible for reporting on the construction cost of the ships and trade opportunities in China, given the fact that the Chinese trade to Nagasaki had now come to a stop due to the presence of foreigners in China.
- 12) Furet's letter shows that the missionaries had an accurate grasp of the situation: “[Satsuma] can do nothing *officially* without the support of the government of Yedo, and it probably does not count much on that government to have the advantage of seeing the foreigners come and trade in its ports.”
- 13) Kōshaku Shimazu-ke hensanjo (1968), p. 1057.
- 14) Commodore Perry received the same answer when he negotiated the U.S.-Japan Treaty of Friendship in March 1854. This led him to conclude a treaty with Ryūkyū in July 1854.
- 15) This was all the more ill-timed in that, Edo being no longer officially concerned with Ryūkyū, Satsuma had authorized the Dutch to carry back their compatriots directly from Okinawa as a goodwill gesture, even though the rule that had applied to all shipwreck victims until then prescribed that they should first be transported to Nagasaki.
- 16) In Japanese, it is the word *jōyaku*, ordinarily translated as “treaty,” which applied to the formal agreements successively concluded by the USA, France and the Netherlands with Ryūkyū. However, these documents were usually referred to officially as “conventions” in the West (or a “compact” in the case of the agreement signed by Commodore Perry).
- 17) Most notably Saga, which could pride itself on having constructed in 1850, two years before Satsuma, the first operational reverberating furnace. Yet, it is Satsuma that constructed the first blast furnace, in 1854.
- 18) Ichiki Shirō (1995), p. 41.
- 19) During its construction the *Shōheimaru* was allegedly a “Ryūkyūan ship.” In 1853, in expectation of the coming of the American expedition, while the ban on the construction of large scale vessels was still in force, Nariakira obtained from Edo tacit permission for the construction of one large ship, comparable

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- in size to those used by the Ryūkyūans to make the crossing to China, and equipped with guns, but intended for navigation in Ryūkyūan waters only. The ban having been lifted on October 17 1853, the ship was officially acknowledged as Japanese and renamed *Shōheimaru* one month after its launch. See Sameshima Shimeta (1989), pp. 326–327, 331–337; Kagoshima-ken hen (1939), p. 62.
- 20) Two years before, in 1853, Shimazu Nariakira dispatched Sonoda Jittoku to Okinawa in order both to inquire about the possibilities of buying ships and weapons from foreign countries and to study English with Itarashiki Chōchū (Ōwan *pēchin*). His name remains attached to one of the earliest Japanese manuals of English, *Ryūei kokugo*. See Takara Kurayoshi (1983). About that time, the Protestant missionary Bernard Jean Bettelheim, present in Okinawa from 1846 to 1854, was requested by Itarashiki Chōchū to explain “the working of the machinery in steamers” (Bettelheim Journal, April 9, 1853, information communicated by Professor A. P. Jenkins).
 - 21) *Kōshaku Shimazu-ke hensanjo* (1968), p. 963.
