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THE VIEWS OF VARIOUS HANS ON THE OPENING OF THE COUNTRY

1. PREFACE

Although the country was closed to foreign intercourse in the Tokugawa period, there were, in the latter half of the period, many who were well versed in things Western, with the consequent gradual growth of progressive ideas among the people. This tendency received a strong stimulus from the visit of Commodore Perry to these shores. There then arose an acute controversy as to whether the country should remain closed or be opened, and diverse opinions found expression in many quarters on this subject. In the present article, I propose to deal at some length with the views held by the various Hans (clans) on some highly controversial diplomatic issues arising in those days.

The American Note presented by Commodore Perry to the Shogunate in June of the sixth year of Kaei (1853 A.D.) was shown by the *rōju* (Ministers of the Shogunate) on July 1st of that year to all Hans, which later submitted their unreserved views on it to the Shogunate. Even before the Shogunate formally invited the Hans to state their views, five memorials were submitted to it. One of these memorials urged the exclusion of foreigners; the emphasised the need of strong defences; another stressed the importance of avoiding war, while the last supported trade with foreign countries. As these embodied the views, not of any particular Hans, but of either individual samurai or individual scholars, I shall here pass them over.

2. VARIOUS VIEWS ON THE AMERICAN NOTE

The views submitted by the various Hans on the American Note may roughly be classified into the following five categories:—

(1) The Hans that stated no definite views or which merely assured the Shogunate of their readiness to abide by whatever decision it might reach. The following four Hans come within this category :

Akashi (which confessed its inability to judge of the merits of the case, and simply promised to abide faithfully by any decision that might be reached by the Shogunate.)

Ashimori (which also pleaded inability to decide, though it urged the need of a peaceful settlement.)

Hiroshima (which said that some extraordinary measure might be necessary in meeting the situation. In time of emergency, it said, it was prepared to support the Shogunate.)

Karatsu (which, regarding the situation as very grave, withheld any expression of view, at the same time signifying readiness to obey whatever instructions might be given it by the Shogunate.)

(2) The Hans that urged war or the exclusion of foreigners. Eight Hans—Morioka, Mito, Kuwana, Tsu, Fukui, Matsue, Yanagawa and Saga—fall within this category. The Morioka Han declared that war was in any case unavoidable. The Ex-Lord of Mito gave ten reasons for his stand against conciliation. For one thing, he dwelt on the evil effects of trade, and urged the Shogunate to decide on an appeal to arms and to issue the necessary instructions to all Hans. The Kuwana Han urged rigid adherence to the prohibition of trade which, it said, was the established policy followed by Japan ever since the Tokugawa régime was founded. If this led to war, the blame lay with American which provoked it, it averred. The Tsu Han was for rejecting the American demand for trade, and advised the Shogunate to open hostilities, if challenged. The Fukui Han expressed the view that it would be disastrous for a country of Japan's limited resources to trade with countries with insatiable desires. It further repudiated the view that trade should be allowed for a certain fixed period, and urged the Shogunate to order all Hans to make preparations for war. The Matsue Han insisted that if America refused to listen to reason, war should be

declared. The Yanagawa Han suspected the American ships of piratical designs, and declared that if their Commander persisted in his unreasonable demand, an appeal should be made to arms. It also emphasised the need for strong coast defence. The Saga Han was also against the opening of trade and urged the necessity of banning the entry of foreigners.

(3) The Hans that, while urging the rejection of the American demands, stressed the necessity of settling the situation peacefully. The following twenty-six Hans belong to this category: Sendai, Yonezawa, Nihonmatsu, Asoo, Iino, Iida, Matsushiro, Kawagoe, Numadzu, Nagoya, Kanazawa, Sonobe, Tatsuno, Okayama, Hagi, Tsuwano, Tokushima, Uwajima, Imaharu, Kochi, Mori, Kurume, Kumamoto, Udo, Kagoshima and Sadohara.

Nagoya opposed the idea of foreign trade on the ground that it was against the traditional policy; Nihonmatsu and Iida were of opinion that trade should be allowed no country except China and Holland; Sendai and Sadohara saw no benefit in trade; Hagi thought that foreign trade would weaken the country; and Okayama saw no necessity of trade, basing its contention on the ground that, while Japan could supply her own needs, she had no surplus products for export. It is noteworthy that the view was widely held that the coast defence should be strengthened.

