

# Succoring Strangers: Clashing Castaway Humanitarianisms in Nineteenth Century East Asia\*

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## | ABSTRACT |

Although the safety of castaway sailors was used to publicly justify interventions such as Commodore Perry's arrival in Tokyo Bay in 1853 or the Japanese invasion of Formosa in 1874, the historiography of this period has searched for alternative explanations, such as commercial expansion or cultural chauvinism. This paper argues that the protection of castaways was more than a pretext for overseas military actions. Shipwrecks were a formidable problem of international relations in the period, demanding the creation of shared norms and mechanisms. In East Asia, European interlopers encountered a pre-existing system dedicated to regulating this problem that clashed with their own. Although both systems protected shipwrecked sailors, they were based on very different assumptions. Westerners made a conscious decision to subvert these indigenous institutions, even while benefiting from them. Ultimately, this struggle over the treatment and repatriation of shipwrecked sailors was a key component of imperialism.

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## I. Introduction

In the nineteenth century, the safety of shipwrecked sailors justified interventions against indigenous polities throughout the Asia-Pacific. One of the better-known incidents is Commodore Perry's arrival in Tokyo Bay in 1853. Although violence did not transpire, it was certainly anticipated by the American squadron. On their final approach to Japan, American sailors and marines had extensively drilled with their cannons and small arms and prepared their ships for combat.<sup>1)</sup> President Fillmore's letter delivered to authorities on shore explained the fleet's mission as seeking "friendship, commerce, a supply of coal and provisions, and protection for our shipwrecked people."<sup>2)</sup> The resulting treaty has been described as a "modestly enhanced shipwreck convention."<sup>3)</sup> Perry's forcible opening of Japan may have been the most successful intervention but it was not the only one. The Low-Rodgers expedition, a violent and abortive attempt to open Korea in 1871, was closely modelled on Perry's expedition whereas Commodore Shufeldt's more successful bid in 1880 also sought to protect the victims of shipwreck.<sup>4)</sup> Formosa, meanwhile, was the object of several British and American annexation schemes during this period, many of which were justified by the need

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1) J. Willett Spalding, *The Japan Expedition: Japan and around the World; an Account of Three Visits to the Japanese Empire, with Sketches of Madeira, St. Helena, Cape of Good Hope, Mauritius, Ceylon, Singapore, China, and Loo-Choo* (New York: Redfield, 1855), pp. 130-31.

2) The President of the United States to the Emperor of Japan in Franklin Pierce and Matthew Calbraith Perry, *Message of the President of the United States, Transmitting a Report of the Secretary of the Navy, in Compliance with a Resolution of the Senate of December 6, 1854, Calling for Correspondence Relative to the Naval Expedition to Japan* (Washington, 1855), p. 10.

3) Warren I. Cohen, *East Asia at the Center* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), p. 263.

4) Ian Murray, "Seward's True Folly: American Diplomacy and Strategy During 'Our Little War with the Heathens,' Korea, 1871," *Penn History Review*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (2011), p. 44; In fact, Shufeldt even made protecting castaways a higher priority than commerce. See Charles Oscar Paullin, "The Opening of Korea by Commodore Shufeldt," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (1910), p. 481.

to protected castaways.<sup>5)</sup>

Yet, scholars have persistently searched for alternative explanations for these interventions. Dodge admits that shipwrecked sailors were an issue for policymakers but places Perry's expedition in the context of "commercial, religious, economic, and even patriotic pressures."<sup>6)</sup> Smith agrees with this approach but probes deeper to reveal the "scientific basis of America's quest for informal, commercial empire."<sup>7)</sup> More recent scholarship has followed in a similar vein. For Jeffrey Keith, Perry's squadron was on a racist and chauvinistic mission to civilize Japan through the introduction of commerce, Christianity, and republicanism.<sup>8)</sup> Gordon Chang, likewise, maintains that racial and cultural attitudes shaped the American expedition to Korea in 1871.<sup>9)</sup> For that matter, Austin's study of Japan's diplomatic relations with America and Europe in the late nineteenth century does not touch on the issue of shipwreck or castaways at all.<sup>10)</sup>

This paper, on the contrary, argues that shipwrecks need to be understood as an ongoing problem of international relations in the period. This problem operated at two levels. Most broadly, the protection of shipwrecked sailors and property was directly related to the maintenance of the maritime networks that sustained nineteenth century imperialism

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5) Leonard Gordon, "Taiwan and the Limits of British Power, 1868," *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (1988), p. 225; Thomas R. Cox, "Harbingers of Change: American Merchants and the Formosa Annexation Scheme," *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (1973), p. 177.

6) Ernest S. Dodge, *Islands and Empires: Western Impact on the Pacific and East Asia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976), p. 303.

7) Geoffrey Sutton Smith, "The Navy Before Darwinism: Science, Exploration, and Diplomacy in Antebellum America," *American Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (1976), p. 55.

8) Jeffrey A Keith, "Civilization, Race, and the Japan Expedition's Cultural Diplomacy, 1853-1854," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (2011), pp. 181, 202.

9) Gordon H. Chang, "Whose 'Barbarism'? Whose 'Treachery'? Race and Civilization in the Unknown United States-Korea War of 1871," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 89, No. 4 (2003), pp. 1334, 1362.

10) Michael R. Auslin, *Negotiating With Imperialism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).

in Asia. More specifically, however, castaways were a source of ideological friction because European sailors often perceived locals as deviating from norms of civilized behavior. This makes the treatment of castaways a useful case study of the spread of European international society, a traditional concern of English school scholars.<sup>11)</sup> Despite their rhetoric, though, European and American ships were not operating in a lawless region. Chosun Korea, Qing China, and Tokugawa Japan had evolved their own institutions for repatriating foreign castaways. This East Asian international society was quite sophisticated and flexible, but it clashed with Western practices and norms. Although both systems protected shipwrecked sailors, they were based on very different assumptions. Thus, the castaway issue was more divisive than hitherto acknowledged. Westerners made a conscious decision to subvert these indigenous institutions, even while benefiting from them. Perry's opening of Japan was but the latest in a long series of such attempts. Therefore, this paper fits alongside recent scholarship that emphasizes both the Janus-faced nature of European international society as well as the importance of local agency in the era "before the rise of the West."<sup>12)</sup>

Although this paper seeks to re-center the issue of castaway sailors, it does not argue that establishing commercial relationships, sources of coal, or Christianity were not factors. It is obvious that these interventions were never only about castaways. Just as the protection of human rights is not the only reason for armed interventions in today's international society, so too was the normative desire to protect shipwrecked sailors constantly intersected by economic, cultural, and political concerns. Nevertheless, this paper brings castaways back into consideration by showing that the protection of shipwreck survivors was never simply

11) For the classic account of this process see Martin Wight, *Systems of States* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1977).

