

That “Naughty Yankee Boy,” Edward H. House, and Meiji Japan’s Struggle for Equality

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America’s first regular correspondent in Japan was Edward H. House (1836–1901), who went to Tokyo in the third year of Meiji for Horace Greeley’s *New York Tribune*. A native Bostonian, House had gained early prominence in two ways: through his devil-may-care lifestyle as a member of the New York Pfaff beer cellar’s bohemian gang, which included the likes of Walt Whitman and Thomas Bailey Aldrich, and through his graphic reports for the *Tribune* on John Brown’s execution at Harper’s Ferry in 1859. He also wrote a much-discussed series of articles for the *Tribune* in the spring of 1860 on the first Japanese embassy to the United States. In the next decade, House created a sensation with his coverage of the Civil War, helped to launch Mark Twain’s eastern seaboard career, accompanied the humorist Artemus Ward on his British debut, and managed the London theater where the Shakespearean actor Henry Irving won some of his earliest enthusiastic notices. Not satisfied merely with journalistic prominence, the restless House sailed to Japan in 1870, as the *Tribune*’s first regular Tokyo reporter, and within weeks he had begun to irritate many of the profit-seeking foreigners with his enthusiastic essays on Japanese customs and progress. By the end of that year, he had literally adopted the Pacific archipelago as a new homeland, and by the middle of the decade a *Tokyo Nichi Nichi Shim-bun* writer would say, on hearing that he was about to launch his own newspaper: “Mr. House . . . neither sneers at Japan nor scorns the Japanese. That makes him unusual among foreigners.”¹

House’s life merits scrutiny for many reasons. His articles and lobbying efforts with opinion leaders helped shaped early American attitudes and policies toward Japan; indeed, when the United States returned its share of the

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Shimonoseki indemnity to Japan in 1883, House was given the lion's share of the credit. His editorials in support of issues like treaty revision and better treatment of women provide a lucid summary of many key features of Japan's public discourse in the 1870s and 1880s. And his role in several diplomatic crises sheds a powerful light on the imperialist environment that shaped Meiji Japan's struggle toward modernity. This article, however, will focus more narrowly—on House's three-and-a-half-year stewardship of the *Tokio Times* (1877–80), where his experiences have much to tell us about the manner in which early-Meiji Japanese officials ordered their relations with the Western powers, as well as the complicated ways in which the Tokyo-Yokohama foreign community of that era related to Japan's struggle with modernity.

Although the *Tribune* described House as its "regular" correspondent when he arrived on 26 August 1870, the title did not mean "full time." In addition to writing a major newspaper piece once every three weeks, he also took a well-paid job (\$3,000 a year) in January 1871 as an English teacher at the newly established Daigaku Nanko, joining William Elliot Griffis and Guido Verbeck in teaching an amazing group of boys that included a future prime minister (Takahashi Korekiyo), a foreign-minister-to-be (Komura Jutaro), a lad who would dominate Japan's intellectual world (Sugiura Shigetake), and his favorite, Mitsukuri Kikuchi, who would become the country's first professor of zoology, after studying for several years in the United States with House's financial support.² He also taught occasional classes at Tokyo's first public school for girls, Takebashi Jogakko, and eventually adopted one of his brightest students, Aoki Koto, after learning that she was contemplating suicide over a failed marriage.³

But teaching always remained second among House's priorities; his passion was reporting. In the summer of 1872, he played a major role in publicizing the *Maria Luz* incident, an episode in which the Japanese released 130 Chinese coolies trapped in slave-ship conditions on a boat bound for Peru. He personally visited the ship and described a "reeking and sweltering . . . atmosphere which would extinguish the life of an American or European in half a day," and he lambasted the American minister Charles DeLong for showing sympathy for the ship's Peruvian captain.⁴ Two years later, he gave up teaching altogether to take on the biggest reporting experience of his Asian life to that time, a war correspondent's assignment with the Japanese expedition to punish Taiwanese tribesmen who had massacred fifty-four shipwrecked Ryukyu islanders over whom Japan claimed sovereignty. House's articles on the soldiers' dramatic military encounters filled the pages of his new paper, the *New York Herald*, in the summer of 1874, and his book on the episode, *The Japanese Expedition to Formosa*, became the standard account.

House never made a secret of his sympathies for Japan. Shortly after his arrival, he wrote to his *Tribune* editor that "existence here is a perpetual delight. . . . The climate is lovely; the people (natives, I mean) are kind . . . ; the language is easy to attain . . . ; the scenery is inexhaustably attractive."⁵ And his articles

adopted the same tone, praising Japan's progress, advocating revision of the unequal treaties, and sneering at foreigners who thought Japan backward. He was never simplistic in his commendations; indeed, he criticized the new Meiji government almost as often as he lauded it. But his general acceptance of the Japanese as competent and intelligent equals set him apart from other foreigners in the treaty ports and made him a favorite of several Japanese officials, particularly Okuma Shigenobu, the young secretary general of the Taiwan Aborigines Office, who had become a power in the finance and foreign ministries by the mid-1870s. As a result, about midway through the Taiwan expedition, several officials began talking about how valuable it might be if House were to begin a paper of his own, arguing that a voice like his—influential as he was in America, and sympathetic as he was to Japan—would be useful in securing better treatment for Japan in the United States and Great Britain. The nature of those talks, as well as the paper that eventuated from them, tell us a great deal about Japan's approach to international diplomacy in the early Meiji years.