The Kagoshima Han opposed warlike action on the score that with her inadequate coast defence, Japan stood little chance of victory. Regarding trade, it stated that it was not advisable for the Shogunate definitely and immediately to reject the American demand. Nor did it think it wise to reject it when the American ships re-visited Japan the next year, as such a course might lead to war. The best way was to put America off as much as possible and induce her ships to leave Japan by explaining to their commander why the opening of trade at an early date was impossible. The Kagoshima Han was nevertheless of opinion that if strong national defence was provided by energetic measures, Japan

would be in a position to defeat America in war in three years' time. The Uwajima Han also was for the rejection of the American demands. The Kanazawa Han recommended a peaceful course, though it was against granting trade facilities to America. If trade was opened with America, it argued, Japan would find it difficult to reject similar overtures from other countries, and this would give rise to no end of trouble with foreign countries, it declared.

(4) The Hans that advocated the acceptance of the American demand. Four Hans—Kakegawa, Marugame, Yoshida and Oka—held that as Japan's victory in war was doubtful, the American wishes should be met, if partially, so as to settle the situation peacefully. The Shibata Han, while suggesting the acceptance of the American demand for the sake of a peaceful settlement, urged that greater efforts should be made to strengthen defences. The six Hans of Sakura, Muramatsu, Obama, Hachiman, Tottori and Nakatsu were for accepting the American request and opening trade with that country. The Oshi, the Iwamurata and the Tsuyama Hans advocated the opening of trade with America for a certain specified period. It was presumably because the American Note carried a suggestion that Japan should try trade for some years by way of experiment, at any rate, and should afterwards suspend it, if the result was found unsatisfactory, that the advisability or otherwise of trading for a certain specified period engaged the attention of many Hans at the time. Altogether fourteen Hans were in favour of accepting the American demands, though their views differed in matters of detail.

(5) The Hans that positively supported trade. Unlike all other Hans, the Hikone and the Fukuoka Hans emphasised the advantages of trade and urged the Shogunate not only to accept the American demands but to engage actively in foreign trade in order to increase national wealth.

It is interesting to note that in a memorial it submitted to the Shogunate under date of August 10th of the sixth year of Kaei (1853), the Hikone Han suggested a different

course. In that memorial, it pointed out a marked difference between the customs in Japan and those in foreign countries and emphasised the need of rigid adherence to the traditional exclusionist policy of the Shogunate. In Japan, it said, the samurai valued uprightness, courage and faith but despised lucre, a trait which it contrasted with the sordid regard of foreigners for monetary gains. Even in an autograph letter addressed by a foreign sovereign to the Ruler of another country, reference was shamelessly made to the profitableness of trade, it remarked contemptuously. To have intercourse with such peoples would be to court trouble. It then proceeded to extol the wisdom shown by the forefathers of the Shogun in laying down the policy of vetoing Christianity and closing the country to foreign intercourse, declaring that it was in the permanent interests of the country that this policy should be unalterably upheld. The memorial nevertheless closed with the suggestion that, instead of remaining isolated from the rest of the world and living in dread of foreign countries, Japan should try to make her courage and prestige felt abroad so that foreigners might hold her in high regard. This concluding remark seems to foreshadow the change which subsequently came over the attitude of that particular Han towards the question of trade. Indeed, in another memorial submitted under date of August 29th of the same year, the Hikone Han admitted that it was no longer possible to adhere to the exclusionist policy. It said that as the exclusionist policy did not ban intercourse with China and Holland, this opening should be utilized in dealing with other foreign countries. It would be unwise to open hostilities; the necessary preparations must first be completed in order to ensure certain victory. Although foreign trade was officially forbidden, there was no reason why the policy laid down long before should be rigidly adhered to in the entirely changed situation. It was in the natural order of things that all countries should supply each other's needs. The best course to follow in the circumstances was to take positive steps to trade with foreign countries, it averred.