12) Shogo Suzuki, Yongjin Zhang and Joel Quirk (eds.), *International Orders in the Early Modern World: Before the Rise of the West* (London: Routledge, 2014); Shogo Suzuki, "Japan's Socialization into Janus-Faced European International Society," *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (2005), pp. 137-164.

a pretext. Contemporary naval officers and merchants took the issue seriously. Indeed, one might even say that this maintenance of maritime routes was at the very heart of the imperial project.

## II. Shipwrecks as a Problem in International Politics

Shipwrecks have long exerted a powerful influence on international relations. Most critical has been the sudden loss of power projection forces, such as the horrendous losses inflicted on the Spanish Armada in 1588. However, this paper goes beyond the immediate loss of lives, hulls, and cargoes and looks closer at the political problem posed by international shipwrecks. When European ships and their survivors washed up on foreign shores, it automatically triggered a series of interactions with local rulers—possibly benefiting or destabilizing them in the process. The problem of international shipwrecks could never be avoided—Terence Grocott has estimated that from 1793 to 1815 alone there were as many as 2000 European shipwrecks a year<sup>13)</sup>—but it could be managed. In regions of the world with extensive maritime commerce, rule-based behavior and norm creation served to mitigate many of the destabilizing consequences of shipwrecks. This process was complex and frequently contested by different stakeholders. Melikan has shown how laws regarding shipwrecked property in medieval Europe reflected the interests of competing groups including shippers, carriers, salvors, landowners, and the civil government.<sup>14)</sup> On the continent, laws tended to favour commercial interests whereas in England, feudal landowning interests sur-

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13) Terence Grocott, *Shipwrecks of the Revolutionary & Napoleonic Eras* (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 1998), vii.

14) Rose Melikan, "Shippers, Salvors, and Sovereigns: Competing Interests in the Medieval Law of Shipwreck," *The Journal of Legal History*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (1990), p. 163.

vived much longer.<sup>15)</sup> While rule-based behavior regarding shipwrecks was coalescing within countries, bilateral agreements helped establish similar norms between countries. An example of this was the Venetian-Seljuk Treaty of 1220, which specified that both parties would refrain from plundering each other's distressed ships.<sup>16)</sup>

Indeed, it is very important to emphasize that these shipwreck norms were an evolutionary process. Written laws, legal precedents, and customary practices regarding the disposition of shipwrecked property and castaway sailors continued to accrue over the centuries. The second element that needs to be emphasized is that shipwreck norms from one culture often collided with another. Although all maritime regions responded to the need to come up with mechanisms for dealing with international shipwrecks, the rules were not the same. For example, as Europeans penetrated the Indian Ocean in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Europeans encountered an "independent State system with well-developed rules of inter-State conduct."<sup>17)</sup> Often European interlopers learned about differences in local shipwreck norms the hard way. An example of this was the loss of the French ship *Corbin* in the Maldives in 1602. The crew of the stricken ship made a fatal mistake when they saved large quantities of silver from their ship and secretly buried it. While this desire to preserve their property may have made sense to them, for the local ruler it was a grievous violation of his customary rights. In the Maldives, a wrecked ship and its cargo belonged to the sultan. The Frenchmen were imprisoned and severely interrogated. Francois Pyrard, one of the survivors, ruefully observed that they would probably have been repatriated at the ruler's expense if they had not been caught trying to salvage from the wreck.<sup>18)</sup> He also reported that

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15) Melikan, p. 172.

16) M. E. Martin, "The Venetian-Seljuk Treaty of 1220," *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 95, No. 375 (1980), pp. 327-328.

17) R. P. Anand, "Maritime Practice in South-East Asia until 1600 A.D. and The Modern Law of the Sea," *International & Comparative Law Quarterly*, Vol. 30, No. 02 (2008), p. 443.

this norm of shipwreck was observed elsewhere in the Indian Ocean, except at Calicut.<sup>19)</sup>

Disasters like this taught European sailors the importance of learning about local norms of behavior because it had strategic consequences. Pyrard's book, it should be remembered, was not published simply as history but as a guidebook for helping his countrymen penetrate Asian markets. Indigenous norms of shipwreck, such as the ones encountered in the Maldives, did not just threaten individual European sailors or property owners, they also threatened the imperial systems that required the constant circulation of ships, goods, and ideas. Indeed, these nautical networks constituted the "lifelines of the early modern empires."<sup>20)</sup> John Law famously analyzed Portuguese expansion in maritime Asia as a heterogenous assemblage of ships, technology, and sailors that was able to maintain its association in the face of hostile human and non-human forces, thereby resulting in system growth.<sup>21)</sup> In other words, imperialism was the consequence of successful maritime networks. But shipwrecks could disassociate these systems, as James Duffy's classic study of Portuguese decline has demonstrated.<sup>22)</sup> Therefore, norms of behavior that mitigated the loss of life and property from shipwrecks were important because they facilitated the maritime networks that made European imperialism possible.

Once aware of local norms of shipwreck, especially if they were unfavorable to castaways, Europeans actively attempted to change or circumvent them. At first this was largely done through bilateral treaties

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18) François Pyrard, *The Voyage of François Pyrard of Laval to the East Indies, the Maldives, the Moluccas and Brazil*, Vol. 1 (London: Hakluyt Society, 1887), pp. 54-62, 69, 72, 81.

19) Pyrard, 1, p. 404 (footnote).

20) Kerry Ward, *Networks of Empire: Forced Migration in the Dutch East India Company* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 32.

21) John Law, "On the Social Explanation of Technical Change: The Case of the Portuguese Maritime Expansion," *Technology and Culture*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (1987), p. 227.