The idea of using journalism to improve Japan's international image was not new to Japanese officials. The government already had begun to counter its domestic opposition by giving sympathetic Japanese editors special access to news sources and by purchasing large lots of their papers for circulation in the provinces. And the Finance Ministry had lubricated the relationship with the friendliest (or at any rate, the least antagonistic) of the foreign papers in 1873 by paying W. G. Howell, the owner and editor of the *Japan Mail*, 5,000 yen a year to have 500 copies of each issue sent to opinion leaders abroad—quite a deal in a world where circulations rarely ranged above 300. Howell had proved an obstreperous ally, however, in part because he kept asking for more money and in part because his views were erratic; so by 1874 Okuma and his colleague Okubo Toshimichi had begun looking elsewhere.

They were encouraged in this approach by Charles LeGendre, an American advisor on Taiwan who wrote a fifteen-page memo to Okuma on 8 July 1874 urging the creation of a new, government-supported, English-language newspaper. No developing state could make genuine progress without the confidence of the imperialist powers, LeGendre wrote, and the anti-Japanese approach of the British-owned English-language newspapers in Yokohama made such confidence hard to win. For that reason, Japan should create "an organ of its own," to be edited by "a man of experience, who has been brought up to the profession, and has learned it in the best journals of England and America." Such a project, he projected, would cost about \$4,000 in start-up costs, plus a thousand dollars a month in salaries, contributors' fees, "and other expenses." In December, LeGendre repeated his arguments in a massive memo to Okuma on Japan's relations with other countries, declaring that the government needed to create an organ that "shall, by sufficient distribution in the capitals of Europe, . . . create a new interest in, and a more complete comprehension of, the Japanese situation." He wanted this journal to have two parts: an official section, for which the gov-

ernment would be directly responsible, and an unofficial section in which divergent opinions would be expressed freely.⁶ By early 1875, he was suggesting House as the editor of such a paper, proposing at one point an annual salary of \$11,000 to get him to publish a paper, at another that House and *Tokyo Nichi Nichi* editor Fukuchi Gen'ichiro put out a joint English/Japanese weekly at an annual cost of \$14,280, and in still a third memo that the government buy the *Japan Mail* for \$15,000 from Howell and put it under an investment company, with House as editor. Okuma apparently liked this last proposal, but House demurred after learning that the *Mail* was not making a profit.⁷

House's interest in the project might have seemed surprising by twenty-first century standards. He had, after all, been quite an independent spirit, notorious for his fights with his editors, never willing to bend a knee to anyone with whom he did not agree. How could he accept a contract that would make him, in effect, an agent of the Japanese government? What about his journalistic independence? His insistence over the past two decades on the right, always, to say just what he thought, even when it was controversial or unpopular? We have no records of his reaction, but if the proposed arrangement gave him pause, he hid that fact to his dying. What we do know is that the idea of close ties between journalists and governments was not the issue, or the taboo, then that it has become in more recent years. We also know that House despised the anti-Japan tirades that appeared regularly in the Yokohama papers. And we know that he had a history of fighting for underdog causes. So it probably should not surprise us that, once terms were settled, he agreed with alacrity to sign Okuma's contract and launch a new paper called the *Tokio Times*.

A confidential agreement (*naimitsu gian*) was inked between House, Okuma, Okubo, and Iwakura Tomomi on 11 October 1876, providing the Bostonian with 15,000 yen over a twenty-eight month period, or nearly 6,500 yen a year, to publish a weekly newspaper. The restrictions on what he could include in the paper were two-fold: he agreed to publish any materials sent to him specifically by Okuma and Okubo, and he agreed that "all essays and editorials on Japan will be written truthfully and impartially, with the well being of the government in mind." The contract also stipulated that the government would send 500 copies of each issue to opinion leaders in Japan and abroad and that if House were to become ill or die, the subsidy would continue only at the government's discretion. A separate agreement provided that the *Times* would be printed by Fukuchi's company, the Nipposha. The contract was renewed at its expiration in 1878, with a 1,000 yen increase in postal and printing fees, after Okuma's colleague Hirai Kisho reported that the *Times* was "commanding great respect abroad" and assisting in the treaty revision struggle.⁸

The first issue of the paper came out on 6 January 1877, and there was no question for anyone who saw that day's issue what kind of paper it would be. First, it would be an intellectual journal, with essays—both those written by House and reprints of domestic and foreign editorials—consuming nearly half of

the space. It also would have a good deal of news, a full complement of ads, shipping reports, and the best writing in Japan. Both friends and rivals commented on its professionalism and erudition. The missionary educator Guido Verbeck called the *Times* "a most excellent journal conducted by a trained journalist." The British journalist W. B. Mason described "the sure touch of the accomplished man of letters, the polished diction, the apt phrase and allusion." The competitor *Mail* said the *Times*'s writing was "smooth and easy, and of excellent texture." And years later the journalist Tokutomi Soho would remark: "Not many people today could put out that intelligent a journal." House's prose tended toward overkill at times; Tokutomi likened it to "murdering tofu with a kitchen knife." But it always was clear, always intelligent, always filled with the colorful phrases that would attract 350 weekly subscribers by 1878, not an impressive number by Western standards, but the highest readership of any of Japan's English-language papers.⁹

The fact that the English teacher House wrote nearly all of the paper's essays personally meant that lucidity was consistent across the columns. Even the short new reports from government bureaus as often as not glistened with colorful metaphors or acerbic asides. And the editorial essays typically were gems of logic and fountains of literary allusion. House's touch also provided the *Times* with endless witticisms. When the editor heard, for example, that a government bureau had hung a portrait of a recently departed, unpopular foreign attaché, he quoted a clerk to the effect that the hanging was "a fine stroke of policy," because "the portrait will be just as active and efficacious as the original ever was, and will cost nothing beyond the first outlay."¹⁰ House informed his readers on one occasion that Eve must have played tennis well in the Garden of Eden, because she was unencumbered by clothes.