The Fukuoka Han, in its memorial dated July 17th of the sixth year of Kaei (1853), suggested that America should be allowed to trade at Nagasaki and that Russia should be treated in a like manner, but that such favour should not be shown Britain and France. In the concluding part, however, this memorial indicated that if the embargo on foreign trade was lifted, prosperity would surely come to Japan and that it was no longer possible to keep Japan closed to foreign intercourse. It took the line that trading with foreign countries was not against precedent.

3. THE VIEWS ON THE SO-CALLED GRAVE AFFAIR

Commodore Perry came to Uraga again in January of the first year of Ansei (1854) to ask for the Shogunate's definite reply, and in March a treaty was concluded. This was a treaty of amity, under which Japan simply agreed to the opening of the two ports of Shimoda and Hakodate to supply to American ships the goods of which they stood in need and to the stationing of an American Consul at Shimoda. When, however, Harris came to Shimoda as American Consul-General in July of the third year of Ansei (1856), he was seeking a more complete treaty. Desirous of conducting negotiations with the Shogunate in this regard, he repeatedly asked the Shogunate for permission to visit Edo (Tokyo). There was much debate as to whether his request should be granted or not, but finally he visited Edo in October of the following year, and on the 26th of the same month, he proposed the conclusion of a treaty of commerce—the event which was popularly known as the “grave affair”. The treaty he proposed provided for the stationing of an American Minister in Edo and free trading between the two countries. On November 6th, he made another proposal to the effect that the open ports should be changed. Following precedent, the Shogunate sought the views of the various Hans on Harris's overtures. The views submitted by the

Hans in response were as follows:—

(1) The Hans that withheld any definite expression of view or which signified readiness to abide by whatever decision the Shogunate might take. To this category belong the seven Hans of Hirosaki, Fukushima, Kasama, Shishido, Iwatsuki, Hamamatsu, and Hiroshima. They stated that the matter was so serious that they were unable to decide either way, but intimated that they were ready to follow the Shogunate's lead in any crisis arising.

(2) The Hans that advocated war. In its memorial submitted in November of the fourth year of Ansei (1857), the Kawagoe Han advised the Shogunate not to accept the American request for permission to station a Minister in Edo. Its memorial dated January of the following year (1858) was more emphatic in recording the Han's opposition to the American proposal. It contended that the entire difference between the habits and customs prevailing in Japan and in America was a fatal bar to friendship. Free trading, if permitted, would excite the nation and cause some people to act recklessly. The only course open to the Shogunate was to resist the American demand by an appeal to arms, and it urged the Shogunate to take a firm resolve and fight that country to the last man.

The Kochi Han, in its memorial, expressed great indignation at the insolent and contemptuous attitude adopted by America, and urged the Shogunate to take resolute steps to uphold its prestige and overpower foreign countries. Although it did not explicitly advocate war, it was obviously ready to fight.

The Hagi Han also advised the Shogunate to take strong measures to preclude national disgrace. It further urged on the Shogunate the necessity of expediting warlike preparations so that war could be waged successfully at any time. The general tenor of its memorial clearly shows that it was ready to risk war.

(3) The Hans that were for rejecting the American demand. Four Hans—Sendai, Kubota, Mito, and Tottori—

were of this opinion, though their views were at variance in details.

In its memorial dated November 20th of the fourth year of Ansei (1857), the Sendai Han urged the Shogunate to reject the American demand. In another memorial under date of May 16th of the following year, however, it charged America with territorial designs and vaguely suggested that the cultivation of friendship and the opening of trade with America were unavoidable in the existing circumstances. It nevertheless pointed out that as it would be a serious matter if the acceptance of the American demand led other countries to ask for trade similarly, the Shogunate must study its course most carefully.

The Kubota Han urged the rejection of the American demand, in its memorial dated November 20th of the fourth year of Ansei (1857). It set its face both against the stationing of an American Minister in Edo and against the opening of ports other than Nagasaki, Shimoda and Hakodate. In the event of trade being permitted, it argued, contraband goods should be clearly defined. In its memorial dated December 28th of the same year, however, the Kubota Han expressed the view that the whole matter should be settled in conformity with the terms of the treaty with Russia.

