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## WESTERN CONTRIBUTORS TO THE MODERNIZATION OF MEIJI JAPAN: HEPBURN AND VERBECK

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The modernization of Meiji Japan was aided by two different approaches in connection with other countries. One approach was that, in order to gain a better understanding of the West, Meiji delegates visited Western countries and learned about Western civilization first hand. One purpose of the Iwakura Mission was to observe and investigate the institutions and practices of advanced countries, which would help the modernization of Japan. Iwakura and high officials, such as Okubo Toshimichi and Ito Hirobumi, visited twelve countries including the U.S., Britain, and France. Upon their return home, they reported to the Meiji Emperor, “Power of nations, people, government, religions, military are deeply rooted and many branches are growing from the root.... Thus we need to quickly establish our constitutional government, accumulate wealth of our people, otherwise the growth of civilization cannot be done.”<sup>1</sup>

The other approach for the establishment of a new nation was that many Westerners came to Japan and provided an incredible assistance to the country directly. The slogan of the Meiji government was “Enrich the country, strengthen the military,” and the government invited Western specialists to Japan with the goal of modernization on their minds. These specialists were called *oyatoi gaikokujin* (foreign advisors employed by the Japanese government). Many *oyatoi gaikokujin* came from Britain, America, and France, and numbered more than 3,000. Despite the risk to their lives, they came over to Japan and transferred their knowledge in the fields of military, law, agriculture and medical science, among others. One such example is that an American, William S. Clark, who established the Sapporo Agricultural College, was invited in 1876 by the Japanese government. Clark, who is well known for his famous words, “Boys, be ambitious!” had a significant impact on the scientific and economic development of the island of Hokkaido.

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<sup>1</sup> Harry Sakamaki, “The Iwakura Mission in 1872” (Presentation, Japan Society of Fairfield Country, New York, February 25, 2012).

Guido Verbeck, who originally came to Japan as a missionary of the Dutch Reformed Church, also became an *oyatoi gaikokujin* at one point in his life. In his proposal “Brief Sketch,” he suggested a mission to travel to advanced countries in search of wisdom and to inspect various systems which could be used to civilize and modernize the nation.

*Oyatoi gaikokujin* certainly contributed to the modernization of Japan; however, not all foreigners who helped Japan at that time were *oyatoi gaikokujin*. Without invitation, some foreigners voluntarily came to Japan and dedicated their lives for the sake of the people and the nation. One such foreigner was Dr. James Curtis Hepburn. With his strong belief in foreign missions, Hepburn came to Japan just before the end of the two-century long closure. He stayed in Yokohama for 33 years (1859–1892) and addressed the people’s needs in terms of medical care, education, and Christian missionary work. This paper, focusing on Hepburn and Verbeck, will explore how they aided in the modernization of Meiji Japan throughout the course of their lives in America and Japan.



**Figure 1. James Curtis Hepburn**

**Dr. James Curtis Hepburn: Milton, Pennsylvania Days**

Hepburn was born in 1815 in Milton, a small town in Pennsylvania. His father was a highly esteemed citizen and lawyer, and his mother was a housewife: “My father and my mother were both humble Christians....My mother was especially interested in Foreign Missions. She took the

Missionary Herald and the N.Y. Observer as far back as I can remember. I always read those papers with interest.”<sup>2</sup>

### **Princeton College and University of Pennsylvania**

After finishing Milton Academy, Hepburn enrolled in Princeton College as a junior at the age of sixteen in 1831. Hepburn’s “first serious impressions about personal religion were in the winter of 1831–32 at Princeton during a revival in the College,” in which he “awoke to a new life and was born again of the Spirit.”<sup>3</sup>

After Princeton, he entered the Medical College of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia: “A year earlier, on May 19, 1835 to be precise, he joined the First Presbyterian Church of Milton. The notion of becoming a medical missionary suddenly overtook him. His father strongly opposed it, and he wanted to wipe away this notion to appease his family. Yet his heart was not at rest until he definitely decided to go overseas. The sense of mission and calling was simply more overpowering.”<sup>4</sup>

### **Meeting Clarissa**

Hepburn received a medical doctor degree from the University of Pennsylvania and opened a medical practice office in Norristown, Pennsylvania, where he met Miss Clarissa M. Leete. She was also interested in missionary work abroad, and their fateful encounter made Hepburn decide on both marriage and missionary work abroad. The couple set sail in 1841 for Singapore, Macao, and then Amoy. Their first child, David Samuel, was born in Amoy in 1844.<sup>5</sup>

### **Life in New York (1846–1859)**

After coming back from Amoy in 1846, the couple lived in New York. According to the New York City Directory of 1850, Hepburn’s address was “42<sup>nd</sup> Street near 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue.” The address indicates the center of present day Manhattan, but the area was still under development when

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<sup>2</sup> Cited in W. T. Linn Kieffer, *A History of the First Presbyterian Church of Milton* (Milton: The First Presbyterian Church of Milton, 1935).

