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**«A MONOLOGUE ABOUT  
FOREIGN SHIPS» BY SUGITA  
GENPAKU**

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**«A MONOLOGUE ABOUT FOREIGN SHIPS» BY SUGITA  
GENPAKU<sup>2</sup>**

This study will introduce and examine the work of Sugita Genpaku (20.10.1733-01.06.1817) – “A monologue about foreign ships” (“*Yaso:dokuwa*” 野隻獨話) – valuable historical document that introduces the reaction of the Japanese government to the expedition of Khvostov and Davidov to Sakhalin in 1806-1807. It was written in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the period which is believed to be a turning point in the early Russo-Japanese relationship, when Russia began to be perceived as a major dangerous enemy.

This unique document, which is hardly ever mentioned in the researches, stands out in long list of Japanese archive documents of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as one of the very few that depicts Russia as a possible trade partner and not the enemy. It was originally written by Sugita Genpaku in 1807 and was published for the first time in 1934 as a part of the multi-volume book called “The thoughts of Great Japan” (*Dainippon shiso: zenshu*: 大日本思想全集). However, in spite of that it has been ignored by the majority of scholars throughout the world including Russia and Japan. This study will introduce the most interesting parts of the work, which describes the response of the Japanese government to the actions of two Russian officers – lieutenant Khvostov (1776–1809) and midshipman Davidov (1784?–1809) at Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands in 1806 and 1807.

This paper will answer following questions: what was the image of Russia in Japan? What impact did the expedition to Sakhalin have on Japanese government and society? What was the best way to address the challenges Japan was facing and could the trade with Russia help to solve them?

JEL Classification: Z

Keywords: Sugita Genpaku, Sakhalin, Russia, Japan, Khvostov.

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## Introduction

In the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Russia was putting all its efforts to open trade with Japan. Establishing trade connections with this country would allow to use its ports and food, which in its turn could solve one of the biggest problems Russian Empire was facing at the time – organizing a food supply of Russian colonies in North America. However, Japan was following the policy of national isolation – so called “*sakoku*”<sup>3</sup> – under which no foreigners could enter the country. The Russian government made an attempt to get an exceptional right to have trade with Japan and sent its first official mission to Nagasaki in 1804. The head of the mission N.P. Rezanov<sup>4</sup> was aware of the devastating state of the colonies and was desperate to make everything possible for this plan to succeed.

However, after spending six months in Nagasaki, Rezanov received a refusal from the Tokugawa government. He was devastated and refused to settle for this negative answer. Upon his arrival to Kamchatka to Petropavlovsk port, in 1805, he met N.A. Khvostov<sup>5</sup> and G.I. Davidov<sup>6</sup>, and began working on the plans for the expedition to Sakhalin as means to make Japan open its doors to Russian trade. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of August, 1806, he issued a directive that authorized the expedition to Sakhalin; however, on the 24<sup>th</sup> of September, 1806, he issued another directive that cancelled the expedition (although the execution of this was performed in a confusing and unclear manner). Lieutenant Khvostov after some hesitation interpreted the last directive from Rezanov as permission to execute the expedition and departed from Kamchatka port of Okhotsk to Sakhalin. Moreover, the following year, in 1807, together with midshipman Davidov, he executed the second expedition, this time not only to Sakhalin, but to the Kuril Islands as well.

In the various research of Japanese scholars this expedition is mentioned under different names, such as “The Incident with Khvostov and Davidov” 「フヴォストフ・ダヴィドフ事件」<sup>7</sup>, “Attack of Khvostov” 「フヴォストフ来寇事件」,<sup>8</sup> “Russian assault” 「露人の暴行」<sup>9</sup>, “Sudden attack of Karafuto” 「カラフト襲撃」<sup>10</sup>, “The Russian attack in the Bunka Years” 「文化魯寇事件」<sup>11</sup>. Russian and overseas research uses more neutral term – “expedition”.

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<sup>3</sup> *Sakoku* (鎖国) – literally “closed country”, but meaning the “national isolation”.

<sup>4</sup> Nikolai Petrovich Rezanov (Николай Петрович Резанов) (1764-1807) was a Russian nobleman and statesman who promoted the project of Russian colonization of Alaska and California.

<sup>5</sup> Nikolai Aleksandrovich Khvostov (Хвостов Николай Александрович) 1776-1809.