Even more important than the *Times*'s lucid prose were the broad scope of its coverage and the vigor of its editorial comment. The paper was especially strong on travel stories, because House himself had traveled widely during his first months in Japan (he had climbed Mt. Fuji, for example, in September 1870, less than two weeks after his arrival) and loved its landscapes and people. The paper also provided exceptionally detailed reports on diplomatic appointments and bureaucratic developments, along with columns of trade statistics and endless discussions of government budgets. Typically, accounts of a personnel shift at a ministry or of some impending new ordinance would appear first in the columns of the insider House. The *Times* also excelled in theater and music coverage, primarily because House was himself an expert in the arts, having been a composer, a critic, a theater manager, and an accomplished pianist before leaving the West. And above all, the paper excelled in comment, with many of its editorials sparking tantrums among the Yokohama editors, who had been irritated enough by House's pro-Japanese stance when he was merely a reporter and now found his polemics intolerable. The *Times*'s columns also nettled many Western diplomats, whose favor he curried only if he respected them. And they even stirred the ire

of Japanese officials more often than one might have predicted, because House never hesitated to criticize the things that he disliked in Japan.

One of the first things that strikes the reader of the paper is the seriousness with which House took Japanese policies. This country was not just a site for making a profit or for converting the heathen—or even for demonstrating the superiority of Western civilization. It was a place where intelligent, rational people were grappling with nation-building tasks, and House looked on their efforts with respect, sometimes greater respect even than Japanese intellectuals did. Frequently that attitude yielded editorials praising Japan's rapid progress—from a position of "frail decrepitude" in the 1860s to "friendly and respected intercourse with the powers of the earth" a decade later.¹¹ Other times it produced essays about the success of specific reforms: the efficiency of Japan's post office, the arrival of the first ship bearing a Japanese flag in London, the rapidity with which Japan was opening new national banks, the vitality of Japanese art. But at other times, more often than one might have predicted, House's respect led to editorials criticizing Japanese customs and government policies.

Indeed, few things illustrated the seriousness with which he took the Japanese better than his willingness to engage them in debate and to criticize things he disliked. No sycophant, he discussed the issues of the day with the vigor of one to whom the alternatives mattered. Often his criticisms dealt with specific, one-time incidents: the "economic absurdity" of some merchants' scheme to sell silkworms to Italy, the bad example set by officials who built extravagant residences, the harsh enforcement of press laws with neither "sufficient reason nor necessity." In June 1877, for example, he gave nearly a column to the firing of the Kaisei Gakko teacher Horace Wilson, who had introduced baseball to Japan, to make way for a Japanese employee. He sympathized with the desire to hire Japanese nationals "as speedily as possible," but questioned why officials would dismiss people "who know their work and do it zealously and well" while retaining "others who are . . . destitute of zeal."¹²

Just as often, House's criticisms were ongoing. For months *Times* editorials raged over the government's failure to regulate the charges of rickshaw pullers, while other essays expressed repeated bafflement at Tokyo's outdated firefighting methods. After a December 1879 fire that destroyed his own home, House's pen was withering; he called the fire fighting department "useless," hopelessly conservative, and "utterly dishonest and corrupt," and concluded that three things were needed: less flammable construction materials, better fire fighting equipment, and a sound insurance system.¹³ The *Times* also criticized broader social practices regularly, particularly the way women were treated by their husbands and families. His first lengthy treatment of this particular topic appeared on 2 March 1878, in response to an essay in which Fukuzawa Yukichi had suggested that Japanese not put their daughters in Westerners' schools lest too much emphasis on nonessential learning make them poor marriage candidates. House said Fukuzawa's view implied that women had no purpose other than to be

“assistants in their husbands’ households,” an attitude he found contemptuous. The real reason for Fukuzawa’s caution, he suggested, was that Japanese men feared that broadly educated women “will presently become intractable and insubordinate, and resolve themselves into an element hostile to the welfare of the state.” He found such fears “ludicrous,” but added that if men could not do as well as women in an equal system, then “the interests of the nation would be best served by as speedy a transfer as possible of all sorts of control to those who may prove themselves better entitled to leadership.” The implicit premise of Fukuzawa’s argument, he added, was that if women were educated broadly they might “perchance lose some of their value as menial drudges.” Space precludes summarizing House’s subsequent editorials on women; suffice it to say that they were numerous and equally hard hitting. And they made it clear that he respected Japanese officials too much to patronize them with either silence or insincere approval of practices he thought wrong.