<sup>3</sup> Kieffer, *A History of the First Presbyterian Church of Milton*.

<sup>4</sup> According to David J. Lu, “James Curtis Hepburn, Missionary from Central Pennsylvania to the Pacific Rim” (Presentation, Synod of Northumberland, 1988).

<sup>5</sup> Kieffer, *A History of the First Presbyterian Church of Milton*.

Hepburn began to live there. At first he had a small family practice, but there was an epidemic of cholera of the Asian strain in the city. His experience in China helped Hepburn to diagnose and treat patients accurately. Although he hated New York, he soon became a well-known physician in the city. During their 13-year stay there, the Hepburns had three additional children, who were five, three, and two years of age, but they all died of illnesses. Hepburn wrote a letter to his brother, Slator, on August 1, 1855: “what a dreadful place is New York, Oh that I had wings that I might fly away to some desolate place. May God forgive me if these are wicked thoughts.”<sup>6</sup>

In the nineteenth century, America experienced significant industrialization and became interested in expanding her trading markets to the East. In 1853, Commodore Perry came to Uraga (near Yokohama) with four black ships, requesting Japan to open her doors to America. A treaty between the two nations was signed in 1854 and allowed foreign missionaries to enter Japan. It was then that Hepburn applied for a medical missionary position. As soon as The Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions in America made the offer, he readily accepted it.

#### **Arrival in Japan**

Hepburn and Clarissa left New York, leaving their only remaining child, Samuel, with a friend and landed in Nagasaki on October 12th, 1859. It was still before the reopening of Japan and most Japanese had never seen Westerners, especially women. When Mrs. Hepburn walked outside, local Japanese men followed her with much curiosity. She was the first American woman to walk on Japanese soil.<sup>7</sup> The couple settled down at Jobutsuji, a Buddhist temple in Kanagawa, a town next to Yokohama, but Christianity was still under prohibition and the Edo (the old name of Tokyo) government had strict surveillance over suspicious foreigners.

Hepburn soon began studying Japanese and hired a Japanese tutor. The man was a brilliant teacher, but after about three weeks he told Hepburn that he would quit the job. He confessed to Hepburn that he was a spy from the government with the intention of assassinating the American;

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<sup>6</sup> Meiji Gakuin Rekishi Shiryōkan, *Hepburn's Letter Addressed to Slator* (Tokyo: Meiji Gakuin, 2008), p. 13.

<sup>7</sup> Ishikawa Kiyoshi, *Shirokyokai Kaihoo April 20<sup>th</sup>: Hebon koborebanashi* (Yokohama: Shiro Kyoukai, 2008).

but he found Hepburn a person of ethics and too nice to be killed.<sup>8</sup> Actually, thirteen foreigners were assassinated at that time,<sup>9</sup> and Hepburn's status was in great danger. This was in distinct contrast with the *oyatoi gaikokujin*, who were treated with high regard by the Japanese government.

### Medical Services

Being a medical missionary, Hepburn opened a clinic at Sokoji Buddhist Temple near his residence and provided Japanese citizens with free medical services. He treated patients as an eye doctor and physician, and his voluntary medical services soon earned him a good reputation; by this time 100 to 150 patients visited per day.<sup>10</sup> In particular, his operation of amputating the leg of the top kabuki actor made Hepburn famous all over Japan. In addition, he trained Japanese medical students in Western medicine in his clinic. One of them was Miyake Hiizu, who became the first chairman of the Medical Science Department at Tokyo University, as well as the first person in Japan to hold a Ph.D. in medical science.

### *Waei Gorin Shusei* (The First Comprehensive Japanese–English Dictionary)

Although Hepburn was engaged in medical services, his ultimate goal for his stay in Japan was to translate the Bible into Japanese. To accomplish this job, Hepburn needed a comprehensive Japanese dictionary, and so he decided to compile one himself. He was fortunate to have come across an eye patient, Kishida Ginko, who was a man of intelligence and skillful calligraphy. With his help, Hepburn successfully completed a dictionary in 1887. It was named *Waei gorin shusei* and was the first comprehensive Japanese–English and English–Japanese dictionary in Japan. The Japanese–English part contained 20,772 words in 558 pages and the English–Japanese part contained 10,030 words in 132 pages.<sup>11</sup> The indexes were basically written in *romaji* (romanized letters), with *katakana* (characters used for foreign words) and *kanji* (borrowed Chinese characters) equivalences added.

<sup>8</sup> Murakami Fumiaki, *Hebon Monogatari* (Tokyo: Meiji Gakuin, 2003).