22) James Duffy, *Shipwreck and Empire, Being an Account of Portuguese Maritime Disasters in a Century of Decline* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955).

with local rulers. In exchange for increased European business, rulers were willing to make concessions on the return of shipwrecked property and the repatriation of survivors.<sup>23)</sup> As the local balance of power shifted, European interlopers became more aggressive in enforcing their norms with gunboats and punitive expeditions. This was even performed by individuals. Sir James Brooke, for instance, not only equipped a private warship to suppress piracy and protect shipwrecked sailors in the Malayan archipelago and ended up establishing himself as the Raja of Sarawak in the process—a clear testament to the interconnectedness of the maintenance of maritime networks and the expansion of imperial control.<sup>24)</sup>

Overall, this process of learning, adapting to, and ultimately subverting/replacing indigenous shipwreck norms would be repeated in East Asia in the nineteenth century. The next section draws upon a variety of primary sources and key historical incidents, especially the exchange of letters between Charles Elliot, the Chief Superintendent of British Trade, and Tang, the Governor of Canton in 1837, to juxtapose the European treatment of castaways with the repatriation system that had evolved independently in East Asia. Although both systems sought to protect shipwrecked sailors, there was friction between them because they operated according to very different assumptions.

23) Notice, for instance, the clauses on shipwreck and the inheritance of property outlined in the Emperor of Japan's trade privileges in John Saris, *The Voyage of Captain John Saris to Japan, 1613. Edited from Contemporary Records by Sir Ernest M. Satow* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1900), p. 138; Likewise, Sir James Lancaster's treaty with the ruler of Achin contained the same clauses, Clements R. Markham, ed., *The Voyages of Sir James Lancaster to the East Indies: With Abstracts of Journals of Voyages to the East Indies During the Seventeenth Century and the Voyage of Captain John Knight (1606) to Seek the North-West Passage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 83-84.

24) For more information, see James Brooke Henry Keppel, *The Expedition to Borneo of H.M.S. Dido for the Suppression of Piracy ...*, Vol. 1 (Chapman and Hall, 1846).



### III. Nineteenth Century Shipwreck Norms

Although they admitted their ancestors had not always treated the victims of shipwreck kindly, for Europeans in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century this had become an important indicator of civilized behavior. Indeed, it is not too much to say that the correct treatment of strangers in distress was a key component of state legitimacy.<sup>25)</sup> In other words, countries that did not care for shipwrecked sailors were judged to be outside the civilized pale. As the nineteenth century progressed, of course, this yardstick of civilization was increasingly loaded with more ideological baggage, including ideas of technological development and race.<sup>26)</sup> Nevertheless, the correct treatment of shipwrecked sailors had a powerful legitimizing effect in Westerners' minds, one that was capable of transcending differences in race or material culture.<sup>27)</sup>

In practical terms, this meant that castaways had to be rescued, treated respectfully, and their property salvaged. An article written by Dr. Fothergill in the early 1800s praising the shipwreck asylum at Bambury Castle in Northumberland, England, gives a good indication of contemporary views on dealing with shipwrecks. This facility had a signal gun to alert the authorities when ships were in distress, sent horsemen to patrol the beach during storms, had full-time observers in the winter, and was equipped with beds and provisions to care for survivors. It also had spare equipment for damaged ships and storage areas for salvaged cargo. Even bodies washed on shore would be buried for free.<sup>28)</sup>

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25) Eileen P Scully, *Bargaining with the State from Afar: American Citizenship in Treaty Port China, 1844-1942* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), p. 25.

26) Scully, p. 25.

27) See the favourable treatment of the islanders in George Keate et al., *An Account of the Pelew Islands, Situated in the Western Part of the Pacific Ocean: Composed from the Journals and Communications of Captain Henry Wilson, and Some of His Officers, Who, in August 1783, Were There Shipwrecked, in the Antelope, a Packet Belonging to the Honourable East India Company* (London: Printed for Captain H. Wilson, by W. Bulmer and Co., 1803).

28) *The Naval Chronicle for 1804: Containing a General and Biographical History of the*

Of course, these ideas were not always implemented. Even domestic shipwrecks sometimes saw grievous breakdowns of order and discipline, as was seen on December 26, 1804, when a ship loaded with sugar and coffee broke up in Plymouth harbor during a storm. Soldiers were forced to fire live ammunition to keep local inhabitants from looting the wreckage.<sup>29)</sup> Nevertheless, the strength of these shipwreck norms cannot be denied. For example, following the 1782 wreck of the English merchant ship *Grosvenor*, the Dutch authorities at Cape Town immediately organized search and rescue missions, even though the two countries were at war.<sup>30)</sup> Just before the outbreak of the Crimean War, with tensions with England at their height, the Russian Admiral Putiatin still felt justified in putting his entire squadron in danger by stopping to help a British merchant ship that had run aground on a reef near Napa, in the Ryukyu islands.<sup>31)</sup>

In East Asia, meanwhile, there was a different set of practices built around different assumptions. Valuable research has been done on the reparation of castaway sailors between Japan, China, Korea, and the Ryukyu islands. Bureaucratic records indicate the scope of the problem. From 1599 to 1888 there were over ten thousand Koreans who drifted to Japan.<sup>32)</sup> The numbers going the other way were considerably lower, perhaps because of the wind and currents. Between 1618 and 1872 there are 1,235 Japanese individuals known to have been castaway on the shores of Korea.<sup>33)</sup> That these international shipwrecks can be viewed

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*Royal Navy of the United Kingdom with a Variety of Original Papers on Nautical Subjects*, Vol. 11 (January to July, 1804) (London: J. Gold, 1804), pp. 55-57.

29) *The Naval Chronicle*, 11 (January to July, 1804), pp. 76-77.

30) Michael Titlestad and Mike Kissack, "The Persistent Castaway in South African Writing," *Postcolonial Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (2007), p. 202.

31) Spalding, *The Japan Expedition*, p. 336.

32) H. Lee, "The Repatriation of Castaways in Chosŏn Korea-Japan Relations, 1599-1888," *Korean Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (2006), p. 65.

33) Michael S. Wood, "Literary Subjects Adrift: A Cultural History of Early Modern Japanese Castaway Narratives, ca. 1780-1880" (Thesis, University of Oregon, 2009), p. 20, <https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/handle/1794/10071> (Searched 2018 December 3).

as a problem in international relations is indicated by the reports of communication breakdowns, disturbances, and violence sometimes occurring between Korean castaways and their Japanese escorts.<sup>34)</sup> It appears that these countries, despite their exclusionary policies, had bureaucratic mechanisms in place to deal with shipwrecked sailors: "From the beginning of the modern era there existed, though loosely, a system of repatriation among East Asian countries, including Choson, Japan, China, and Ryukyu, that did not entail compensation, though there were regional differences."<sup>35)</sup> In other words, the political challenges and opportunities posed by shipwrecked foreign nationals were constrained by bureaucratic institutions and a shared body of practices.