More to the liking of his Japanese supporters—and more distasteful to his rival foreign editors—was the greatest of House’s crusades: his attacks on the evils of Western imperialism. No issue so thoroughly aroused him during the *Times* years as the way the European powers had appointed themselves world arbiters, speaking the language of justice while devising rules that benefited themselves alone. In the eighth issue of his paper, House reprinted a *Tokyo Nichi Nichi* analysis of the imperialist system, which argued: “We cannot arrive at an equality with foreign powers, because they maintain their conduct not by reason or on moral principles, but depend upon force.” And he wrote his own variations on that theme almost weekly. The attacks went in many directions. Frequently, it was trade that angered House, the fact that the diplomats tailored their policies to the merchants’ appetite for profit. Nearly as often, he wrote about the incompetence of Western diplomats serving in Japan. Sometimes he talked about the Europeans’ and Americans’ ignorance of Asia, and their willingness to use derogatory stereotypes or epithets such as “Japs.” And in almost every issue, he discussed what he saw as imperialism’s chief villain: the British trade system, backed up by its military might. He was so relentless, in fact, in his attacks on the British that a respected twentieth-century ambassador, Hugh Cortazzi, would write (without apparent evidence) that House had been “employed to write anti-British propaganda.”¹⁴

House’s feelings about imperialism were revealed most forcefully in scores of editorials on treaty revision. Indeed, he ran more than a hundred editorials and articles on the treaties during his years at the *Times*, and he discussed revision at least that many times more as a side issue in articles with another focus. His underlying principle was that Japan had been forced by ignorance and military weakness in the 1850s to sign treaties that robbed her of sovereignty, dignity, and economic opportunity—and that even though she had become a strong, civilized nation since then, the treaty powers continued to deny her justice. To regain dignity and achieve prosperity, Japan must find a means, a forceful means

if necessary, to throw off the old treaties. She must find a way to end the extraterritorial system under which foreigners committing crimes in Japan were tried by their own consular courts, and she must be given (or seize, if need be) autonomy in the setting of tariff rates. House was not naive about what it would take to accomplish treaty revision; he agreed with Fukuzawa that “foreign relations are governed, not by reason, but by passion,” and he never held out much hope that the British would give up the advantages of the unequal system without a great deal of pressure. But none of the obstacles daunted him much. He had no doubt about the justice of his position, and he felt sure that means were available for bringing treaty equality to fruition, particularly after the Japanese government decided in the fall of 1877 to negotiate directly with officials back in America and Europe rather than in Tokyo, where the foreign representatives usually acted as a bloc.¹⁵

The largest number of House’s treaty articles concentrated on trade and tariffs. He raised that topic first in a 17 March 1877 editorial on Japan’s 1876 trade statistics, arguing that “a higher duty” would improve the country’s commercial position. Then, on 31 March he launched a series of eight long letters by the Philadelphia economist Henry C. Carey, advocating protectionism as a source of prosperity. And on 21 April he ran the first major *Times* editorial on tariffs, showing how British Minister Harry Parkes’s interpretation of the treaties enabled British steamers to transport 2.5 million piculs of coal duty free to Japan each year, at a loss of more than \$21,000 in tariffs, or a full fifth of the customs house’s annual revenues.

One point that House pounded home, again and again, was that Japan badly needed the lost revenue. He noted that British merchants had to pay less duty when they sent goods to Japan than when they exported items to Europe, and that even Great Britain, the “declared exponent and advocate” of free trade, took in more customs revenue than Japan did. And he endlessly lauded the value of protectionism in building native industries—anywhere. Bismarck’s Germany was committed to protective tariffs; protectionists were in the majority in France now; even Switzerland, “the free trade country of Europe,” was putting high tariffs on goods from countries that excluded Swiss products. House called the move to protection a “sweeping wave.” He also argued that America’s growing silk industry had been helped by sixty-percent tariffs, while the absence of duties in England had enabled the French to invade the British silk market. “There were upwards of 14,000 looms going . . . at Bedford Leigh” before the British signed a treaty with the French to eliminate the duties, he said, “but the treaty swept them all away. . . . Destitution followed wherever silk was manufactured.”¹⁶

Equally important to the *Times* was the question of fairness. Tariff autonomy was a matter of national right; if strong nations denied that right to weaker ones, they were acting unjustly. When the *Japan Mail* called on Japan to exhibit “a fair and liberal spirit” in treaty negotiations in 1877, House huffed that the Japanese

would of course be fair and liberal—but that they were not “bound” to negotiate “in any spirit excepting that which pleases them. . . . The truth should never be lost sight of, that the regulation of a customs tariff is a national right.” He said the “fetters” of tariff limits were “imposed in her hours of extremest weakness,” and now that Japan was a healthy participant in international affairs they should be removed.

His trump card on this argument came in another long essay that quoted Townsend Harris, the American negotiator of the first commercial treaty with Japan, as personally opposing the continued imposition of the tariff limits. House had written Harris in 1875, asking for a comment on the limits, since the diplomat’s name often was “quoted in a sort of defence of the claims made by the present envoys.” Harris replied quickly, saying he had intended the tariff limits to be only a temporary measure until the Japanese understood international affairs well enough to revise them. He admitted to writing the treaty and fixing the limits, because of “the ignorance of the Japanese of a tariff of duties on imports and of the manner in which customs should be collected.” But he had made sure that the treaty specifically stipulated that rates could be revised in a few years, at Japan’s initiative. He wrote:

I constantly told the Japanese commissioners that before the time came around for revising the Treaty they would have gained such experience as would enable them intelligently to deal with this matter themselves; remarking that while ten years was an important part of a man’s life it was as nothing in the life of a nation. I never, for a moment, claimed a right to interfere in matters which purely belong to the municipal affairs of every nation. Such interference is the result of absolute conquest, and not of any international right.