<sup>9</sup> Meiji Gakuin Rekishi Shiryōkan, *Meiji Gakuin Rekishi Shiryōkan Shiryshū* (Tokyo: Meiji Gakuin, 2006), p. 88.

<sup>10</sup> Okabe Kazuoki, ed., *Hebon Zainichi Shokan Zenshū* (Tokyo: Kyobunkan, 2009).

<sup>11</sup> Murakami Fumiaki, *Hebon Monogatari*, p. 132.

The dictionary was very useful to both Japanese and Westerners who studied English or Japanese. About 1,000 or 2,000 copies of the first edition sold out quickly, and the book was expanded until the most recent ninth edition. It is amazing that Hepburn took up this job, having little knowledge of the Japanese language when he began, and taking only seven years to complete it.

Eventually Hepburn sold his copyright of the third edition of *Waei gorin shusei* in order to raise funds to build the dormitory of Meiji Gakuin in 1886. The dormitory was named after him, “Hebon Hall,” and Hepburn was the first President of Meiji Gakuin (1890–1891).

### **Hebon’s Romanization**

Hepburn used his own romanized description system in *Waei gorin shusei* in 1886. This system is based on English pronunciation and is called “Hebon-shiki” or “Hepburn-system.” In 1885, however, Tanakadate Aikitsu invented the system called “Nihon-shiki” based on Japanese pronunciation. According to the “Nihon-shiki system,” the Japanese equivalents of *bean curd* and *tea* are spelled *tohu* and *otya*, respectively. On the other hand, the “Hepburn-shiki system” writes *tofu* and *ocha*. Currently “Kunrei-shiki system,” which is a revision of “Nihon-shiki,” is the officially recognized romanized system. In reality, however, “Hebon-shiki” is used for Japanese passports and is more prevalent. The term “Hebon-shiki *romaji*” has been very popular in Japan, and thus the name “Hepburn” is well known among the Japanese people.

### **“Hepburn Juku” and Meiji Gakuin**

In 1858, The Treaty of Amity and Commerce between the United States and Japan was concluded and stated that a settlement called *kyoryuchi*, in Japanese, should be built in the ports of Kanagawa, Kobe, Nagasaki, Hakodate, and Niigata. The *kyoryuchi* in Yokohama was located at the present Yamashita Park of Yokohama Port and was called “Yokohama Kyoryuchi.” Hepburn built a new residence at the Yokohama Kyoryuchi 39<sup>th</sup> in 1863 and used it as both a clinic and an academy. The academy was called “Hebon Juku” and was run by Dr. and Mrs. Hepburn. This is the origin of Meiji Gakuin, which was founded in 1887.

Prominent individuals who studied at “Hepburn Juku” included Hayashi, Tadasu (later Minister of Foreign Affairs as well as Minister of Communication). Hayashi wrote on his childhood memories of Dr. and Mrs. Hepburn: “I was brought up among the Doctor’s family from the time I was

thirteen years old, and both the Doctor and Mrs. Hepburn treated me with parental love and kindness.”<sup>12</sup>

### **The Bible Translation**

After the completion of the dictionary, Hepburn devoted himself to the translation of the Bible. In 1874, a Joint Committee on Translating the Bible was formed. It is worth noting that “Hepburn advised the American Bible Society not to recognize translations rendered by individuals” as “he “firmly believed that the translation must be a joint work, and the Society should accept only those versions recommended by a committee of missionaries representing all denominations in Japan.”<sup>13</sup> The whole Bible was translated into Japanese, and more than 60% of the 27 volumes of the New Testament and nearly half of the 39 volumes of the Old Testament were translated by Hepburn himself.<sup>14</sup> The translation of the New Testament was completed in 1880 and that of the Old Testament in 1887.

### **Shiro Church**

In February, 1873 the prohibition of Christianity for Japanese citizens was lifted, and foreigners were allowed to do missionary work in Japan. The Yokohama First Presbyterian Church was established at the site of Hepburn’s residence in the Yamashita Settlement 39th in 1874. Still, Hepburn “strongly felt that the church for the Japanese people had to be within their reach and had to be built within the place they lived.”<sup>15</sup> With this sentiment in mind, it was transferred to the Sumiyoshi-cho area of Yokohama with the name of Sumiyoshi-cho Church, which is presently known as Shiro Church in Onoe-cho.

By this time, Western medicine had become popular and Hepburn thought that some other Western doctors could help Japanese patients. He closed his clinic in the Yokohama Settlement 39<sup>th</sup>, entrusting “Hepburn Juku” to Mrs. Hepburn and J.C. Ballagh,<sup>16</sup> and moved to the Yamate

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<sup>12</sup> Cited in Takaya Michio, *Hebon* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kobunkan, 1986).

<sup>13</sup> Lu, “James Curtis Hepburn, Missionary from Central Pennsylvania to the Pacific Rim.”