The fact that the East Asian castaway repatriation system was embedded in pre-existing tributary and trading relationships was problematic. For Western countries that were not permitted to join these trading or diplomatic relationships, it meant that East Asian mechanisms for the repatriation of castaways were never fully implemented. In addition, European castaways were perceived as a more serious security threat than castaways from other Asian countries. Hamel and his colleagues were not allowed to leave Korea in 1653 for fear that they would tell other countries about the kingdom.<sup>36)</sup> Aizawa Seishisai, writing in 1825, believed English sailors were Russian spies who "draw maps and sketch our terrain."<sup>37)</sup> Likewise, Chinese officials often worried about shipwrecked Europeans being pirates.<sup>38)</sup> This overriding concern with security led to tensions with Western countries over the question of physical

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34) James B. Lewis, *Frontier Contact Between Choson Korea and Tokugawa Japan* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2007), p. 13.

35) Lee, "The Repatriation of Castaways in Chosŏn Korea-Japan Relations, 1599-1888," p. 68.

36) Hendrik Hamel, *Hamel's Journal: And, A Description of the Kingdom of Korea, 1653-1666* (Seoul: Royal Asiatic Society, Korea Branch, 1998), p. 14.

37) Aizawa Seishisai as quoted in Peter Duus, *The Japanese Discovery of America: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston; New York: Bedford Books, 1997), p. 55.

38) J. R., *Diary of a Journey Overland, through the Maritime Provinces of China from Manchao, on the South Coast of Hainan, to Canton in the Years 1819 and 1820* (London: London, Sir R. Phillips, 1822), p. 9.

detainment of castaways. In 1852, for instance, the *New York Times* published a story detailing how American castaways in Japan were imprisoned, forced to step on the cross, deprived of food, and treated like wild beasts. One of them was even beaten to death.<sup>39)</sup> A sticking point in Perry's negotiations with the Japanese was whether castaways could be physically restrained. The Japanese cited security concerns but Perry refused to countenance the practice.<sup>40)</sup> Article IV of the resulting treaty was explicit that "those shipwrecked persons ... shall be free as in other countries, and not subjected to confinement."<sup>41)</sup>

Yet, for the most part, it seems that shipwrecked sailors from Europe and the United States were still successfully repatriated through tributary or trade networks. In China, shipwrecked foreigners were sent to the trading port of Canton and from there to Macao. This happened in 1598 when 120 Spanish sailors and soldiers were shipwrecked on the Chinese coast.<sup>42)</sup> It was still happening in 1819 when the British-owned *Friendship* ran aground on Hainan Island.<sup>43)</sup> In Japan, castaways were usually sent to Nagasaki, such as the seven American sailors repatriated in 1849.<sup>44)</sup> In Korea, they were usually forwarded on to China through the northern frontier, like the crew of the American schooner *Surprise* in 1866 or the four deserters from the *Two Brothers* whaling ship that ended up being blown by a storm into East Korea Bay in 1855.<sup>45)</sup> In 1801, however, it appears that Chinese authorities refused

39) Report of Japanese Cruelty to American Sailors, 1852, in Duus, *The Japanese Discovery of America*, pp. 71-72.

40) The Personal Journal of Commodore Matthew C. Perry in Duus, p. 93.

41) Spalding, *The Japan Expedition*, p. 252.

42) Antonio de Morga, *The Philippine Islands, Moluccas, Siam, Cambodia, Japan, and China, at the Close of the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 117-122.

43) J. R., *Diary of a Journey Overland, through the Maritime Provinces of China from Manchao, on the South Coast of Hainan, to Canton in the Years 1819 and 1820*.

44) Duus, *The Japanese Discovery of America*, p. 12.

45) Earl Swisher, "The Adventure of Four Americans in Korea and Peking in 1855," *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (1952), pp. 237-239.

to accept a party of four Portuguese castaways and they were returned to Korea to an unknown fate.<sup>46)</sup> There is evidence for repatriations through Tsushima to Nagasaki as well, such as the Dutch survivors of the *Sperwer*.<sup>47)</sup> Overall, the East Asian repatriation system actually showed considerable flexibility in dealing with the problem of shipwrecked Westerners.

The real root of the problem was the ideological gulf separating the two approaches to castaways. European concern for the ‘civilized’ treatment and repatriation of castaways (and their property) was the tip of an iceberg that included hydrographic surveys, the establishment of pilot systems, navigational buoys, and light houses. This whole bundle of Western practices and norms were aimed at making navigation simple, safe, and ultimately inexpensive. But safe navigation was not simply a matter of saving money or lives—it represented the progress of civilization. This thinking can be found quite early in European thought. In the *Seamans Secrets*, a treatise on navigation written in 1607 by John Davis, intercontinental voyages are praised as mutually beneficial and natural.<sup>48)</sup> The preface of Broughton’s *A Voyage of Discovery to the North Pacific Ocean*, despite being published almost two hundred years after John Davis, echoes him to a striking degree by arguing that voyages served to “promote a further knowledge of the globe, to soften the ferocity of our unenlightened fellow creatures, enlarge the intercourse of mankind, and bind together the remotest nations by the connections of commerce.”<sup>49)</sup> The Americans bought into this idea as well. Commodore Perry and other prominent figures in Washington strongly believed that

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46) Robert Nuff, “Korea’s Inhospitable Shores: Cheju Island Shipwrecks,” *Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society Korea Branch*, Vol. 82 (2007), p. 57.

47) Hamel, *Hamel’s Journal*, p. 89.

48) John Davys, *The Voyages and Works of John Davis, the Navigator* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1880), pp. 236-237.