Now, House said, we “see what the motives that influenced Mr. Harris really were.” The Harris letter created quite a furor; it was reprinted quickly in *Tokyo Nichi Nichi* for Japanese consumption; American minister John Bingham was upset by what he saw as Harris’s attempt “to steal my thunder” in the treaty reform campaign; and Harris’s thoughts kept rippling through the journalistic and diplomatic communities for years to come.¹⁷

During 1878 the *Times* expressed optimism about the prospects of changing the tariff system, thanks especially to the support Bingham and the U.S. State Department now had thrown behind revision. House began proposing alternatives to the present system, even if the British would not go along. In the summer of 1878, he raised the idea of Japan simply renouncing the treaties and setting tariffs as it pleased. No one would go to war over that, he asserted. All of the negotiations, “the endless iterations of conference, negotiation, correspondence,” had “brought forth nothing—not even a mouse.” It was time for Japan to take a bold initiative. “One sturdy breath of independence, and the swollen bubble so long blown by diplomatic arrogance and assumption tumbles back into the froth of which it was composed.” A more realistic kind of “diplomatic ingenuity,” he suggested later, would be for Japan to form an alliance with one of the

great powers—preferably the United States, or if that were not possible, France, Germany, or Russia—in which each would grant the other major concessions, such as the elimination of all duties on each other's goods. He did not see this as a permanent arrangement (after all, it contradicted his protectionist theories), but as a temporary measure to break the log jam. Trade between the two countries would soar, and the other treaty powers would be forced to negotiate new treaties. "To gain 'a great right,' it might be necessary to sanction 'a little wrong'." He also held out great hope for the unilateral negotiations being conducted that year between Japan and the United States. And when agreement actually was reached on a bilateral treaty that gave Japan tariff autonomy, he was elated.

House's optimism turned to disappointment, however, when the Japanese, acting under a misperception of American demands, added a clause making the bilateral treaty effective only when the other treaty powers had agreed to similar changes. The impact of that clause was to render the new treaty meaningless. House called it "the most deplorable diplomatic blunder committed by Japanese agents since the original surrender of sovereign rights, twenty years ago." To ratify the treaty with the new clause "would be just as useful" as "to submit the document to flames and ratify the ashes." He said the draft had been excellent otherwise; it restored to Japan the right of "regulating customs duties and controlling foreign commerce"; it also gave her the right to protect "the coasting trade." But with the added stipulation, the treaty had become hostage to Great Britain. "A whole agreement is carefully put together, like a child's toy structure, only to be knocked into fragments by the final touch." The work on treaty revision would have to start again—this time with more baggage, since the bilateral negotiations had created new resentments and the blunder had taken away the Japanese government's leverage. In an early 1879 editorial, he would conclude: "When Japan is prepared to say, 'This I want and this I will have,'—she will get it, and not before." He no longer expected that soon.¹⁸

The other treaty revision that drew major comment from House was extraterritoriality, and here too he cited Harris, who said, first, that the jurisdictional clause of the treaty "*was against my conscience*"; second, that the secretary of state at the time had regarded extraterritoriality as an "unjust interference" with national sovereignty that had to be included to satisfy Congress; and third, that "*I fear that I shall not live to see this unjust provision struck out of our treaties.*"¹⁹ But justice was not the sole issue, House said. At least as galling were the specific abuses the system engendered. He gave issue after issue to reports (with an abundance of comment, of course) on iniquitous decisions that issued from the consular courts, all the while building a powerful argument against the system as a whole.

Among the first of the episodes that attracted House's pen was a pair of parallel, nearly identical, cases in 1877 that produced opposite judgments in two different consular courts. Two residents of the Tsukiji foreign quarters, one a

Briton, the other an American, had refused for months to pay rent to their Japanese landlords. When the Japanese government sued, the British court ordered the offender to pay the back rent, while the American court ruled for the defendant. Noting that the cases illustrated the “absurdity of the ex-territorial system,” House ran a piece from *Hochi Shimbun*, which asked: “How are foreigners justified in saying that their methods of dispensing justice are the only trustworthy ones?” A month later, he ran a paragraph from the journal *Celestial Empire* calling the two cases “splendid illustrations of the vaunted *impartiality* of Justice as administered in foreign law courts.” The following May, House talked about the “growing scandal” of Yokohama sailors—“a notoriously ignorant, irresponsible, and, when vinously excited, quarrelsome class”—who got involved in violent scrapes and went away with little or no punishment. And an 1880 case, in which a British seaman named Ross murdered the officer of an American ship, drew a lengthy list of the extraterritoriality system’s abuses: inadequate policing of the treaty ports, a woefully weak licensing system for bars and saloons, and jurisdictional disputes of every kind. The system increased the likelihood of violent crimes such as this, House wrote; even though Ross had been sentenced to death, the jurisdictional controversies made it unclear whether he ever would be punished—“all because of that ever patent absurdity which still grows a luxuriant perennial crop of abuses,—the distorted phenomenon of extra-territoriality.”²⁰