<sup>14</sup> Cited in Okabe Kazuoki, *Shiro Kyokai 125 nenshi* (Yokohama: Yokohama Shirokyokai, 2004).

<sup>15</sup> Lu, “James Curtis Hepburn, Missionary from Central Pennsylvania to the Pacific Rim.”

<sup>16</sup> On April of 1880, the Hebon Juku moved to the Tsukiji enclave and

Settlement, which was up the hill nearby, to be soulfully engaged in the work of Bible translation.

### **Return to America**

When the Bible translation was completed, Hepburn thought that his mission was finished and that it was time to go back to America. His farewell party was held at Shiro Church and he made a speech: “I give my thanks to God that I have been in this country for 33 years and have devoted my energies to helping the Japanese people...Ah, I have completed my work and it is time for me to return to my home country, where I shall rest and then go on to meet my parents in Heaven.”<sup>17</sup> Hepburn was then 77 years old, and Clarissa was 74 years old.

### **Life in East Orange (1893–1911)**

The couple left Yokohama in October, 1892 and settled in East Orange, New Jersey in May, 1893. They chose the place probably because their three children were buried at Rosedale Cemetery, Orange, near their house. They lived in a house on 71 Glenwood Avenue, with a small maple tree in the front yard. The house still exists at the same address and a widow now lives there. The house is nearly 150 years old and stands three stories high with a basement.<sup>18</sup>

Dr. and Mrs. Hepburn were members of Brick Presbyterian Church, which is a ten minute walk from their residence in East Orange. This building also exists, but the church is presently named “Temple of Unified Christians at Brick Church.”

Hepburn called his 19 years of life in East Orange *inkyō*, whose Japanese word means “retired life.” Mrs. Hepburn became mentally ill and Hepburn expressed his great sorrow about her in his letter to William Elliot

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changed its name to the “Tsukiji Dai-Gakko,” with J.C. Ballagh is its principal. (*The Home Page of Meiji Gakuin University* (Tokyo: Meiji Gakuin University, 2010).

<sup>17</sup> W. T. Linn Kieffer, *A History of the First Presbyterian Church of Milton*.

<sup>18</sup> The maps of Hepburn’s residence based on the present house owner’s story are at the end of this article (Figure 3 and 4), drawn by Sato Takahiro and Watanabe Hideo. Author’s note: When I interviewed the widow, she knew about Hepburn and told me that the big maple tree in the front yard is probably one of the oldest ones in America. It was my strong desire to draw the map of the entire house, and she generously accepted my request.

Griffis, who wrote a book about Hepburn in 1913.<sup>19</sup> The letter mentioned the following: “My heart is full sorrow, on account of my dear wife, whom I have been compelled to send to an asylum, on account of mental derangement...”<sup>20</sup>

In the same letter, there is a sense of loneliness from the old man, whose only remaining child is no longer living at home: “I am alone in my house with a servant to care for me. I am waiting to hear from my son, who is at Nagasaki in business for the Standard Oil Co. —I have urged him to come home and occupy my house and to take care of me. I cannot hear from him before the middle of January, next, until then I am undecided what to do. I cannot now give a positive answer to your request about my papers, etc.”

In 1905, when Hepburn was ninety years old, he received a medal from the Japanese government in recognition of his great contributions to Japan. Hepburn expressed his gratitude for this honor in his letter: “Especially do I esteem the honor which His Majesty the Emperor of Japan has conferred upon me through Mr. R. Takahira the Japanese Minister at Washington. Let me also join with the Japanese people in crying Teikoku Banzai.”<sup>21</sup>

Takahashi Korekiyo, a former student of “Hebon Juku” when he was twelve years old (and later became the Prime Minister in 1921), visited the Hepburns in 1905 and missed seeing Mrs. Hepburn, who was hospitalized. The next year, Mrs. Hepburn passed away at the age of 88, having contributed many honorable achievements during her lifetime. She was responsible for girls’ education at “Hepburn Academy,” which was the precursor of the present Ferris Women’s College in Yokohama. She had been helping her husband with many activities for 65 years and Hepburn’s achievements would not have been possible without her strong support.

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<sup>19</sup> Cited in William Elliot Griffis, *Hepburn of Japan and His Wife and Helpmates: A Life Story of Toil for Christ* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1913).

<sup>20</sup> Hepburn’s letter addressed to Griffis on Dec. 22, 1904. It is kept in Hepburn’s folder, which is preserved in the William Elliot Griffis Collection of Rutgers University.

<sup>21</sup> Meiji Gakuin Rekishi Shiryōkan, *Meiji Gakuin Rekishi Shiryōkan Shiryōshū*, p. 106.