 - 22) Three warships, under the command of Admiral Cécille, stationed in the port at Unten from June 1 to July 17 1846. Although the procrastination of the Ryūkyūan officials, who could take advantage of the distant location of the scene of those negotiations from Shuri, as well as the lack of determination on the part of the French, made the attempt unsuccessful, that show of force resulted in the first breach in Edo’s isolationist policy. See Ikuta Sumie (1992), pp. 1–93; Majikina Ankō (1993), p. 309; Sakai (1970), pp. 211–219; Beillevoire (2001), pp. 193–206.
 - 23) One must have in mind that when the commercial treaties were about to be signed, or even in the early period after they came into force, nobody could really predict how Japan’s internal situation would evolve, the degree of leeway that would be granted to foreigners. For that reason, the Ryūkyū Islands were still considered, at least by the French, as a convenient outpost for the management of commercial transactions with Japan.
 - 24) See the articles on “Ichiki Shirō” in *Nihon rekishi gakkai hen* (1981) and Uehara Kenzen (1983 a), in addition to his autobiography, *Ichiki Shirō* (1980).
 - 25) *Ichiki Shirō* (1995), pp. 29–30.
 - 26) Ichiki Shirō was promoted to the rank and office of *Ohiroshiki bantō kaku kachi-metsuke kenkin*, “clerk of the Ohiroshiki with the additional function of lower-ranking overseer”. See *Kōshaku Shimazu-ke hensanjo* (1968), p. 968.
 - 27) *Ichiki Shirō* (1980), p. 931.
 - 28) See Arashiro Toshiaki (2007), Uehara Kenzen (1983 b).
 - 29) The *uēkata* ranked just below the king (*ō*), princes (*ōji*), members of cadet branches of the royal family and scions of former regional lords (*aji* or *anji*).
 - 30) *Ichiki Shirō* (1980), p. 932.
 - 31) *Ichiki Shirō* (1995), pp. 86–97.
 - 32) Kagoshima-ken ishin shiryō hensanjo (1983), pp. 374–377; *Kōshaku Shimazu-ke hensanjo* (1968), pp. 964–966.
 - 33) In case information on the commercial operation leaked to Edo, about which Shimazu Nariakira, in fact, hardly cared, the instructions were to explain that it had resulted from pressures exerted by the French on Ryūkyū.
 - 34) Following the French-Ryūkyū convention concluded in November 1855, the French missionaries were allowed the construction of a house on Matsuo hill, a place they had chosen.
 - 35) In a letter to the Japanologist Léon de Rosny, sent from Hong Kong and dated October 12, 1855, Furet writes that “His Majesty the King and the Regent are under the influence of a few Japanese mandarins who conceal their true identity to foreigners,” and that Itarishiki Chōchū is one of them. He further describes him as a “Prime Minister and interpreter” who “supports the Japanese policy in everything and always, [and] seems to tell the Regent what he has to do, although he just pretends to be an interpreter.” “No mandarin dares to say a word when he speaks.” See Furet (1861), p. 6. Furet had previously expressed the same opinion in a letter to Captain Bonnet of September 8, 1855: “I believe he is one of the Japanese who influence Loochoo.” See AMEP, Furet personal file.
 - 36) AMEP, vol. 569, pp. 384–386, letter dated November 9, 1857, from Barthelémy Girard to Napoléon