49) William Robert Broughton, *A Voyage of Discovery to the North Pacific Ocean ... Performed in His Majesty’s Sloop Providence, and Her Tender, in the Years 1795, 1796, 1797, 1798* (London: T. Cadell and W. Davis, 1804), p. ix.

commerce and civilization were directly linked.<sup>50)</sup>

If facilitating commerce through the protection of castaways was praised by European writers, a nation that did not allow its coastal waters to be surveyed, mistreated castaways, and turned away ships in distress was shrinking its civilized duty. But what about countries such as China, Korea, and Japan that repatriated castaways but did so in a manner that restricted outside contact? Notice the negative tone of the following commentary:

The case of the gentleman, [the supercargo of the *Friendship* who kept a journal during his repatriation through Canton in 1820], is not a solitary one: others of the same kind could be enumerated, when persons who landed on the coast under similar misfortune, have been treated precisely in the same manner, the whole expence of travelling to Canton being, invariably, defrayed by the government. On the same principle they will not allow of intercourse with foreign nations, even their immediate neighbours, as far as has been as yet ascertained, except in the ports of Macao or Canton, and here their commerce is carried on with Europeans ostensibly, as if it were a favour conferred, and not as if the mutual benefits of trade were exchanged.<sup>51)</sup>

On one hand, it is possible to look at this incident as an example of how effective and benevolent the Chinese repatriation system was. After all, the survivors were saved, fed, and ultimately returned to their countrymen free of charge. However, for the English the moral of the story was different. For them this incident served to underscore how unjust the exclusionary rules were. This kind treatment of castaway sailors was deceptive because the repatriation, performed without compensation, was actually *minimizing* interaction with the rest of the world.

However, this sort of civilization through intercourse discourse was

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50) Keith, "Civilization, Race, and the Japan Expedition's Cultural Diplomacy, 1853-1854," pp. 181-183.

51) J. R., *Diary of a Journey Overland, through the Maritime Provinces of China from Manchao, on the South Coast of Hainan, to Canton in the Years 1819 and 1820*, p. 91.

not unchallenged. As European officials and military officers attempted to portray themselves as more civilized, they were faced with a counter-narrative emanating from their East Asian rivals. It is striking how the treatment of shipwrecked sailors was a legitimizing trope for both sides, but it was expressed in subtly different ways. For East Asian officials, the repatriation of castaways was a natural component of the tributary relationship with their less-civilized neighbors. In other words, it was a chance to exhibit charitable behavior. For Europeans, however, the treatment of shipwreck sailors was a reciprocal responsibility between states that facilitated deepening ties.

This difference of viewpoints is evident in an exchange of letters between Charles Elliot, the Chief Superintendent of British Trade, and Tang, the Governor of Canton, in 1837. Elliot, having learned of the rescue of seventeen Chinese sailors by an English ship, decided to take advantage of this good news by communicating with the governor directly. By bypassing the Hong merchants, Elliot wanted to push for more official government-to-government contact than had been hitherto allowed. Using castaways as an excuse to pry open the door of isolationist policies was an example of the exploitative type behavior that will be discussed in the next section. What interests us here, however, is how the treatment of shipwrecked victims was constructed differently by the two sides.

Elliot's letter of April 8, 1837 boasted that the British captain who rescued the Chinese sailors acted with "becoming humanity."<sup>52</sup> Interestingly, he also acknowledged that the Chinese had previously treated shipwreck English sailors with numerous acts of kindness. Elliot saw this reciprocal behavior as a sign of mutual intercourse and a positive sign for the future: "The interchange of these charities cannot fail to strengthen the bonds of peace and good-will between the two nations."<sup>53</sup>

The Governor's response, in the form of an edict to the Hong mer-

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52) Great Britain Foreign Office, *China: A Collection of Correspondence and Papers Relating to Chinese Affairs* (London: J. Harrison & Son, 1838), p. 201.

53) Foreign Office, p. 201.

chants on April 19, 1837, was imperious in tone. There was no thank you for the English, who were only doing their duty as obedient barbarians: “They have tendered to the Celestial Empire their respectful services.”<sup>54)</sup> Moreover, the Chinese rescue and repatriation of English castaways was similarly construed in a paternalistic fashion. “And in regard to those in distress, they are rescued from their distresses, and with needful gifts are sent back. These things arise solely from the all-pervading goodness, and cherishing kindness of the Great Emperor, whose favours are constant and universal.”<sup>55)</sup> Finally, he resented any insinuation that the repatriation of castaways was somehow establishing an equal relationship between the two states: “The said Superintendent ... has absurdly used such words and expressions as ‘Your honourable country,’ and ‘peace and good-will between the two nations,’ giving utterance to his own puffed-up imaginations. Not only is this offensive to the dignity to be maintained, but also the ideas therein expressed are absurd and ridiculous.”<sup>56)</sup> Thus, even both sides agreed that castaways should be treated kindly and repatriated, there was a considerable ideological gulf separating their understanding of the issue. This gulf would lead to increasing conflict as the nineteenth century progressed.

#### IV. Subverting the East Asian System

Although Europeans did not agree with the East Asian system’s ideological assumptions, they were far from ignorant of them. This section details the deliberate subversion of East Asian shipwreck norms by Europeans through false claims of distress and humanitarian gestures.

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54) Foreign Office, p. 203.

55) Foreign Office, p. 203.

56) Foreign Office, p. 203.



These probes ultimately set the stage for more coercive strategies later in the century.

At the simplest end of the spectrum were European visits, ostensibly because of storm damage or a shortage of provisions. These visits gave the Europeans a chance to make contact, conduct surveys, accumulate some linguistic and cultural knowledge, and poke around on land. The voyage of the English warships *Alceste* and *Lyra* to Korea and the Ryukyu Islands in 1816 are classic examples of this kind of behavior. Having escorted Lord Amherst to China, the ships surveyed along the coasts of Northern China and then Korea. They made periodic landfalls, walking as far as they could before locals stopped them. Their contact with Korean officialdom was mutually unsatisfactory because translation problems left both sides conversing with body language or illegible writing.<sup>57)</sup> However, like the earlier visit by Captain Broughton in 1797, Korean sources indicate that local officials assumed the ships were in distress because they refer to them as “drifting on the sea.”<sup>58)</sup>

The Ryukyu islanders had better translators and the British justified their visit by pleading that a storm had damaged their ships and they needed to enter the harbor for repairs. They even resorted to theatrics. “To make this story feasible, the well was filled by turning the cock in the hold; and the chain-pumps being set to work threw out volumes of water on the main deck, to the great amazement of these people, who seemed to sympathize very much with our misfortunes.”<sup>59)</sup> The locals agreed to help repair the ships and provided fresh food and provisions. The British used the chance to explore the harbor and learn

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57) John M’Leod, *Narrative of a Voyage in His Majesty’s Late Ship Alceste, to the Yellow Sea, along the Coast of Corea, and through Its Numerous Hitherto Undiscovered Islands, to the Island of Lewchew: With an Account of Her Shipwreck in the Straits of Gaspar* (London: J. Murray, 1817), p. 46.