### Hepburn's Death

On September 21, 1911, in his residence, Hepburn fell into a quiet but everlasting sleep due to old age; he was 96 years old. His funeral was held at Brick Presbyterian Church, and he was buried in a modest tomb in Rosedale Cemetery, together with his beloved wife and three children. Afterwards, "Griffis wrote how, at the time of Dr. Hepburn's death, he went into the study of the house in East Orange and found it stripped of almost all the books, for the doctor had been wont to keep nothing for himself but what he was actually using and had given away everything that could be used elsewhere. In the same spirit he had given his all to Japan and Japan had taken him to her heart."<sup>22</sup> It was just by coincidence that on that same date, Hepburn Hall of Meiji Gakuin caught fire.

Both the Japanese and American press wrote sentinel headlines. The *New York Times* reported on September 24, 1911, "JAPANESE PRAISE HEPBURN. Regret Death of American Who First Taught Them Modern Medicine....The Hepburn Hall at Meiji Gakuin, the leading Presbyterian school in Tokio, was destroyed by fire at the hour of Mr. Hepburn's death."<sup>23</sup>



Figure 2. Guido Verbeck

### Guido Verbeck: Early Life (1830–1851)

Guido Verbeck was born into a middle class family in the province of Utrecht, Holland in 1830. His parents were good Christians and made

<sup>22</sup> Cited in Elizabeth Gilliland, "James Curtis Hepburn, Missionary to Japan: A Biographical Sketch" (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Historical Society, 1938).

<sup>23</sup> "Japanese Praise Hepburn," *New York Times*, September 24, 1911.

him go to the Moravian School, which emphasized mission and spiritual training. He was a talented linguist and early in life learned to speak French and English almost as well as Dutch. His birth year, 1830, was signified by the construction of the first railway in Europe. Engineering was considered the “coming profession,” and thus he entered the Polytechnic Institute of Utrecht.

#### **Life in America (1852–1858)**

In 1852, when he was twenty-two, he immigrated to the United States, a country of opportunities, and was engaged in a foundry in Wisconsin. Two years later, in Arkansas, he suffered from cholera, which caused a turning point in his career. He promised God that if restored to health, he would consecrate his life to service in the missionary field. After his recovery, he entered a seminary in Auburn, New York and was ordained in 1859. In the same year he met Maria Manion, and they soon married. Verbeck applied and was appointed to go out to Japan under the Missionary Board of the Reformed Dutch Church.

#### **Life in Nagasaki (1859–1869)**

Verbeck sailed from New York for Japan on May 7, 1859 and arrived at Nagasaki on November 7, 1859. He arrived in the same year the Hepburns arrived at Yokohama, less than one month later (the Hepburns left New York on April 24, 1859 and arrived at Yokohama on October 18, 1859). Nagasaki was for a long time the only port of Japan open to trade through Dejima, so Verbeck settled at Sofukuin Buddhist Temple in Nagasaki.

English had been replacing Dutch in Japan at that time, so he taught English at the Nagasaki Domain Academy, Seibikan. His pupils included Okuma Shigenobu, Ito Hirofumi, Okubo Toshimichi and Soyeshima Taneomi, who all became high government officials later on. Verbeck recalled that, “More than a year ago I had two very promising pupils, Soyeshima and Okuma, who studied through with me a large part of the New Testament and the whole of our national constitution.”<sup>24</sup> Teaching at Seibikan made Verbeck well known all over the nation, and many promising students even outside Nagasaki came to study under him.

Okuma and Soeshima established Chienkan, the Saga Domain Academy in Nagasaki in 1866 and learned from Verbeck the American

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<sup>24</sup> William Elliot Griffis, *Verbeck of Japan* (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1900), p. 174.

Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. Verbeck's letter dated on January 17, 1868 stated, "...and the meaning of the word 'Liberty' for which there is no exact equivalent in the languages is to become gradually appreciated and known."<sup>25</sup> Western concepts such as liberty, independence, and equality at birth were introduced to the Meiji leaders of Japan in this manner.

The Tokugawa Shogunate government collapsed, and the Meiji Restoration began in 1868. The new government needed foreign advisors to learn new political systems from the West. Recommended by his former student, Okubo, Verbeck received an appointment for a teaching position at the Kaisei Academy (later Tokyo Imperial University). In 1869, he left Nagasaki and students gathered for his farewell party. Students in Chienkan included famous samurai, such as Saigo Takamori and Sakamoto Ryoma in their younger days.

#### **Tokyo: *Oyatoi Gaikokujin***

Entering the service of the Japanese government, the Dutch-American missionary became an *oyatoi gaikokujin*. The book entitled *Oyatoi Gaikokujin List* was published in 1872 and the term, *oyatoi gaikokujin* became prevalent soon thereafter.<sup>26</sup> *Oyatoi gaikokujin* were treated with a generous payment by the Meiji government. Verbeck was paid \$600 (Mexican dollars), which was the same amount received by Iwakura Tomomi, the second highest government official at that moment. The Ministry of Education was established in 1871, and Verbeck provided inspiration for the Education Order of 1872. The Conscription Ordinance of 1873 was also assisted by him. Verbeck had been a source of information about the West. He was such an important person to the government that he was heavily guarded wherever he went, especially because anti-foreigner feelings remained strong in Edo.