The episode that drew House’s most fearsome attack followed the arrival of the German ship *Hesperia* in Yokohama’s outer harbor in July 1879. Since the vessel had spent most of the previous month loading and unloading cargo and passengers in Kobe, where a cholera epidemic had broken out, the Japanese ordered it under quarantine, whereupon the German minister von Eisendecker objected, saying the treaties gave the Japanese no jurisdiction over German ships. After having the boat inspected by a German doctor and by Germany’s consul general, von Eisendecker permitted the ship to unload its passengers and cargo on 14 July, over the objections of a Japanese officer who “absolutely forbade the captain to leave the station.” Former U.S. President Ulysses Grant, on tour in Tokyo at the time, suggested that Japan fire at the German ship, and U.S. Minister Bingham wrote home that the death toll from the cholera epidemic “would not have been nearly so great if the Government of Japan had been aided and not resisted, as she was by certain foreign powers.” House published numerous articles on the episode, using phrases such as “outrage,” “diplomatic law-breaking,” and the “utter poverty” of the Germans’ defense of their actions. In December, House wrote that the *Hesperia* episode had touched off a debate in Germany and England that betokened an end to the extraterritorial system, perhaps even within a decade: “The doors of debate have at length been thrown open, and . . . we may now look for that publicity which, in England, heralds the death blow of any system of unprincipled oppression and arrogant injustice.” He predicted that Harry Parkes, the man he held responsible for inspiring von Eisendecker, would be recalled, if only the Japanese government would suggest it.²¹

Rumors were rife when House shut down the *Times* on 26 June 1880. The rival Yokohama editors proclaimed that its readership was small (though theirs was smaller) and that the paper no longer was viable (an inaccurate assumption), due to House's alienation from mainstream foreign thought. Some said dissension in government circles had undermined Japanese support for the paper's subsidy, while others suggested that House had offended his supporters by insisting on the right to attack official policies. The truth actually was more complex than they could have imagined. First, House did indeed—as he had claimed publicly—have to return to America to handle family financial affairs, because his uncle and business agent had died unexpectedly the previous winter, leaving House without close relatives and plunging his financial affairs into “a serious confusion.” Second, he was suffering by now from a case of the gout so serious that he would have to be carried aboard the ship bound for America; he hoped that doctors in New York might be able to give him relief. And third, Okuma had decided to send him on a quiet trip to Europe and America, to lobby politicians and officials for a more sympathetic ear in the treaty revision talks, an assignment House liked very much, since it combined two of his passions, fair treatment for Japan and the political/cultural swirl of Paris and London. He said in the last issue that some people had urged him temporarily to turn the paper over to a surrogate, but he had rejected that because the *Times* had been “the vehicle of expression for the views of a single person”; to give control to someone else would destroy “the efficacy of the publication.”²²

The years that followed would take House's odyssey with Japan in tortuous and dynamic new directions: continued magazine campaigns against the unequal treaties, unsuccessful lobbying efforts to be named American consul-general in Yokohama, endless correspondence with American intimates like Grant, John Hay, and John Russell Young about Japanese affairs, a tumultuous and eventually quite public relationship with Mark Twain, a return to war reporting (from a wheel chair) during the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95, even directorship of the first Western symphony by the Emperor Meiji's court musicians, to whom he taught Western-style music on Western instruments, at the request of the empress. But the *Tokio Times* years tell us more than any of those later experiences about the complex ways in which sympathetic foreigners and the early Meiji government worked together in Japan's march toward modernity. They also provide intriguing insights into questions about Japan's overseas lobbying efforts and source disclosure that even today trigger heated discussions. And they illustrate how complicated the relationships among the expatriates themselves were—and always will be.

One of the most disheartening, yet at times most charming, characteristics of the *Tokio Times* was this last feature: its struggles with the *Herald*, *Gazette*, and *Mail* in Yokohama. John Russell Young wrote in 1879: “If you take sides with the eastern nations, in this far east, you bring upon you the rancor of the foreigners. . . . You are bribed, bought, corrupted. You are possessed of the devil.”²³

House stirred strong responses and a good deal of opposition. Sometimes the attacks were humorous, as when the *Japan Punch* printed a cartoon of him carrying an American flag with a rising sun in the middle of it, under the caption, "The new flag of Japan—a la Tokio Times & Co.," or when it labeled him "the naughty Yankee boy who would throw coals at the British Lion."²⁴ At other times, they could be vicious. In 1879, for example, after House had criticized Parkes, the *Gazette* wrote about the *Times*'s "'damnable iteration' of insult, its simulated indignation for wrong never inflicted, its venomous malice."²⁵ And while House averred that he wanted to maintain a civil tone, he saw no choice but to respond in kind. "Gentle persuasion or moderate debate would be a senseless affectation," he wrote. "As well seek to extinguish the blaze of a furnace with perfumed oil. . . . Courtesy and soft speech . . . would be mistaken for timidity."²⁶ As a result, he sneered often at his rivals' journalistic sloppiness, at their mistakes, at their "all-embracing ignorance," at the *Gazette*'s "shrill, unnatural voice,"²⁷ and he tore apart their arguments with a zest that suggested more than unavoidable self-defense. It was little wonder that when the *Times* announced its own demise, the *Herald* sniped that the paper "has gone out with a stink, and society is well rid of a weekly and nasty nuisance."²⁸ The animosity between the pro- and anti-Japanese foreigners was not just a pose; it was deep and real. The editors' goals differed as much as their personalities. The Yokohama journalists sought British profit above all and regarded the Japanese as inferior, while those of House's ilk sought a world order that treated the Japanese as equals and granted treaty sovereignty to any nation capable of exercising it.

Less obvious but even more important were the things the *Times* experience has to tell us about the methods the Meiji government used in its drive to win a place in the imperialist system. A great deal has been written about that government's public treaty revision efforts: the diplomatic negotiations in Tokyo and in foreign capitals, the conference approaches, the suggestions of novel, sometimes halfway measures toward equal treatment. House's story shows that the public activities were, however, only a part of the narrative. Although space limitations preclude a detailed analysis, it is important to note that the subtler, behind-the-scenes attempts at creating a climate conducive to international acceptance consumed as much of the Meiji officials' energy as the better-known up-front activities. At least four points need to be made in this regard.