<sup>6</sup> Gavriil Ivanovich Davidov (Давыдов Гавриил Иванович) 1784-1809.

<sup>7</sup> Ariizumi Wako 有泉和子 *Kaizoku ni sareta kaigunsikan fubosutofu to davidofu* 海賊にされた海軍士官フヴォストフとダヴィドフ (Naval officers Khvosotv and Davidov who were turned into pirates) In the annual report of Slavic language and literature studies Part 2. Tokyo University, 2003. P. 184.

<sup>8</sup> Nakamura Zentaro 中村善太郎. *Chishima Karafuto shinryakishi* 千島樺太侵略史 (History of invasion to the Kuril Islands and Karafuto). Tokyo: Bunnyukan Zohan, 1904. P.58

<sup>9</sup> Inobe Shigeo 井野辺茂雄. *Ishin zenshi no kenkyu* 維新前史の研究 (Research about History before the Meiji Restoration). Tokyo: Chubunkan shoten, 1942. P.219

<sup>10</sup> Kimura Hiroshi 木村汎. *Nichiro kokkkyo koshoshi – hoppo ryodo hennkann e no michi* 日露国境交渉史—北方領土返還への道 (The history of negotiation about Russo-Japanese border – a way of restoration of the Northern Islands). Tokyo: Kadokawa sensho, 2005. P.63. Hirakawa Arata 平川新. *Rezanofu raiko shiryo ni miru chobaku kankei to Nagasaki tsushi* レザノフ来航史料に見る朝幕関係と長崎通詞 (Imperial-shogunal relations and Nagasaki interpreter in historical documents concerning the arrival of Rezanov). In *Kaikoku izen no nichiro kankei* 開国以前の

While the majority of Russian research is based merely on the Russian historical documents, Japanese research relies exclusively on the Japanese records. In Japanese studies Khvostov is mainly depicted as a tyrant and pirate who attacked the Japanese and scared away the Ainu. On the other hand in Russian studies Khvostov is described as a patriot, and the expeditions to Sakhalin and Kuril Islands are seen as the start of the reclamation of Sakhalin<sup>12</sup>.

The Sakhalin expedition of 1806-1807 is believed to be not only a turning point in the early period of the Russo-Japanese relations but also one of the main reasons why Russia began to be perceived as a major dangerous enemy from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The majority of the Japanese people was supporting the idea of fighting back against the Russians, but there were people who were against military actions and were supporting the idea of opening commerce with Russia. Sugita Genpaku (20.10.1733 – 1.06.1817) was one of them.

Sugita Genpaku was born on the 20<sup>th</sup> of October, 1733. His mother died in childbirth, his father was working as a physician in Obama-han (小浜藩) in Wakasa province (current Fukui prefecture). Genpaku was entitled to follow his father's steps and therefore started studying medicine from a very young age. Miyase Ryumon (宮瀬龍門 19.01.1720 – 18.02.1771) was teaching him Chinese science, while Nishi Geni (or Nishi Gentetsu 西玄哲 1681 – 1760), who was a personal physician of Tokugawa shogun, guided him through the European knowledge base on surgery.

In the beginning of 1771 Sugita Genpaku started his research on human anatomy through conducting post-mortem examinations. In 1774 together with the Maeno Ryotaku (前野良沢 1723–1803), who was a surgeon himself, translated a Dutch study “*Ontleedkundige Tafalen*” into Japanese and named it “*Kaitai Shinsho*” (“New Book of Anatomy” 解体新書). This was a first scientific book about human anatomy in Japan. The publication of this study is considered to be a starting point of the western academic medicine in Japan, which in its turn had a big impact on promotion of *rangaku* (蘭学)<sup>13</sup> throughout the country. In 1815 Sugita Genpaku published

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日露関係 (Japanese-Russo relations before the opening of Japan). Northeast Asian studies Series (In Japanese) Volume7.Sendai: Tohoku University press, 2006. P.39.

<sup>11</sup> Matsumoto Eiji 松本英治. *19 seiki hajime no nichiro kankei to Nagasaki oranda shokan* 19世紀はじめの日露関係と長崎オランダ商館 (Russo-Japanese relations in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the Dutch kontor in Nagasaki). In *Kaikoku izen no nichiro kankei* 開国以前の日露関係 (Japanese-Russo relations before the opening of Japan). Northeast Asian studies Series (In Japanese) Volume7.Sendai: Tohoku University press, 2006. P. 43.