#### **International Exchange**

Verbeck imported foreign books to Japan and sent Japanese students to universities abroad. He had a connection with Dr. Ferris Isaac, chief of the Missionary Board of the Dutch Reformed Church in America, with whose aid Verbeck sent many Japanese students to Rutgers College,

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<sup>25</sup> Ito Noriko, *Furubekki kokorozashi no shōgai: kyoshi soshite senkyōshi toshite* (Tokyo: Ayumu, 2010), p. 103.

<sup>26</sup> Noriko, *Furubekki kokorozashi no shōgai*, p. 123.

New Jersey. Those students included the Yokoi brothers, who were the first Japanese students to go to school at an American college. Iwakura's two sons were Verbeck's students and Verbeck wrote their recommendations for studies at Rutgers. About 500 Japanese students went abroad to the U.S. and Verbeck took care of half of them. Griffis Elliot was a professor at Rutgers College and Verbeck assisted in bringing him to Japan to teach at the Fukui Domain Academy, Meishinkan.

#### **“Brief Sketch” in 1871**

On October 26, 1871, Iwakura requested that Verbeck call him to talk about a paper that Verbeck had shown to a high Japanese officer. The paper, the so-called “Brief Sketch,” was a proposal that Verbeck had sent to Okuma as a response to his request regarding the removal of the unequal treaties. The proposal read that a great embassy composed of the highest imperial officials should visit the United States and Europe in order for Japan to receive full recognition as a sovereign state. Okuma, however, kept the paper to himself for two years or more due to the intense anti-foreign feelings of 1869. Hearing Verbeck's story, Iwakura believed that the program was exactly what the government needed, and the embassy was organized according to Verbeck's paper. Their members went abroad for 632 days from December 1871 to September 1873.

#### **Religious Toleration**

Law, economics, and diplomacy were the important subjects of the mission for Iwakura, while for Verbeck, the survey of Christianity was crucial. He strongly felt that the great visitation of Japan's leading diplomats to the Western countries would result in a definite and permanent commitment from its people to a vital union with the nations of Christendom.<sup>27</sup>

Griffis cited Verbeck's letter addressed to Dr. Ferris Issac. In this citation, Verbeck explains how the embassy is structured, with hopes that toleration of Christianity will be realized eventually:

The government is going to send a very superior embassy to America and Europe. I shall give some of the member's letters (special) to you. The ambassadors expect to sail on the 22<sup>nd</sup> December for San Francisco. The chief of the

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<sup>27</sup> Cited in Griffis, *Verbeck of Japan*.

embassy is the father of Tatsu and Asahi (of New Brunswick), the Prime Minister and most influential man in the Empire. It is my hope and prayer that the sending of this mission may do very much to bring about, or at least bring nearer, the long longed-for toleration of Christianity.<sup>28</sup>

### **The Iwakura Mission in 1872**

The purposes of the mission was to a) visit all contracting parties of the Amity & Commerce Treaties in order to present its credentials to the sovereign of each country; b) gather information on the countries visited in order to effect the modernization of Japan; c) renegotiate the unequal treaties with the U.S., Great Britain, and other European countries.<sup>29</sup> Giving direct advice to Iwakura, the Prime Minister and Chief Ambassador, Verbeck was certainly the originator and organizer of the program.

Christians in Japan received bad treatment by the Edo government. Four thousand Catholics were exiled from Nagasaki in 1866 and were forced to work in mines. Many Christians were imprisoned in Kaga (the present Ishikawa Prefecture) and Kishu (the present Wakayama prefecture). Knowing this, Hepburn and other missionaries informed the American Foreign Mission Office of the horrible situation of Christians in Japan. This news spread not only in the U.S. but also in Europe. Since the U.S. and most European countries are Christian nations, the Iwakura Mission was severely criticized by those countries, for they understood that Japan oppressed Christians. The Japanese government, which wanted to renegotiate unequal treaties with those countries, came to realize the importance of lifting the anti-Christian edicts and removed them.<sup>30</sup>

The grand outcome of the mission for Verbeck was the lifting of the anti-Christian edicts and the toleration of Christianity. He wrote these lines to Ferris: “The great and glorious event of the day is that, about a week ago, the edicts prohibiting the introduction of foreign religions have been removed by command of the government from the public law-boards

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<sup>28</sup> Sasaki Akira, “Oyatoi kyoshi senkyōshi furubekki 1869–1878,” *Kiyō* 36 (Tokyo: Meiji Gakuin University, 2004), p. 305.