58) Grace Koh, “British Perceptions of Joseon Korea as Reflected in Travel Literature of the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Century,” *The Review of Korean Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (2006), pp. 128-129.

59) M’Leod, *Narrative of a Voyage in His Majesty’s Late Ship Alceste*, p. 59.

more about the people. They consistently pushed for more freedoms. Captain Maxwell, for example, pleaded that the storm had damaged his health so much that he needed to walk around on shore to recover, a request that the islanders politely resisted at first.<sup>60)</sup> In the end, the British got permission to walk around on the beach (for their health), wash their clothes, build a depot on shore, and repeatedly tried to walk farther inland than they were allowed.

The result of this behavior was a wealth of information on a hitherto little-known part of the world. Captain Basil Hall, the commander of the *Lyra*, and John M'Leod, a surgeon on the *Alceste*, both wrote books about their experiences. In addition to the narrative content—which was full of descriptions of local customs, dress, and landscapes—M'Leod's book had an appendix with a chronological list of Ryukyu kings, the names and locations of the various islands, and five pages of Ryukyuan words and numbers.<sup>61)</sup> These publications were very popular in America and Europe.<sup>62)</sup> This information, all collected under false pretenses, can be considered an important contribution to the European database of knowledge about Asia. According to Robert Fletcher, these accounts fueled increasing commercial, imperial, and missionary interest in the islands as well.<sup>63)</sup> Ironically, the islands ended up with a reputation as a safe-haven for ships in distress, which resulted in more European contacts in the years ahead.<sup>64)</sup>

Exploiting East Asian norms was not always so successful. The

60) Basil Hall, *Voyage to Loo-Choo, and Other Places in the Eastern Seas, in the Year 1816. Including an Account of Captain Maxwell's Attack on the Batteries at Canton; and Notes of an Interview with Buonaparte at St. Helena, in August 1817* (Edinburgh: A. Constable & Co., 1826), p. 132.

61) M'Leod, *Narrative of a Voyage in His Majesty's Late Ship Alceste*, pp. 275-284.

62) Robert S. G. Fletcher, "'Returning Kindness Received'? Missionaries, Empire and the Royal Navy in Okinawa, 1846-57," *The English Historical Review*, Vol. CXXV, No. 514 (2010), p. 6.

63) Fletcher, "'Returning Kindness Received'? Missionaries, Empire and the Royal Navy in Okinawa, 1846-57."

64) Fletcher, p. 7.

Eclipse, an American ship chartered by the Russian American Company, entered Nagasaki harbor in 1807 pretending to be a ship in distress. In a blatant attempt to initiate trade “a large assortment of articles of trade were brought on deck, but none of the people would make any purchase.”<sup>65)</sup> The ship’s captain claimed to be low on food and water, so the Japanese supplied them with everything for free. The crew did not really need it though, so during the night they dumped out all the extra water.<sup>66)</sup> This disappointing attempt to open trade only lasted three days.

Simple exploits like pretending to be damaged or requiring water was not enough to break the exclusionary policies of East Asian countries. As shown above, these states were flexible enough to accommodate distressed European ships while at the same time discouraging them from pursuing any meaningful diplomatic or commercial contact. The repatriation of castaways as an excuse to open diplomatic or commercial relations was the next logical step. By no means was this an exclusively European trick, either. Even as early as the fifteenth century, for example, Ryukyuan kings and provincial Japanese elites used the repatriation of Korean castaways as an excuse for trade or the exchange of envoys.<sup>67)</sup> It has even been surmised that Tsushima deliberately increased repatriations back to Korea when trade revenue lagged because their envoys received valuable gifts.<sup>68)</sup> However, the key difference between these indigenous East Asian practices and European humanitarian gestures in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is that the European

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65) Archibald Campbell, *A Voyage Round the World, from 1806 to 1812: In Which Japan, Kamschatka, the Aleutian Islands, and the Sandwich Islands Were Visited; Including a Narrative of the Author’s Shipwreck on the Island of Sannack, and His Subsequent Wreck in the Ship’s Long-Boat; with an Account of the Present State of the Sandwich Islands, and a Vocabulary of Their Language* (New York: Printed by Broderick and Ritter, 1819), p. 19.

66) Campbell, p. 19.

67) Kenneth R. Robinson, “Centering the King of Chosŏn: Aspects of Korean Maritime Diplomacy, 1392-1592,” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (2000), p. 112.

68) Lewis, *Frontier Contact Between Choson Korea and Tokugawa Japan*, p. 11.

attempts were aimed at destroying the tributary system by establishing state-to-state contacts on the Western model.

The Russians were among the first to make a conscious use of castaways to establish relations with Japan after the establishment of the exclusionary policies from 1633 to 1639. The instructions issued to Martin Spangberg in the 1730s specifically told him that if he found any shipwrecked Japanese on Kamchatka peninsula, he should use the excuse to return them. Even if the Japanese refused to accept them, he was recommended to secretly put them on land.<sup>69)</sup> It was not until Laxman's voyage in 1792 that the Russians would have any kind of success in their dealings with the Japanese authorities. Although Laxman received written permission for a Russian ship to later visit Nagasaki, the local authorities did not evince much pleasure at his return of the castaways. The Japanese officials told him that he could "either leave them, or take them back again."<sup>70)</sup>

Nevertheless, Laxman's visit encouraged the Russians to make another attempt in 1806. Again, the repatriation of Japanese sailors was the ostensible reason for their visit to Japan. This attempt, however, was more substantial. Instead of a low-ranking officer sailing from Siberia, the Krusenstern expedition sailed from St. Petersburg and included Nikolai Petrovich Rezanov, a high-ranking nobleman, as official ambassador. This expedition was an utter failure. The Japanese kept the embassy cooped up in a small house on shore for six months. In the end the castaways were repatriated, though one of them, called Madsuira by the Russians, attempted to kill himself.<sup>71)</sup>

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69) Frank Alfred Golder, *Russian Expansion on the Pacific, 1641-1850; an Account of the Earliest and Later Expeditions Made by the Russians along the Pacific Coast of Asia and North America; Including Some Related Expeditions to the Arctic Regions* (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1914), p. 221.

