

1853

Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry (1794–1858) first visited Japan on the orders of President Franklin Pierce to pursue trade opportunities with Japan, which had largely closed itself to trade with the West. On his arrival in Japan in 1853, Perry threatened naval intervention if the kingdom refused American appeals for a trade relationship, and at the Convention of Kanagawa (1854), Japan opened two ports to trade with the United States. The *New York Daily Times* (later the *New York Times*) published this report.

### **From the *Freeman's Journal***

At last accounts Commodore Perry and Squadron had sailed from the Loo-Choo Islands, the southernmost group of the Japan Empire. Private letters from one of the officers of his Flag-ship give some interesting particulars not published in the Journals. Under date of July 1, this gentleman writes that: "On the 6th of June we marched to Shudi, the capital of the Loo-Choo Islands, with all the officers, marines and sailors, with artillery, &c. It was a march of some three or four miles, over a magnificent paved road, through a rich and highly cultivated country. The clumps of trees and other ornamental embellishments of the way astonished us much less than our heavy cloth uniforms and accoutrements astonished the timid natives, who gathered along our road to gape at us with wonder and poorly concealed disquietude. They cannot tell what to make of this ambiguous demonstration. Poor devils! Their Japanese masters will find out one of these days. The object of this visit was to be received by the Regent of these Islands at his Royal Palace. The honor of the visit may have rebounded to his tawny Excellence, but it is certain the pleasure, such as it was, was all on our side. They are suspicious, and very ill at ease. Commodore Perry was carried in a sedan chair. The rest of us gave the natives a specimen of how Yankees, heavily accoutred, can march under a scorching sun on foot. If the Japanese give us a friendly reception, all will be smooth. If not, we will have a far more effective squadron here, one of these days, and teach them conformity to Christian manners.

"The *Susquehanna* is one of the vessels that disgrace our Navy, and gives boundless annoyances to her officers. The machinery is too light, and is so out of order that the vessel is unfit for service. It is a shame that she is not called home and fitted up under competent inspection.

"Our American Speculators should be on hand. *Commodore Perry has made a purchase at Port Loyd, on one of the Bonin Islands, north of east of the Loo-Choo*

group. This must become a dépôt for our steamers. The land is inviting, and is, I think, destined to become a flourishing American colony.”

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“The Japan Expedition.—Commodore Perry at the Loo-Choo Isles,” *New York Daily Times* (1851–1857), October 20, 1853, 1.

### **PRACTICING Historical Thinking**

**Identify:** Describe the reception that Perry received in Japan, according to the officer who is quoted in the *New York Daily Times*.

**Analyze:** Why does the officer state that the Japanese are “suspicious, and very ill at ease”?

**Evaluate:** How did the development of trade relations in the Far East influence the United States’ domestic economies? Use your classroom notes and textbook for additional information.