<sup>29</sup> Cited in Sakamaki, “The Iwakura Mission in 1872.”

<sup>30</sup> Sugita Sachiko, *Hebon hakase no aishita Nihon* (Tokyo: Inochi foresuto bukkusu, 2006), pp. 99–101.

throughout the country! It is equivalent to granting toleration! The Lord be praised.”<sup>31</sup>

#### **The Order of the Rising Sun and Missionary Work**

“Verbeck helped the government out of a great difficulty,” Iwakura repeatedly said of Verbeck. As an appropriate conclusion to his long service to the government, the emperor decorated Verbeck with the Order of the Rising Sun in 1877. Verbeck, however, had been criticized by other missionaries for his deep engagement with the government, and he had long been debating which role to take, stating the following:

My kingdom is not of this world, and though I know that missionaries ought to avoid getting mixed up in political affairs, yet, when these people come and sincerely inquire after the most likely measures that could conduce to the welfare of their country, I do not feel at liberty to refuse them a hearing and advice, in a place where honest advisers are few, if at all extant.”<sup>32</sup>

When Verbeck returned to Japan in 1874, conditions had changed. The Japanese were becoming self-reliant, and foreign advisers were being dismissed. He found that he had been deprived of his position of authority at the Nanko (later Tokyo Imperial University), and his influence soon began to wane. Although for a while Verbeck continued to work as a translator for the Genro-in (the Chamber of Elders), and teach at the newly-founded Nobles School, by the end of the decade his contacts with government had become more formal and ceremonious. From this time onward, Verbeck was increasingly drawn into church work, which absorbed his energies until his death in 1898.<sup>33</sup>

#### **Return to Missionary Work**

Verbeck returned to missionary work, giving ten years to the work of translating the Bible. The translation of the Old Testament was completed in 1887. His translation of Psalms and Book of Isaiah were

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<sup>31</sup> Griffis, *Verbeck of Japan*, p. 265.

<sup>32</sup> Griffis, *Verbeck of Japan*, p. 173.

<sup>33</sup> Albert Altman, “Guido Verbeck and the Iwakura Embassy,” *Japan Quarterly* 14 (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbun, 1966), p. 58.

exceptionally good that those works had a future influence on Japanese literature. Meiji Gakuin opened in 1887 as the first Protestant institution in Japan, and Verbeck became Professor at the Department of Theology. Then, he was appointed the first trustee of Meiji Gakuin in 1886. Among missionary related activities, Verbeck enjoyed preaching the most, and in the end, he quit teaching and traveled widely in Japan as a preacher. His Japanese was superb, and his missionary tours were welcomed anywhere.

### **Verbeck's Death**

Despite the glorious career as *oyatoi gaikokujin*, Verbeck's late life was poor, lonely, and sad. He had a wife and many children to support. The American government rejected Verbeck's request to obtain an American passport because he had already lost his Dutch citizenship, and the Japanese government granted him permanent residence. Verbeck lived in three countries, Holland, America, and Japan, but he did not hold the right of citizenship in any country. His true citizenship was in heaven. In 1898, Verbeck died in Tokyo of a heart attack, and his weary body was laid to rest in the foreign section of the Aoyama Cemetery in Tokyo.

### **Summary**

Both Hepburn and Verbeck voluntarily came to Japan in 1859 with a common purpose of preaching Christianity. Both passed away with the common goal of living as servants of God. Although they shared the same translation job of the Old Testament and taught at the same university, their activities in Japan were quite different. Hepburn continued to be a servant of Christ until his return to America, while Verbeck became an *oyatoi gaikokujin* to serve the Japanese government in the middle of his life in Japan. Verbeck contributed to the government as an administrative advisor, while Hepburn helped individual Japanese people as a medical doctor and dedicated a significant time of his life to the translation of the Bible. Both of them were notable as great Western contributors to Meiji Japan.

### **Hepburn's Major Contributions:**

- a) Provision of free medical services and introduction of Western medical science.
- b) Creation of the first comprehensive Japanese-English and English-Japanese dictionary and the Hepburn romanization system.
- c) First translation of the Bible and other missionary work, including the founding of Meiji Gakuin and Shiro Church.

**Verbeck's Major Contributions:**

- a) A great teacher of Meiji leaders such as Okuma, Ito, and Okubo. His influential lectures opened their eyes to the West, and eventually to the modernization of Japan.
- b) A very important consultant or advisor to the Meiji government, namely with his "Brief Sketch" and other advice on the Education Order, etc.
- c) A recruiter of many young students to American universities. The professors like Griffis whom Verbeck invited to Japan were also great contributors to the nation.