<sup>12</sup> Polevoi B.P. *Первооткрыватели Сахалина. Pervootkryvateli Sakhalina («Discoverers of Sakhalin»)*. Учјно-Sakhalinsk, 1959., Senchenko I.A. *Sakhalin i Kurilyi – istoriya osvoeniya i razvitiya. Сахалин и Курилы – история освоения и развития («Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands – history of reclamation and development»)*. Moscow, 2006., Cherevko K.E. *Зарождение русско-японских отношений XVII-XIX века. Zarojdenie russko-yaaponskih otnošenii XVII-XIX veka («The beginning of Russo-Japanese relation»)* М., 1999., Pozdneev D.M. *Материалы по истории северной Японии и ея отношений к материке Азии и России. Materialyi po istorii severnoi Yaponii i eya otnošenii k materiku Azii i Rossii. («Documents about history of Japan and its realtions with Asian continent and Russia»)* Vol. 2, Yokohama, 1909., Sokolov A. *Хвостов и Давыдов // Записки гидрографического департаментa морского министерства. Khvosotv i Davyidov // zapiski gidrograficheskogo departamenta morskogo ministerstva («Khvostov and Davidov // memorandums of hydrographic ministry»)* Chast X. SPb., 1852. Davidov G.I. *Двукратное путешествие в Америку морских офицеров Хвостова и Давыдова, писанное сим последним Двукратное путешествие в Америку морских офицеров Хвостова и Давыдова, писанное сим последним («Two journeys of Russian officers Khvostov and Davidov, which was written by last one»)* SPb., 1848.

<sup>13</sup> *Rangaku*, (Japanese: “Dutch learning”), concerted effort by Japanese scholars during the late Tokugawa period (late 18th–19th century) to learn the Dutch language so as to be able to learn Western technology; the term later became synonymous with Western scientific learning in general.

biographical work named “*Rangaku Kotohajime*” (“Beginning of Dutch Studies” 蘭学事始), where he provided a thorough description of the events which led to the advances in science medicine in Japan. Two years later in 1815 at the age of 85 he passed away.

Sugita Genpaku was a very talented unordinary scholar, who is mostly known for his translation of the above studies. Being well known as an anatomist and physician he is hardly ever mentioned as a prominent philosopher and a brilliant writer. His sarcastic and unique way of describing Japanese society in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century on the pages of his hardly ever mentioned paper called “A monologue about foreign ships” (野隻獨話 «*yaso:dokuwa*») deserves an undivided attention. The key word is the “monologue” as he was most likely sure that only few people at the time would understand and support his revolutionary thoughts about Japanese society and changes the country was going through. All these changes were mainly caused by the expedition of Khvostov and Davidov to Sakhalin in 1806 -1807 which made a huge impact on Japanese minds.

On the pages of the archive historical documents one can often see how scared and paranoid the Japanese government became. Countless exaggerated reports were delivered to the shogunate: “Huge ships in a shape of the mountains appeared at the horizon with 600 Russians (red people<sup>14</sup>) on them. They burned everything down to the ground and took all Ainu away with them. Everybody feels the fear towards Russia”<sup>15</sup>. Sugita Genpaku was one of the few people who dared to mention the possibility of the fact that Russia was simply trying to establish trade with Japan and was not interested in colonizing it.

Maybe that is the main reason why the book “A monologue about foreign ships” is written in a very interesting manner: it describes the conversation of two people – Sugita Genpaku himself – and *kagebo:shi* (影法師) – a silhouette against the shoji that eventually disappears with the rising sun. It starts with the following words:

*I am afraid that even if I try to share my sincere thoughts with others they won't listen to me, but on the other hand, If I don't say anything I will start questioning my own morals.*<sup>16</sup>

It is quite interesting that his whole life Sugita Genpaku had close connections with bakufu and was privileged to have an audience with the shogun himself. His last meeting with the eleventh shogun Tokugawa Ienari (徳川家斉 18.11.1773 – 22.03.1841, 1787-1837 on a post of a shogun) took place in 1805<sup>17</sup>, during which he offered the latest medicines to the head of the government as a gift. However, in 1807, when the second expedition of Khvosotv and Davidov to Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands took place, Sugita Genpaku resigns his post and delegates all responsibilities to his son. Straight after that he starts working on “*Yaso:dokuwa*”, each page and sentence of which is filled

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<sup>14</sup> 赤人 *akajin* – the term that was used in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to describe the Russians.