70) Vasily Mikhailovich Golovnin and Captain Rikord, *Narrative of My Captivity in Japan during the Years 1811, 1812 & 1813, Etc. To Which Is Added, an Account of Voyages to the Coasts of Japan, and of My Negotiations for the Release of the Author and His Companions*, Vol. 1 (London: Henry Colburn, 1818), pp. 15-16.

71) Victoria Moessner, *First Russian Voyage Around the World: The Journal of Hermann*

Not only were any hopes of establishing trade relationships thwarted, but Rezanov was extremely angered by what he considered an ungrateful reception. After the Russian fleet returned to Kamtschatka, an officer on the Russian flagship wrote that “undoubtedly, Resanoff is building castles in the sky again and wants to conquer Sachalin and avenge himself on the Japanese.”<sup>72)</sup> This sarcastic aside proved prophetic when Rezanov proceeded to order punitive attacks on northern Japanese territories by American Russian Company ships without the permission of his home government.<sup>73)</sup> The Japanese retaliated a few years later by kidnapping Golovnin and the crew of the sloop *Diana* while they were surveying the eastern coast of Japan.<sup>74)</sup> Thus, what started as a humanitarian gesture involving the return of shipwrecked sailors came dangerously close to triggering a war.

The next major example of a humanitarian gesture occurred in 1837. Again, it involved a number of Japanese castaways who had survived a remarkable series of events. After drifting for months on the Pacific Ocean they had been cast away on the shores of Oregon, taken captive by Indians, rescued by the Hudson’s Bay Company, and then conveyed to England. From here they were sent to Hong Kong where they came to the attention of Charles Gutzlaff, a prominent German missionary. Gutzlaff employed the castaways as language tutors and planned to return them to their country.<sup>75)</sup> They were soon joined by another party of shipwrecked Japanese, rescued from the Philippines. An American merchant, Charles King, even tried to get his hands on a third party

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*Ludwig Von Lowenstern 1803-1806* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 2003), p. 219.  
72) Moessner, p. 357.

73) A. E. Sokol, “Russian Expansion and Exploration in the Pacific,” *American Slavic and East European Review*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (1952), p. 99.

74) For an account of his capture, see Chapter 1 and 2 of Golovnin and Captain Rikord, *Narrative of My Captivity in Japan*.

75) C. W. King and G. Tradescant Lay, *The Claims of Japan and Malaysia upon Christendom: Exhibited in Notes of Voyages Made in 1837, from Canton, in the Ship Morrison and Brig Himmaleh* (New York: E. French, 1839), pp. ix-xii.

of shipwrecked Japanese under the care of Chinese officials in Canton but was denied because the men were currently in the process of being repatriated through a port city which traded with the Ryukyu islands.<sup>76)</sup> It is interesting that Gutzlaff and King did not choose to use the Chinese repatriation system. This suggests that getting the castaways home was not as important as opening Japan to ‘civilized’ intercourse with the outside world. Using tributary networks, in other words, was ideologically unacceptable.

Sailing on an unarmed merchant ship named the *Morrison*, King and Gutzlaff purposely avoided Nagasaki because they wanted to avoid the tributary-style restrictions that the Dutch put up with.<sup>77)</sup> The letter they delivered to Japanese authorities even attempted to use Confucian ideas to buttress their mission, misquoting Menicus that “he who does not rescue the shipwrecked, is worse than a wolf.”<sup>78)</sup> However, the attempt failed terribly. At Tokyo Bay and at Kagoshima the *Morrison* was fired at with cannons and was forced to retreat to China. King’s frustration with Japan is evident in the closing pages of his book. By mistreating its own people, the Japanese government had lost all legitimacy:

[Japan] confines its subjects to vessels of so bad a model, that every gale must be expected to drive many of them out to sea, where their crews must perish by shipwreck or famine, or meet, on some savage shore, a barbarous death, unless rescued by the interposition of European or American aid. Even if this be their apparently happier lot, what must become of these unfortunate men? Their unnatural government spares not whom the tempest has spared.<sup>79)</sup>

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76) King and Lay, p. xiii.

77) King and Lay, p. 113.

78) King and Lay, p. 117; The actual quote is “he who would not so rescue a drowning woman is a wolf.” Charles F. Horne, *Sacred Books and Early Literature of the East: Medieval China* (Whitefish: Kessinger Publishing, 1997), p. 334.

79) King and Lay, *The Claims of Japan and Malaysia upon Christendom*, pp. 171-172.

King's account of the voyage, which portrayed the incident as a Christian good deed repaid by treachery, was the first book about Japan published in the United States.<sup>80)</sup> Quite rightly, it has been pointed out that this was the only time that a ship repatriating castaways was fired upon.<sup>81)</sup> However, for contemporaries the treatment of the *Morrison* was a powerful reminder that Japan's exclusionary system was fundamentally wrong and colored their perceptions of what to expect. Sir Edward Belcher, the commander of the *HMS Samarang*, admitted that this book and the personal testimony of Mr. Gutzlaff, who had accompanied the *Morrison* as an interpreter, left him with "semi-hostile, or cautious, feelings" towards the Japanese even before he arrived at their country.<sup>82)</sup> It is hardly surprising that the written accounts of these failed humanitarian gestures, deeply colored by frustration, contributed to a growing desire to solve the problem by more aggressive means.

The period saw several more attempted humanitarian gestures. Captain Aulick, upon being tasked with a planned expedition to Japan in 1851, recommended to his superiors that he take along seventeen Japanese castaways who were in San Francisco.<sup>83)</sup> The *Prince Menchikoff*, belonging to the Russian American Company, failed to repatriate several Japanese sailors at Simoda in 1851.<sup>84)</sup> Sources are not so clear regarding the Perry expedition. Some authors suggest that the fleet had only a solitary Japanese castaway, nicknamed Sam Patch by the crew of the *USS Susquehanna*, but this man did not want to be repatriated because he

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80) Shunzo Sakamaki, "Western Concepts of Japan and the Japanese, 1800-1854," *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (1937), p. 3.

81) Wood, "Literary Subjects Adrift," p. 3.

82) Edward Belcher, *Narrative of the Voyage of H.M.S. Samarang, during the Years 1843-46; Employed Surveying the Islands of the Eastern Archipelago ...*, Vol. 2 (London: Reeve, Benham, and Reeve, 1848), p. 23.