Nariaki, Ex-Lord of Mito, signified his desire to go to America with three or four million *ronin* (masterless samurai), farmers and *chonin* (tradesmen) under his command to negotiate personally with the American Government regarding its demand. He denounced foreign trade as ruinous to this country. He was evidently bitterly opposed to the idea of an American Minister being stationed in Edo, for he declared that there was a vast difference between the opening of ports as an expedient to gain time in which to complete defences and the acceptance of the American demand for permission to station her Minister in Edo, and urged the Shogun to take a strong stand against the latter.

In his letter dated June 9th of the fifth year of Ansei, however, Nariaki suggested to the Shogun that trade should

be confined to the importation of arms and that consent should be given for an increase in the number of open ports rather than that the stationing of a Minister, the opening of direct trade and the building of Christian churches should be permitted. He further suggested the advisability of providing efficient armaments with the profits accruing from trade. This shows that his former views had undergone some change.

The Tottori Han held that as trade with other countries, even if opened, was not likely to last long, it was better to reject the American demand. It also doubted the wisdom of granting the American request for permission to station her diplomatic representative in Edo. If, as a result of the development of trade, Japan became exhausted, civil commotion might ensue, and such a contingency, if it arose, would be turned to account by foreign countries. This would naturally excite feudal lords, big and small. Altogether, the Tottori Han concluded, acceptance of the American demands would make for national insecurity.

(4) The Hans that advocated acceptance. Some counselled acceptance of the American demand for the sake of a peaceful settlement, while some others suggested the conclusion of a short-term treaty. The advisability of opening new ports and drawing up suitable plans for enriching the country and strengthening defences was also urged by some Hans. Sixteen Hans were in favour of acceptance, these being Morioka, Aidzu, Yada, Oshi, Nagaoka, Takatō, Nishio, Kuwana, Hikone, Obama, Akashi, Himeji, Tsuyama, Takamatsu, Hamada and Fukuoka.

The Aidzu Han thought it unavoidable in the circumstances to conclude a simple treaty with a limited term of validity. While accepting the American demand for the opening of more ports, Japan should take measures to enrich the country and increase her military strength. The Oshi Han said that although Japan was a self-supporting country, it was advisable to accept the American demands, as it would be hazardous to go to war. When Japan had become suf-

ficiently strong, this arrangement should be revoked. Its suggestion was that the treaty to be signed should be valid for fifteen years.

The Nagaoka Han urged that Japan should abandon her ways and follow the rules and practices usually adopted by foreign countries. This was tantamount to giving its support to the conclusion of a treaty of commerce.

The Akashi Han, in its memorial submitted about November 27th, supported acceptance of the American demands, while at the same time emphasising the necessity of strengthening national defence. In another memorial presented a month later, however, it confessed that it had no good suggestion to make, adding that it would obey the Shogunate's directions in the event of a revolutionary reform being effected.

The Tsuyama Han, in its former memorial dated November 27th, expressed the view that as it would be difficult to reject the demand for trade, the only alternative was to conclude a short-term treaty. In its December memorial, it voiced opposition to the idea of an American Minister being stationed in Edo, and suggested a policy of procrastination as the best to be followed in the circumstances. On the other hand, it maintained that both immediate and permanent interests should be taken into careful consideration in deciding the attitude towards trade, and said that trade might well be permitted on the understanding that it would be suspended in two or three years, should it prove harmful. The general tone of its argument shows that this Han was in favour of acceptance of the American demand. The Hamada Han took the line that trade should be permitted for a fixed period of twenty or thirty years.

(5) The Hans that positively advocated trade. Four Hans—Fukui, Tokushima, Yanagawa and Kagoshima—not only supported acceptance of the American demand but urged the necessity of taking positive steps to develop foreign trade in consonance with the trend of the times.

In its memorial dated November 26th of the fourth year of Ansei, the Fukui Han declared that as the military power of the country depended on national wealth, trade should be carried on actively so that Japan might become the richest country in the world. It further pointed out that in order to lead others, instead of being led by others, it was essential that Japan should take the initiative in everything. She should strive to annex small countries and endeavour to carry on trade with all countries vigorously. In another memorial dated February 18th of the fifth year of Ansei, the Fukui Han described Edo and Osaka as suitable places for international trade, and urged the Shogunate to permit the feudal lords and rich merchants to carry on trade with foreign countries. It expatiated on the need of encouraging Japanese navigation, of importing American machinery and of engaging American experts, at the same time emphasising the advisability of sending Japanese to China and Western countries for trading and other purposes. Its views were thus very progressive.

