

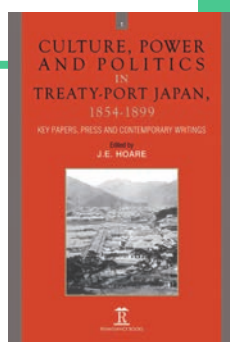
A Friendly Disposition and Orderly Demeanour

Sources and Resources on the Japanese Treaty Ports

Ian Rapley

Early on in Jim Hoare's academic career, his PhD supervisor William Gerald Beasley suggested that he would not remain always 'a treaty port man'. Beasley was both wrong and right: Hoare's professional life in the UK's Foreign & Commonwealth Office took him far beyond the subject of his doctoral research, but his fascination with the site of 19th century contact between Japan and the Western powers persisted alongside his day job. This two volume set represents a selection of sources collected by Hoare over 50 years of research, covering a broad array of material, both primary and secondary, on topics as varied as treaty texts and negotiations, economic history, the language of the ports, and whimsical poetry produced by their residents.

There are two groups for whom I think that this collection will prove of most interest. Firstly, I think that the combination of primary and secondary material will be a useful inspiration for undergraduate and perhaps also masters level students in search of a research topic. The diversity and range of different subjects engaged within the selection should provide students with a wealth of ideas to chase. So whilst this is not a cheap collection, it is one for which hopefully many university libraries will be able to find a home. The second audience for which I think the collection will be of interest is more established scholars, as a tool for



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Section of a Japanese print showing three US officers, believed to be Commanders Anan and Perry, and Captain Adams, who engaged in opening up Japan to the west. Image held in the public domain reproduced courtesy of Wikipedia.

understanding the scope of existing research on the treaty ports, and a prompt to inspire us to look at them anew.

I think that it is fair to say, without any slight on Hoare or other scholars featured in this collection, that the Japanese treaty ports have tended to be less central to the historiography of modern Japan (at least in the English language) than their importance in the second half of the 19th century might suggest. In the UK, the figures best known for their work on the subject have tended to occupy positions outside conventional university research posts (such as Hoare, that other great British scholar-diplomat, Hugh Cortazzi, or the writer Pat Barr, for example) and much of the higher profile work on them has tended to be more pedagogical in approach than usual research monographs (e.g. John Dower's work at MIT Visualizing Cultures), or has focused on making available primary material (Fred Notehelfer's *Japan Through American Eyes*, Routledge, 2001). This is, again, not to denigrate the value of the material that has been produced – quite the opposite: it

is to argue that the discipline as a whole has tended to overlook research on a subject of considerable importance and interest. Indeed, these volumes suggest to me that, in the wake of global and transnational turns, the time is right to place the history of the treaty ports back into the heart of the field.

The extensive introduction lays out the history of Hoare's research and the makings of the collection, as well as a brief history of the ports' establishment and lifespan. I think it is notable, however, that relatively little space is devoted to consideration of the analytic significance of the material and the subject: for example, why are the treaty ports important, what are the pressing questions about them and their inhabitants, and what does this body of material as a whole tell us? Perhaps, after a lifetime working on the topic, the answers to these questions are so self-evident as to not require consideration, but I would suggest that they are the sort of things that we should be considering more explicitly as we continue to research the treaty ports of Japan.

This is an exercise already in progress: Douglas Howland, Simon Partner, and Steven Ivings, amongst others, have recently produced work on the ports, their inhabitants, and the ways in which they were administered. The treaty ports are a complex topic, and admit multiple perspectives, as revealed by the different approaches in this collection and these more recent researchers' work. On the largest scale, one can think of them within the context of Japan, as Hoare's collection does, or as parts of a broader Asia/Pacific network (an approach taken by Brunero & Puig's recent *Life In Treaty Port China And Japan*, Palgrave MacMillan, 2018). There is also a more micro-level spatial dimension. Jeremy Taylor's article on the Bund in Volume 1, as well as other pieces on the architecture of the treaty ports, and indeed the classic 1860s survey of Japan and China by Nicholas Denny, all indicate that the construction and layout of the ports merits

examination and interpretation. The ports were also home to a wide range of inhabitants: representatives of the Western Powers, of course, but also Japanese and other Asians (notably a large number of Chinese labourers, something highlighted by an essay in Volume One by Hoare himself, as well as more recent work by Eric Han). What is more, the Western residents comprised a mix, too: diplomats, traders, soldiers, sailors, missionaries, and, increasingly, 'globetrotters' passing through. In handling this mix, new models such as Mary-Louise Pratt's idea of the 'contact zone' and the school of 'new diplomatic history' seem ideally placed to bring new insights to bear on the topic.

Reading this collection, then, is a reminder of the significance of the treaty ports, the value of the work already produced on them, and the potential for applying new insights and methods.

Ian Rapley
Cardiff University, United Kingdom



Marine Corps General Joe Dunford meets with Thai Army General Ponpiapat Benyasri, 2018. Image originally posted on the DoD website, reproduced courtesy of the US Dept. of Defence. Photo by Officer Dominique A. Pineiro.

In the second part, Zawacki scrutinizes major characteristics of the triangular relationship between Thailand, the United States and China, from Thaksin's period to the military government in 2014. During Prime Minister Thaksin's term (2001–2006), Thailand received strong support from China in terms of trade and investment. This illustrated that Thailand could balance itself against or bandwagon with China. While Thailand enjoyed itself with Beijing's economic ties, Thai-US relations visibly

remained apparent in 2001–2006. Due to Washington's announcement regarding the War on Terror after the 9/11 incident, Thai troops were deployed in Afghanistan and Iraq. Being a good ally with the United States in the war against terrorism had been questionable, due to sensitivities over the southern insurgency circumstance in the deep South of Thailand. The enrichment of Thai-US relations then temporarily ceased after the Thai military intervened in politics in September 2006.

In addition, Zawacki demonstrates the shift of Thai diplomacy towards China in 2006–2014. China had been more proactive than the United States in terms of economic competitiveness, both bilaterally and regionally. The 2008 financial crisis that emerged in the United States limited the opportunity to drive the idea of a free trade area in the Asia Pacific region. The opportunity of economic growth in Asia was given to China. Thailand deemed that China should become an interested partner

in economic cooperation, including defense – offering the benefit of cheaper weapons. Even though the relationship with the United States in military cooperation continued, China-Thailand military ties progressively improved during 2011–2014. Chinese hegemony had expanded over the United States in the Straits of Malacca, Indian Ocean and South China Sea. Thailand took a new opportunity to extend its alliance. The strategic cooperation therefore led Thailand to concern about economic diplomacy with China.

Thailand has, indeed, changed its position much over the last decade, focusing on the shift in triangular relations. These shift pathways, however, tend to focus much on the way in which Thailand deals with two great powers – the United States and China – in terms of economy and defense. The author's work is richly descriptive and provides great fluency and timing in an elegant and original work. I highly recommended this book as an example of the study of Thailand's diplomacy towards great powers. Finally, I would provide a niche suggestion here. As a reader whose interest in the theme of Thailand's foreign relations is aroused, I expect to read more publications specially regarding the decision-making process of small states such as Thailand in developing their foreign policy towards bilateral relations with great powers such as the United States and China. This could help readers to comprehend the purposive actions of the policymakers in Thailand and other states that are influenced by the great powers.

Katsamaporn Rakson
Ramkhamhaeng University,
Thailand