83) Kenneth E. Shewmaker, "Forging the 'Great Chain': Daniel Webster and the Origins of American Foreign Policy toward East Asia and the Pacific, 1841-1852," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 129, No. 3 (1985), p. 245.

84) Abraham Feldman, "The Origin of the Japanese Navy," *Historian*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (1945), p. 138.

feared being punished.<sup>85)</sup> Joseph Heco, a Japanese castaway serving as an interpreter with the Americans, wrote that thirteen Japanese castaways had accompanied Perry on his first visit to Japan but had been too terrified to accept repatriation.<sup>86)</sup> The 1871 Low-Rodgers expedition to Korea — which ended up fighting with Korean forts on Gangwha Island — also carried with it five shipwrecked Koreans earmarked for repatriation.<sup>87)</sup> Evidently, what Westerners saw as humanitarian gestures aimed at establishing diplomatic or commercial relations continued long after the disappointing experience of the *Morrison* but they were increasingly better armed and prepared to fight. They were transitioning into humanitarian interventions.

## V. Conclusion

The attempts to subvert East Asian shipwreck norms described in this paper may seem to support the argument that the castaway issue was a pretext, albeit one with a long and established tradition. After all, if C. W. King really wanted to repatriate the Japanese castaways back in 1837, he could have just done it through China. Likewise, since previous American victims of shipwreck were eventually returned through Nagasaki, Perry's decision to go into Tokyo Bay at the head of a powerful fleet was hardly necessary. If shipwrecked sailors were the real problem, the argument goes, there were more peaceful and less intrusive ways to solve it. Nevertheless, in the modern age, when we no longer need

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85) Rhoda Blumberg, *Commodore Perry in the Land of the Shogun* (HarperCollins e-books, 1985), p. 68; Feldman, "The Origin of the Japanese Navy," p. 139.

86) Joseph Heco, *The Narrative of a Japanese: What He Has Seen and the People He Has Met in the Course of the Last Forty Years* (San Francisco: American-Japanese Publishing Association, 1900), pp. 191-192.

87) Paullin, "The Opening of Korea by Commodore Shufeldt," p. 474.



to fear shipwreck, it is easy to lose sight of how visceral this issue was for contemporaries. The Secretary of State's letter authorizing Perry's expedition mentioned previous abuses of castaways and castigated the Japanese in no uncertain terms, even calling them "the common enemy of mankind."<sup>88</sup>) Commodore Perry's personal journal likewise exhibits a degree of sensitivity whenever he discusses shipwrecked sailors, highlighting the more civilized behavior of Western ships and settlers through words such as "humane" and "gratuitously."<sup>89</sup>) In his personal letter to the Japanese emperor, on the other hand, he used strong language, blaming him for treating foreign sailors "as if they were your worst enemies."<sup>90</sup>) For contemporary merchants and naval officers — themselves the most likely victims of shipwreck and imprisonment — the castaway issue was highly personal and directly relevant.

To another extent, this concern for shipwrecked sailors was eminently practical — it had geopolitical consequences. Shipping networks should be understood as the underlying architecture of contemporary maritime empires. The protection of castaways was not an issue that European naval officers and diplomatic officials saw in isolation. It was closely connected to ideas of the freedom of the seas as well as the practical maintenance of merchant shipping routes. Protecting shipwrecked sailors helped maintain shipping routes which led to greater commerce and thereby fueled the spread of civilization itself. In other words, protecting wrecked ships and sailors was never a superficial justification for imperialism but was an integral part of the imperial process itself. The Japanese certainly learned this lesson. It was not a coincidence that the country's first overseas imperial venture—the Formosa Expedition in 1874—was in response to the abuse of shipwreck sailors by local

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88) Letter from Mr. Conrad, the Secretary of State, to Mr. Kennedy, the Secretary of the Navy in Pierce and Perry, *Correspondence Relative to the Naval Expedition to Japan*, p. 5.

89) Extracts from the rough Journal of Commodore Perry in Pierce and Perry, p. 39.

90) Letter from Commodore Perry to the Emperor of Japan in Spalding, *The Japan Expedition*, p. 162.

villagers. In the words of a contemporary British naval officer, “among the many advances in civilization that Japan has made, their treatment of shipwrecked people has been one of the greatest, and would do credit to any nation.”<sup>91)</sup> This incident not only marked Japan’s growing internalization of Western shipwreck norms and the abandonment of the East Asian tributary system, but also the beginning of its acceptance into the ranks of European imperial powers.

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91) Bonham Ward Bax, *The Eastern Seas: Being a Narrative of the Voyage of H. M. S. “Dwarf” in China, Japan and Formosa. With a Description of the Coast of Russian Tartary and Eastern Siberia, from the Corea to the River Amur* (London: J. Murray, 1875), pp. 242-243.

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[초 록]

## 이방인 구조하기: 19세기 동아시아에서의 표류 선원에 대한 관점의 충돌

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해난 사고를 당한 표류 선원의 안전이 1853년 페리 제독의 도쿄만 상륙이나 1874년 일본의 타이완 침략의 경우에서 볼 수 있듯이 개입을 공식적으로 정당화하는 이유였으나, 이 시기의 역사 기술은 상업적 팽창이나 문화적 국수주의와 같은 다른 원인을 탐색해 왔다. 본 논문은 표류 선원의 보호가 나라들이 해외 군사 행동을 한 표면적 구실 이상이었다고 주장한다. 이 시기에 해난 사고는 국제관계에서 중대한 문제였고, 여기에는 서로 공유하는 규범과 해결 방법이 필요했다. 동아시아에서 유럽의 침입자들은 이 문제를 규율하는 지역의 기존 체계와 맞닥뜨려야 했고, 이는 자신들의 체계와 충돌되었다. 두 체계 모두 표류 선원을 보호하는 것이었지만 두 가지는 서로 다른 전제에 기반했다. 서구인들은 이 지역 고유의 제도에서도 표류 선원의 보호를 얻었지만 이를 뒤엎고자 하는 의도적인 결정을 내렸다. 결국, 표류 선원에 대한 처우와 본국 송환에 관한 이러한 대립은 제국주의의 핵심 요소였다.

주제어: 표류 선원, 해난 사고, 제국주의, 개입, 조공 체제

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