<sup>15</sup> *Tsuko ichiran*. 通航一覽 Vol. 284. P. 218-219.

<sup>16</sup> *Dainippon shiso: zenshu*: 大日本思想全集 (The thoughts of Great Japan), Volume 12. Tokyo. Yoshida shoten shuppanbu. 1934. P. 262.

<sup>17</sup> *Nihonshi so:go:nenpyo*: (日本史総合年表 Chronological table of history of Japan). Tokyo, 2001. P.441.

with the worry about the future of his own country – Japan. He blames the government for such incredibly poor state of the country and criticizes its policies.

It is hard to say if the retirement of Sugita Genpaku and publication of his work are connected in any way, but one thing is for sure – he knew about the policies of the bakufu first-hand.

The “Monologue about the foreign ships” (“*Yaso:dokuwa*”) consists of three volumes: in the first one the author describes Japan and compares it to the Russian Empire; in the second – depicts the poor state of matter in the Japanese society in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; in the third one – comes up with arguments which prove that Japan could profit from trade with Russia. This valuable document will help us to answer following questions: what was the image of Russia in Japan? What impact did the expedition to Sakhalin have on Japanese government and society? What was the best way to address the challenges Japan was facing and could the trade with Russia help to solve them?

In Section 1 we will introduce the state of Japan in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as seen in “*Yas:dokuwa*”, in Section 2 – state of the Japanese society of that period, and finally in the Section 3 – we will introduce an unusual for that period image of Russia as a trade partner.

## Section 1

### **The First volume of the “*Yaso:dokuwa*”: Japan in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.**

In the first volume the author describes Japan in a not very flattering manner: as a country that needs to be renovated, its laws being renewed and the attitude of Japan towards Russia – should be reconsidered. That’s how the author sees Japan in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

*Japan is like an old house which within a time was enlarged with a multiple useless rooms. It grew big but nobody was taking care of it. Once it got in a horrible condition and the time has come to get rid of all the things that were not in use anymore, everybody started saying that they were too dear to the heart, too precious to throw them away. There is no way one can build a new house this way. That is similar to the country.<sup>18</sup>*

That miserable state of Japan, that was not even able to get rid of unnecessary – as Sugita Genpaku sees it – things, seems to be even more miserable put in comparison to “prosperous” and “spreading its influence” Russia. That's how author describes it in his work.

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<sup>18</sup> *Nihonshi so:go:nenpyo*: (日本史総合年表 Chronological table of history of Japan). Tokyo, 2001. P.266.

*The original name of Russia, as we call this country now, used to be Moscovia, and it occupied a relatively small territory. However, a great monarch (ruler) named Peterugorodo<sup>19</sup>, [...] reformed it into prosperous country and spread his influence all the way down to Kamchatka, which is very close to our Edzo<sup>20</sup>. Apparently he became an emperor of all the countries he invaded to, and his country became one of the strongest empires in the world.<sup>21</sup>*

It's quite fascinating how Sugita Genpaku depicts Russians on the pages of his book. He sees them as people who wouldn't stop until they reach their aim.

*After the reign of the emperor named Peteru, the era of the Empress has begun. This Empress wanted to start trade with our country, and in the 4<sup>th</sup> year of Tenbun<sup>22</sup>, foreign ships – very similar to the Russians – has entered the waters of the Northern Sea which caused quite an uproar. It is clear that already then, 7-10 years ago, they were planning to establish commerce with Japan. It seems that once people from that place have a goal they do everything possible and impossible to achieve it, put all their energy in it. If the goal is impossible to achieve within one man's life, they bequeath it to further generations, to their children and grandchildren. That way, by changing tactics they don't stop until they get it their way.<sup>23</sup>*

Sugita Genpaku also examines first Russian official diplomatic mission to Japan and turmoil at Sakhalin and the Iturup islands that followed afterwards. He explains it all as a “common misunderstanding” and mentions that if all the “rumours” will turn out to be true – the “dark time”<sup>24</sup> will be inevitable.