The Tokushima Han regarded the situation then prevailing as one ordained by Heaven, and advised the Shogunate to accept the American demand (in its memorial dated November 25th of the fourth year of Ansei). In a later memorial dated December 27th, it urged the Shogunate to open Shinagawa, Edo, and Yokohama and to send Japanese ships abroad to trade. In still another memorial dated June 2nd of the following year, the Tokushima Han reminded the Shogunate of the evils of war. It would throw the nation into distress and claim heavy sacrifices of life, it said. If defeated, Japan would have to sue for peace by ceding land to the enemy, as was usually done in foreign wars. Such a situation would increase America's desire for more land, resulting in constant trouble. The Opium War cost China very dear, and it was well for Japan to profit by China's experience, it averred. In this way, the Tokushima Han disapproved of Japan's doing anything to provoke war.

The Yanagawa Han urged the necessity of concluding

treaties with America, Russia, Britain and France and of effecting a revolutionary reform. It also argued that as trade thrives on products, an inquiry should be made into the state of domestic production, at the same time devising good plans for increasing production.

The Kagoshima Han took the line that such items of the American demand as might be harmless should be accepted without delay. Once trade was opened, Japanese merchantmen should be sent to many foreign countries so that Japan's sphere of activity might be extended all over the world, it contended.

4. CONCLUSION

It will be seen from the above summary of the views submitted by the various Hans to the Shogunate on two occasions—first, in regard to the American Note, and second, about the so-called grave affair—that some change had taken place in the attitude of at least some Hans in the interval.

(1) The five Hans of Sendai, Mito, Kawagoe, Kochi and Hagi advocated war or rejection of the American demand on both occasions. To be more exact, Mito urged war on the first occasion and advocated rejection of the American demand on the second, while Kawagoe, Kochi and Hagi counselled rejection first and urged war next. Sendai was in favour of rejection on both occasions.

(2) The Tottori Han was, on the former occasion, for accepting the American demand, but on the latter occasion advised rejection of it.

(3) On the other hand, the Morioka and the Kuwana Hans urged war in their first memorials, but in their second memorials expressed themselves in support of acceptance of the American demand.

(4) Of the four Hans of Fukui, Yanagawa, Tokushima and Kagoshima, which in their second memorials equally proclaimed the necessity of carrying on trade vigorously, the first-mentioned two Hans urged war and the exclusion of

foreigners, while the other two Hans expressed themselves against trade in their first memorials. Thus, these four Hans held a negative opinion at first, but later became converted to a positive view.

* * *

What general conclusions can be drawn from the views submitted by the various Hans? It is, of course, impossible to form any definite idea of the views prevalent among all the feudal lords of the time on the basis of the views so far summarized, since it was only 54 Hans on the former occasion, and 34 Hans on the latter occasion, out of a total of about 270 Hans, that submitted their views at all. As, moreover, four Hans on the former occasion and seven Hans on the latter occasion stated in their memorials that they had no definite opinions on the subjects regarding which their views were sought, the Hans that expressed themselves definitely numbered only 50 on the former occasion and 27 on the latter. It is nevertheless possible to infer the general trend of opinion from the views recorded.

It is noticeable that the views expressed by the same Hans on the two different occasions were often not in accord. But exactly how this change of opinion came about in the years intervening between the sixth year of Kaei and the fourth or fifth year of Ansei, it is difficult to ascertain. This notwithstanding, it is possible to form a general idea as to how the American overtures were received in this country.

(1) It is noteworthy that the Hans that supported war or the exclusion of foreigners were very few. So far as the memorials submitted by feudal lords are concerned, only eight out of the total of 54 Hans, or 14.6 per cent., urged warlike action for the exclusion of foreigners, on the former occasion, and only three out of the total of 34 Hans, or 8.8 per cent., supported such a course on the latter occasion.