First, the handling of House and the *Times* illustrates just how sensitive officials were to the fact that international success depended as much on creating a milieu as it did on building a military, developing an economy, or engaging in direct negotiations. It did not take LeGendre's memos to tell them that Japan needed the confidence of European nations if it was to get their cooperation; nor did it take his advice to make them aware that this quest for confidence demanded public relations almost as much as it did specific policies. In a world in which the Yokohama papers daily lambasted Japan as inept, greedy, and backward, the need for a friendly voice—for an organ that explained Japanese poli-

cies sympathetically, in a language that foreign leaders could read—was self-evident. That was the reason the government would find it important to send 500 copies a week to opinion leaders in the Western world.

Second, the treatment of House showed the early leaders' understanding that soft gloves worked better than bare fists in securing friends. The secret contract establishing the *Times* contained only two clauses (out of nine) that restricted what the *Times* could publish. The first required House to publish anything that Okuma and Okubo specifically requested; the second (Article Five) stipulated that "all essays and editorials on Japan will be written truthfully and impartially, with the well being of the government in mind."²⁹ Such clauses could, of course, have been used to regulate the paper's contents quite severely, but the reality was that House was given almost total freedom. As we have seen, he criticized Japan as vociferously as he praised it, and his attacks on practices like the treatment of wives and lavish spending hit at the very people who supported his subsidies. That he looked out for the government's (and Japan's) interests is undeniable, but he had been doing that since the day he stepped ashore at Yokohama, indeed since the day he covered the Japanese ambassadors to Washington in 1860. The *Times* columns thus make it clear that the officials to whom he answered gave him as much latitude as his own inclinations demanded. They seem to have understood that the best censorship is self-censorship. House probably would not have accepted any other arrangement, and though his independence surely caused men like Okuma to squirm at times, they were savvy enough to give him the space that he demanded, knowing that his essential, pro-Japanese message would come through most effectively when he spoke from conviction rather than from fetters.

Third, the *Times* experience highlights the lack of unity within Japanese government circles. Not everyone was as astute as Okuma and Okubo when it came to shaping opinion. Nor did everyone see quite so clearly how important it was to shape foreign opinion. Thus, when House returned to Tokyo in 1882, planning to revive the paper, he was blocked—not by journalistic rivals but by the fact that his sponsors were no longer around. Okubo had been assassinated before the *Times* shut down, and Okuma had been forced from the government a few months after House left for Europe. For years, the Bostonian would write about the "tragedy" for Japan of that ouster. It is clear in hindsight that it also was a misfortune for House, because without Okuma to patronize him, he was not able to secure sufficient funds to revive the paper.

Finally, House's efforts add new dimensions to our understanding of the nature and role of the *oyatoi gaikokujin*, or foreign employees, who helped Meiji Japan along the path to modernity. They make it clear that in the field of journalism, just as in most other areas, there were foreigners who gave themselves to the Japanese cause not out of greed, or because they were power seekers, but because they were committed quite genuinely to the progress of a land that they had come to love. From his first days in Tokyo, House was infatuated with this

“fantastic and delightful country.”³⁰ And his espousal of its causes never wavered, regardless of who was paying his checks. As he wrote midway through his *Times* career, he had kept up “an unchanging front throughout half a dozen years of tolerably active controversy.” Surely, he added, that “counts for something.”³¹ Not everyone was convinced by his arguments (though one Hartford clergyman wrote that “you have made a good deal of a Japanese patriot of me”³²), but even his opponents would have agreed that he represented an important group of foreigners who served the Japanese cause not primarily from avarice or ambition, but because they had come to love and respect Japan itself. Working both beside and beneath an enlightened group of officials who were as good at public relations as they were at nation building, those foreigners played a significant role in shaping the direction Japan took as it entered a wholly new international sphere.

Notes

¹ *Tokyo Nichi Nichi Shimbun*, 18 Dec. 1876.

² House’s salary and Daigaku Nanko experiences are discussed in UNESCO Higashi Aija Bunka Kenkyu Senta, ed., *Shiryō oyatoi gaikokujin* (Tokyo: Shogakukan, 1975), pp. 163, 193; Showa Joshi Daigaku, ed., “E. H. Hausu,” *Kindai bungaku kenkyū sosho*, vol. 5 (Tokyo: Showa Joshi Daigaku, 1957), pp. 395–400; and Shigehisa Tokutaro, *Oyatoi gaikokujin* (Kagoshima: Kagoshima Kenkyūjo Shuppankai, 1968), p. 161.

³ See Usui Chizuko, *Joshi kyoiku no kindai to gendai: Nichibei no hikaku kyoiku gakuteki shiron* (Tokyo: Kindai Bungei, 1994), p. 191; also Aoki Koto, “The Story of My Life,” 20 June 1874, William Elliot Griffis Collection, Rutgers University; Henshu Inkai, ed., *Za yatoi: oyatoi gaikokujin no sogoteki kenkyū* (Tokyo: Shibunkaku Shuppan, 1987), p. 144.

⁴ *New York Tribune*, 23 Sept., 28 Nov. 1872.

⁵ E. H. House to Whitelaw Reid, 21 Sept. 1870, Whitelaw Reid Papers, Library of Congress.