Libois, the procurator of the Foreign Missions Society of Paris in Hong Kong.

- 37) Nomura Chōsen was one of the signatories of the treaty with France in November 1855.
- 38) On Bettelheim's missionary and medical activities in Okinawa, see Jenkins (2005).
- 39) Kagoshima-ken ishin shiryō hensanjo (1983), p. 380; Ichiki Shirō (1995), pp. 96–97. Charles Gutzlaff, with the assistance of the castaway Yamamoto Otokichi, published in 1836, at Singapore, a translation in *katakana* of the Gospel of St. John and of the Acts of the Apostles. In the following year, he also published the translation of other portions of the Bible. Unsurprisingly, these publications being of Protestant origin are nowhere mentioned in the correspondence of the French missionaries. The books on Japan, which could be either in French or in English, remain unidentified.
- 40) Kagoshima-ken ishin shiryō hensanjo (1983), pp. 383–385; Ichiki Shirō (1995), pp. 136–138; Kōshaku Shimazu-ke hensanjo (1968), pp. 979–982. In his letter of March 5, Shimazu Nariakira specified that the warship, and also the merchant ship at that time, should be equipped with a 340–350 horsepower motor.
- 41) This sum was equivalent to 190,000 units (*mai*) of *yōgin*, a currency of the late Edo period and early Meiji era made of imported silver. The first payment was to be of 60,000 *ryō*. Another estimate for the total expenditure, including the guns, amounted to 220,000 *ryō*. See Kōshaku Shimazu-ke hensanjo (1968), p. 984; Sameshima Shimeta (1989), p. 321.
- 42) Since the 1830s, for the handling of relations with Western visitors, the Ryūkyūan authorities resorted to an *ad hoc* system of governmental functions based on a three-tier hierarchy that roughly paralleled the official one. The officials periodically appointed to fill those positions, usually corresponding with their actual rank in the state hierarchy, often used Chinese pseudonyms to conceal their identity, but this is not the case here.
- 43) Among other sources, see Kagoshima-ken ishin shiryō hensanjo (1983), p. 399 and Ichiki Shirō (1980), pp. 948–949.
- 44) Furet does not mention that point, and it remains uncertain whether the payment actually took place.
- 45) Ichiki Shirō (1980), p. 954.
- 46) Letter to Napoléon Libois, AMEP 569, p. 437.
- 47) Letter to Joseph Voisin, June 2, 1859, AMEP 568, p. 1266.
- 48) Letter to Napoléon Libois, June 30–July 7, 1859, AMEP 569, p. 450 b, c.
- 49) Brooke (1986), p. 107.
- 50) Letter to Napoléon Libois, June 30–July 7, 1859, AMEP 569, p. 450 d.
- 51) Mounicou (1976), p. 56. Paul C. Blum's translation of Father Mounicou's diary dates that entry 11 March. This is an error, correspondence with other sources apart, as can be seen on the French original, "Journal du P. Mounicou (1856–1864)," *Bulletin de la Société des Missions étrangères de Paris*, 63, mars 1927, p. 138.
- 52) No French physician author named Bucchart, Burgard, or any similar name, was found. This could be the famous Dutch physician and scientist Hermann Boerhaave (1668–1738), Būruhāfe in Japanese, whose teaching was influential among Japanese *rangakusha*.
- 53) The designation of Ōshima as a "dependency of Ryūkyū" shows that the missionaries had no knowledge of the administrative subjection of that island to Satsuma which resulted from the invasion of Okinawa in 1609, nor, with any precision, of that episode itself.
- 54) Diocesan archives of Le Mans (Département of Sarthe), 9th letter of Furet to Charles Paumard, dated March 19, 1858, completed on October 10. The latter, then assistant superior at the seminary of Précigné (same département), was a former colleague of Furet from the time he was teaching sciences and mathematics at Précigné. This explains the witty style of the letter, permitted only with a close friend.
- 55) In French, the phrase is in the plural.
- 56) Letter to Joseph Voisin who held the function of director at the seminary of the Foreign Missions Society in Paris. AMEP, vol. 568, pp. 1180–1183, dated March 5, 1858, completed on October 12.
- 57) After his return, for health reasons, from Okinawa where he had spent one and a half years, Eugène Mermet awaited the opening of Japan at the Procure in Hong Kong, headed by Napoléon Libois. The only extant letter sent by Furet to Libois during that period, dated October 23, 1858, states nothing about Ichiki Shirō or Satsuma. There is no letter from Furet to Mermet preserved in the archives of the Foreign Mis-

- sions Society.
- 58) Letter to Jean Rousseille, assistant procurator of the Foreign Missions Society of Paris in Hong Kong. AMEP, vol. 568, pp. 1184–1186, dated October 24, 1858.
 - 59) Diocesan archives of Le Mans (Département of Sarthe), 11th letter of Furet to Charles Paumard, dated January 15, 1859.
 - 60) Despite the humorous tone, the reference to professorship betrays Furet’s sense of self-importance, which not infrequently filters through his correspondence, on account of his higher education and scientific training.
 - 61) Beillevaire (1999), pp. 54, 61.
 - 62) AMEP, vol. 568, pp. 1188–1190, letter dated October 25, 1858.
 - 63) See Bollinger (1991), p. 174; Marnas (1896).
 - 64) The murder of the British merchant Charles Lennox Richardson and the severe wounding of two of his companions by members of his bodyguard on September 14, 1862, at Namamugi, a village between Yokohama and Kanagawa. It resulted in the bombardment of Kagoshima by the British Navy in August 1863, what Japanese history terms the “Anglo-Satsuma War” (*Satsuei-sensō*).
 - 65) Haraguchi (1997), pp. 11, 17–18.
 - 66) See the preceding note.
 - 67) That mission to Europe, which was led by Niiro Gyōbu, comprised men aged thirteen to thirty-three. Godai Tomoatsu himself took part in it, along with men whose names went down in history, such as Terajima Munenori, Mori Arinori or Samejima Naonobu. By 1865, the Edo government had already sent three diplomatic missions to the West. Satsuma’s mission was preceded by the departure of five men from Chōshū in 1862, for the same study purposes, but it resulted from individual initiative.

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