(2) On the former occasion, the view urging a peaceful solution while at the same time advocating rejection of the

American demand was predominant, 26 Hans, or 48.1 per cent., taking this stand. On the latter occasion, only four Hans, or 11.7 per cent., out of the total of 34, held views against acceptance of the American demand.

(3) The view in favour of acceptance was expressed by 14 Hans, or 25.9 per cent., out of the total of 54, on the former occasion, but on the latter occasion, 16 Hans, or 47 per cent., out of the total of 34 supported this course.

(4) Whereas, on the former occasion, two Hans, or 3.6 per cent., urged the necessity of opening and carrying on trade vigorously, four Hans, or 11.7 per cent., expressed themselves in favour of this course, on the latter occasion.

(5) Generally speaking, the view in favour of rejection of the American demand found wider approval on the former occasion than the view in support of war and the exclusion of foreigners. It seems that the dominant sentiment was to avoid war, but none the less to oppose the American demand. On the latter occasion, the general tendency was to accept the American demand for trade. It is particularly noteworthy that the view advocating positive measures to encourage trade witnessed a marked growth. This shows that with changes in social conditions in the interval from the sixth year of Kaei and the fourth or fifth year of Ansei, the need of opening up the country and carrying on trade was gradually borne in upon the public mind. It is generally believed that the view advocating the exclusion of foreigners was dominant in the closing years of the Tokugawa Shogunate, but it seems difficult to draw such a conclusion, at least from the memorials submitted by the various feudal lords to the Shogunate.

(6) A few words may be added in regard to the Hans that indicated in their memorials that they had no opinions to express or that they were ready to do the bidding of the Shogunate in all circumstances. This attitude does not necessarily mean that they were all unable to form any definite opinions. Some of these Hans might really have found

it impossible to judge of the merits or demerits of trade, but some might have deliberately withheld any definite expression of view, deeming it politic to do so.

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For the facts given in the preceding chapters I am indebted to the *Dai Nippon Komonjo: Bakumatsu Gaikoku Kankei Monjo* (Japanese documents bearing on foreign relations in the closing years of the Tokugawa Shogunate), and it is possible that this record omits the views held by some Hans. It is also possible that what I have so far stated can be supplemented by new facts supplied by other historical materials.

As the classification of the views submitted by the various Hans is my own, others may classify them in different ways according to their own lights, and I may add that the conclusions I have drawn from these views do not necessarily accord with those reached by other historians.

The views of the various Hans may be classified and tabulated as follows:—

	Sixth year of Kaei (1853). 54	Fourth and fifth year of Ansei (1857-1858). 34
(1) No statement of definite view.	Akashi, Ashimori, Hiroshima and Karatsu. 4	Hirosaki, Fukushima, Kasama, Shishido, Iwatsuki, Hamamatsu, and Hiroshima. 7
(2) For war or for exclusion of foreigners.	Morioka, Mito, Kuwana, Tsu, Fukui, Matsue, Yanagawa, and Saga. 8	Kawagoe, Kochi and Hagi. 3
(3) For rejection of American demand (though in favour of peaceful settlement).	Sendai, Yonezawa, Nihonmatsu, Asoo, Iino, Iida, Matsushiro, Kawagoe, Numadzu, Nagoya, Kanazawa, Sonobe, Tatsuno, Okayama, Hagi, Tsuwano, Tokushima, Uwajima, Imaharu, Kochi, Mori, Kurume, Kumamoto, Udo, Kago-shima and Sadohara. 26	Sendai, Kubota, Mito and Tottori. 4

(4) For acceptance of American demand.	Sakura, Oshi, Kakegawa, Iwamura, Muramatsu, Shibata, Obama, Hachiman, Tsuyama, Tottori, Marugame, Yoshida, Nakatsu and Oka. 14	Morioka, Aizu, Yada, Oshi, Nagaoka, Takato, Nishio, Kuwana, Hikone, Obama, Akashi, Himeji, Tsuyama, Takamatsu, Hamada and Fukuoka. 16
(5) For positive encouragement of trade.	Hikone and Fukuoka. 2	Fukui, Tokushima, Yanagawa and Kagoshima. 4

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