⁶ The subsidies to the *Mail* are discussed in Yamamoto Fumio, *Shimbun hattatsu shi* (Tokyo: Ito Shoten, 1944), pp. 166–67, and Ebihara Heihachiro, *Nihon Oji shimbun zasshi shi* (Tokyo: Taikaido, 1934), pp. 81–86. Howell’s demand for more money is found in a memo from Charles LeGendre to Okuma Shigenobu, 8 July 1874, Okuma monjo (OM), No. C462, Waseda University. The LeGendre memos are in OM C462 (8 July 1874) and OM C479 (23 Dec. 1874, with pp. 83–95 dealing specifically with the creation of a paper).

⁷ LeGendre’s 1875–76 memos to Okuma about using House (OM, Waseda University: LeGendre memos of 1 Jan. and 5 Apr. 1875; 5 Mar. 1876; and Okuma memo to LeGendre, 9 Sept. 1876) are discussed in Kasahara Hidehiko, “Rujiyandoru to seifukei Oji shimbun,” *Shimbun Gaku Hyoron* 33 (1984): 208–209. The 1 January 1875 memo (OM No. 4416) was the first mentioning House by name.

⁸ The contract is in OM, No. A1115 (1 Oct. 1876). The extension (24 June 1878) and Hirai’s discussion (24 Apr. 1878) are found in OM, No. A1116.

⁹ Evaluations of House are found in W. B. Mason, “The Foreign Colony: Early Meiji Days: III—Edward H. House, Editor of the First English Journal in Tokyo,” *The New East* 2, no. 3 (Mar. 1918): 243; W. E. Griffis, *Verbeck of Japan* (New York: Revell,

1918), p. 289; *Japan Weekly Mail*, 6 Jan. 1877; Tokutomi Soho, "Hausu sensei no omoide," *Shimbun kisha to shimbun* (Tokyo: Min'yusha, 1929), pp. 116–17. For circulation figures see *Tokio Times*, 6 July 1878, p. 2, and 3 Jan. 1880, p. 14.

¹⁰ *Tokio Times*, 10 Feb. 1877.

¹¹ *Tokio Times*, 6 Jan. 1877.

¹² *Tokio Times*: silkworm exports, 16 June 1877; press law enforcement, 27 Jan. 1877; firing of Horace Wilson, 2 June 1877.

¹³ *Tokio Times*, 3 Jan. 1880.

¹⁴ Ian Nish, ed., *Britain and Japan: Biographical Portraits*, Vol. I (Kent, U.K.: Japan Library, 1994), p. 16.

¹⁵ *Tokio Times*, 14 Dec. 1878.

¹⁶ *Tokio Times*: British income from tariffs, 20 Oct. 1877; the sweeping wave, 17 May 1879; British silk industry, 24 Apr. 1880.

¹⁷ *Tokio Times*: 28 July 1877 ("a national right"), 24 Nov. 1877 (Harris's letter; italics in *Tokio Times* but not in letter itself). House's letter to Harris was written 17 January 1875; Harris's reply was sent 22 March 1875; copies of both are in the Charles LeGendre Papers, Library of Congress. For Bingham's response, see Payson J. Treat, *Diplomatic Relations between the United States and Japan, 1893–1895*, vol. II (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1932), p. 33. Treat suggests that Harris probably did not intend his letter to be published, but the fact that Harris responded specifically to a request from House, a journalist, suggests that Treat was mistaken.

¹⁸ *Tokio Times*: 27 July 1878 (unilateral renunciation of treaty); 10 Aug. 1878 (alliance with a strong nation); 1 Feb. 1879 (the fatal clause); 19 Apr. 1879 ("this I want").

¹⁹ From *Tokio Times*, 24 Nov. 1877; Charles LeGendre Papers, Library of Congress. The emphasis is in the *Times* but not in the letter. The last line of the letter said, "I fondly hope that you [rather than "others"] may see it fully abrogated"; otherwise the quotations follow the Harris letter precisely.

²⁰ *Tokio Times*: 8 Sept. 1877 (Tsukiji cases); 6 Oct. 1877 (*Celestial Empire*, emphasis in original); 18 May 1878 (violent sailors); 12 June 1880 (seaman Ross).

²¹ *Tokio Times*: 9 Aug. 1879 (general account of *Hesperia* episode); 19 July 1879 ("diplomatic law-breaking"); 13 Dec. 1879 (discussion in England and Germany). For statements of Grant and Bingham, see Treat, *Diplomatic Relations*, II, p. 88.

²² *Tokio Times*, 26 June 1880.

²³ *Tokio Times*, 27 Dec. 1879.

²⁴ *Japan Punch*: Nov. 1877 ("new flag"); Feb. 1878 ("naughty Yankee").

²⁵ *Japan Gazette*, 4 Jan. 1879.

²⁶ *Tokio Times*, 27 Dec. 1879.

²⁷ *Tokio Times*: 13 Dec. 1879 ("ignorance"); 26 June 1880 ("unnatural voice").

²⁸ *Japan Daily Herald*, 26 June 1880.

²⁹ *Naimitsu gian*, Articles 4 and 5, OM, No. A1115, Waseda University Library.

³⁰ Letter from House to Whitelaw Reid, 21 Sept. 1870; Whitelaw Reid Paper, Library of Congress.

³¹ *Tokio Times*, 6 July 1878.

³² Joseph Twichell letter to House, 9 June 1879, Mark Twain Papers, University of California-Berkeley Library.