*The people of this land<sup>25</sup> for the past 30 years have been moving further deep towards our islands north to Oku-Edzo<sup>26</sup>. Their desire to get permission to trade with Japan got so big, that they even dared to come here and ask for it. The 1<sup>st</sup> year of Bunka<sup>27</sup> the first mission arrived to Nagasaki, but they were denied. Displeased with the answer of the Japanese government they furiously declared: “The way we got treated in Nagasaki has crossed all the limits of cruelty, which*

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<sup>19</sup> Peter the Great (1672-1725) ruled the Tsardom of Russia and later the Russian Empire from 7 May (O.S. 27 April) 1682 until his death.

<sup>20</sup> 蝦夷 Edzo – the former name of the Hokkaido - the Northern Island of Japan.

<sup>21</sup> *Dainippon shiso: zenshu*: 大日本思想全集 (The thoughts of Great Japan), Volume 12. Tokyo. Yoshida shoten shuppanbu. 1934. P. 269.

<sup>22</sup> *Tenbun* 天文 – the name of the period that lasted for twenty years: 1532 – 1555.

<sup>23</sup> *Dainippon shiso: zenshu*: 大日本思想全集 (The thoughts of Great Japan), Volume 12. Tokyo. Yoshida shoten shuppanbu. 1934. P.270.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* P. 270.

<sup>25</sup> The Russians

<sup>26</sup> The name of the Sakhalin Island.

<sup>27</sup> 1804.

*is a clear act in violation of the previous treaty". Furthermore, during autumn of the previous year and summer of current year (autumn of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of Bunka and summer of the 4<sup>th</sup> year of Bunka) twice in a row they invaded the islands north-west from Edzo. Most likely it happened due to the common misunderstanding.<sup>28</sup>*

Sugita Genpaku words are full of acute criticism and are as sharp as a samurai's sword when he talks about Japanese government and its political actions. He also notes an interesting fact that people in Japan were opposed to the decision of Tokugawa bakufu which had decided to refuse Russians in opening trade with them

*Among people who are criticizing warrior government there is a perception that ordinary officials have absolutely no clue about the current situation in the world and they see Russians only as invaders. The fact that they ignored the head of the official mission who brought the presents all the way from the other side of the world and sent him back home – proves Japan to be a closed country<sup>29</sup>. However, such an ill-treatment of the powerful country is unacceptable! [...] This inconsistent decision of the Japanese government planted the seed of fear and anxiety even in the souls of all Japanese people.<sup>30</sup>*

He also makes an interesting note about a terrifying letter from lieutenant Khvostov and Davidov that declared following: *"If you refuse to open trade with us be prepared that next spring we will send our fleet and conquer these lands"*. The fact of a possible existence of this letter meant only one thing for Sugita Genpaku – beginning of the end. *"The world will become a chaos and the dark time will come"*<sup>31</sup> – states the author. The reasons to such a pessimistic thoughts Genpaku explains in the next second volume of his work.

## Section 2

### **The Second volume of the “Yaso:dokuwa”: state of the Japanese society in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.**

In the second volume the author describes a disturbingly bad state of Japanese society in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century on all levels. Samurai, feudal lords, retainers, people of the low

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<sup>28</sup> *Dainippon shiso: zenshu*: 大日本思想全集 (The thoughts of Great Japan), Volume 12. Tokyo. Yoshida shoten shuppanbu. 1934. P. 267.

<sup>29</sup> Sugita Genpaku is using the term “*mikaikoku*” (未開國), which literally means “the country that hasn't been opened yet”.

<sup>30</sup> *Dainippon shiso: zenshu*: 大日本思想全集 (The thoughts of Great Japan), Volume 12. Tokyo. Yoshida shoten shuppanbu. 1934. P.267.

<sup>31</sup> *Dainippon shiso: zenshu*: 大日本思想全集 (The thoughts of Great Japan), Volume 12. Tokyo. Yoshida shoten shuppanbu. 1934. P.270.



cast – all of them became victims of Sugita Genpaku’s crucial criticism. Very sharp, sarcastic at a time author’s remarks about women-like feudal lords and warriors who were busy “chewing chicken all day long” and not being able to seat in the saddle of the horse – are quite entertaining and shocking at the same time.