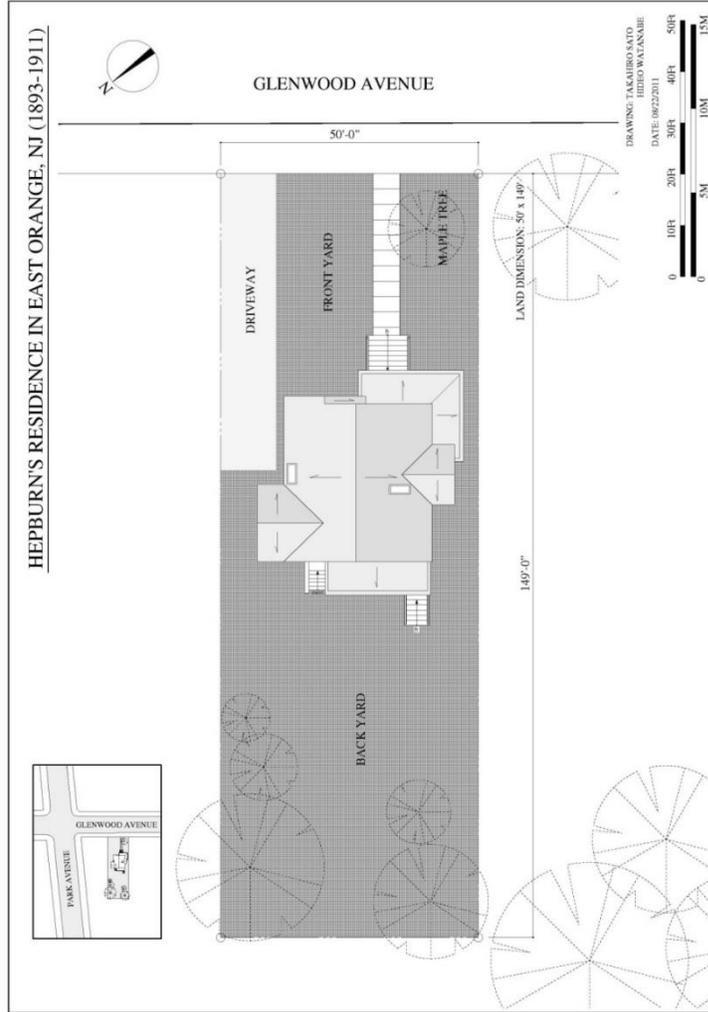


Figure 3. Hepburn's Residence in East Orange, NJ (1893-1911)

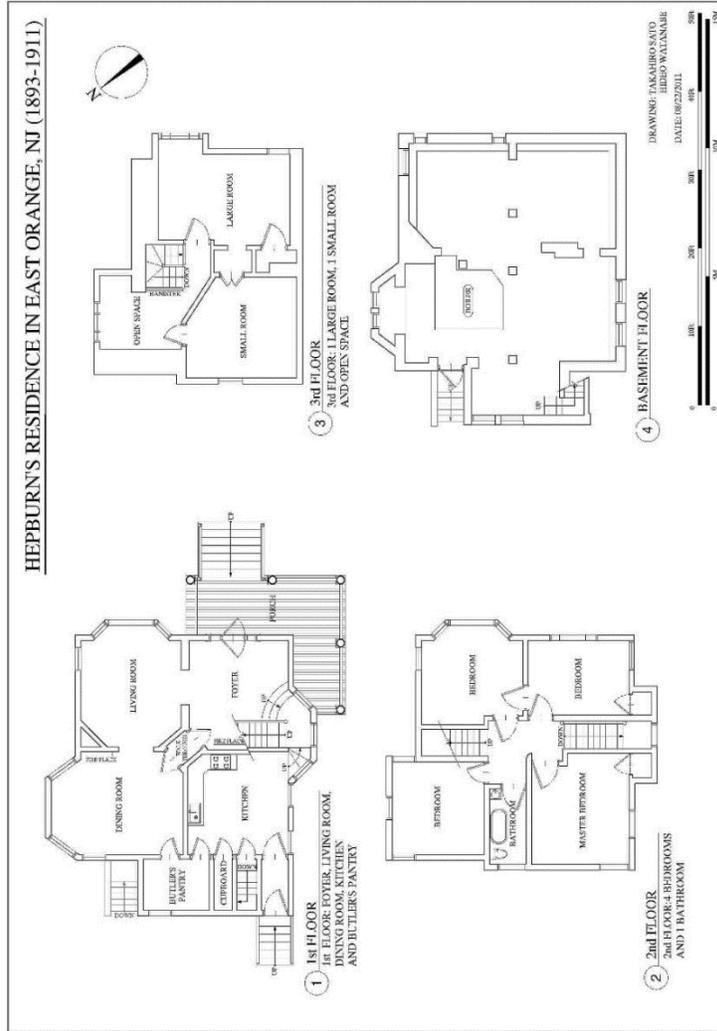


Figure 4. Hepburn's Residence in East Orange, NJ (1893-1911)