

The North Pacific Surveying Expedition and  
US foreign policy towards Japan:  
The connection to Commodore Perry's expedition to Japan  
by *GOTO Atsushi*

The research to date on the fleet of the United States North Pacific Exploring and Surveying Expedition (NPSE), which visited Shimoda in May 1855, has concluded that the fleet's aim was to test the effectiveness of the treaty of peace and amity between Japan and the United States, known as the Kanagawa Convention (concluded 31 March 1854), under direct orders issued by the US Secretary of the Navy, despite the fact that the Convention had not yet been concluded when the NPSE departed from Norfolk, Virginia, in June 1853. The purpose of this article is to reveal more concrete detail the diplomatic purposes and reasons behind the NPSE's visit to Japan.

It was in August 1852 that the NPSE was scheduled to be dispatched to survey the North Pacific maritime region, as part of US Navy and State Department policy aimed at challenging British hegemony and protecting whale fisheries in the region. While these objectives were similar to those of Commodore Perry's expedition to Japan, the NPSE also intended to negotiate with countries that Perry had not visited. This means that both Perry's expedition and the NPSE were equally important to US diplomacy regarding the North Pacific region.

However, the two expeditions did not always cooperate. For example, the NPSE had to suspend its surveying activities when it arrived at Hong Kong in May 1854, because Perry had concentrated his vessels in Japan, leaving no US ships in the South China Sea to protect American merchants during the confusion created by the Taiping Rebellion.

Finally, the author shows that when the NPSE did arrive in Shimoda, its aim was to open negotiations with Japan, not on the orders from the Navy, but on the decision of the NPSE Commander John Rodgers himself. Before heading for Japan, the NPSE visited the Ryukyu Kingdom, where Rodgers judged that the

treaty between the Ryukyus and the United States, which had been concluded by Perry, was being violated by the government of the Ryukyus, a perception that probably influenced his decision to proceed to Japan.

Contrary to the widely held view, the author shows that the Secretary of the Navy did not order the NPSE to visit Japan with the purpose of testing the effectiveness of the Convention of Kanagawa and calls for a reconsideration of the character of US diplomacy regarding the Pacific Ocean region, in general, and Japan, in particular during the mid-19th century.