*Have a close look at the samurais. They haven’t known wars for more than 200 years and lived in a peaceful environment: five or even six generations haven’t even witnessed the war. As a result martial arts have come to a decline. Even if there is a small dispute 7 or 8 out of 10 retainers of the shogun who are supposed to react first in such situations together with the vassals of the shogun (gokenin<sup>32</sup>), have become so similar to women that they spent days putting their make up on. Merchants are vulgar and the spirit of the samurai’s has been lost.<sup>33</sup> Of course one can not say that there are no more people who are familiar with the martial arts, but they, as a rule, use this ability only as a tool to get a social status and to achieve growth in their own carrier. Indeed, there are only a few left who fully dedicate themselves to the way of warrior – bushido. They carry the service out everyday but they hardly have any interest in what they are doing.<sup>34</sup>*

*Feudal lords can shoot the aim only if its 1 shyaku 2 sun<sup>35</sup> away from them! Similar to cats, they can seat in the saddle of only castrated<sup>36</sup> horse, and ride it only if there are no holes in the ground! [...] Living a comfortable prosperous life for a few generations they can’t change a thing now and only can count on their own income. Living the life of no fear and worries they became very similar to kabuki theatre actors, playing the role of the generals on the big stage trying to gain our attention in the very first act.*

*Here is a clear example of the weak spirit of samurais. In the 7<sup>th</sup> year of Kansei<sup>37</sup> there was a deer hunting for a couple of days, during which such nonsense as hunting stuffed deer and wild boars took place. Right before that they exchanged the sake cups<sup>38</sup> with their relatives as [the warriors do when] they are about to go and fight thousands of enemies at the battlefield to the last drop of blood. Later in the 1<sup>st</sup> year of Bunka<sup>39</sup>, during the deer hunting some – so called warriors – couldn’t even distinguish a man from a deer and were shooting people standing nearby.*

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<sup>32</sup> 御家人 – *gokenin* – was initially a vassal of the shogunate of the Kamakura and the Muromachi periods. In exchange for protection and the right to become *shugo* (governor) or *jito* (manor's lord), in times of peace a *gokenin* had the duty to protect the imperial court and Kamakura, in case of war had to fight with his forces under the shogun’s flag. During the Edo period the term finally came to indicate a direct vassal of the shogun below an *omemie* (御目見), meaning that they did not have the right to an audience with the shogun.

<sup>33</sup> *Dainippon shiso: zenshu*: 大日本思想全集 (The thoughts of Great Japan), Volume 12. Tokyo. Yoshida shoten shuppanbu. 1934. P. 272.

<sup>34</sup> *Dainippon shiso: zenshu*: 大日本思想全集 (The thoughts of Great Japan), Volume 12. Tokyo. Yoshida shoten shuppanbu. 1934. P. 272.

<sup>35</sup> 35cm

<sup>36</sup> Sugita Genpaku is using the Japanese term «*kyosei*» (去勢), which literally means «castration».

<sup>37</sup> 1795.

<sup>38</sup> *сакэдзюки* 盃.

<sup>39</sup> 文化元年 – 1804.

*Concerning the warriors of a lower rank, they spend their days playing the shamisen<sup>40</sup>, acting as kabuki theatre actors, were involved in tea ceremonies flower arrangements ikebana etc., and some of them are wasting their days chewing fried chicken karaage<sup>41</sup> and planting trees.<sup>42</sup>*

*Some of them are doing part-time jobs on the side, horse-lovers are training the horses and selling them for a triple price, concerned only with their own profit. One can say that there are almost no people left who could be called a true samurai.<sup>43</sup>*

*This kind poor state of matters can be seen not only among the vassals of the shogun but among the feudal-lords as well. In case of the serious danger they wont risk their own lives to defend the others. Due to the lack of the warriors the generals have no other way but to take the swords and fight for themselves.<sup>44</sup>*

*There are not enough horses in the cavalry. Even if you get all the necessary horses in case of emergency, these horses never heard the sound of a gun or an arrow, never seen an armour-clad warrior, would not be able to make a single step at the battle field. As a result, there are no respectable warriors left nowadays nor among the shogun retainers, neither among other vassals and cavalry soldiers.<sup>45</sup>*

While comparing the state of the two armies – Japanese and Russian – Sugita Genpaku repeatedly emphasizes the strength and the superiority of the latter, comparing it to a “young hot-blooded soldier”<sup>46</sup>. He considers the use of armed force against Russia to be a bad idea saying that “Japan doesn’t even have the third of the army it used to have and be proud of”<sup>47</sup>. To prove his point of view, he emphasizes that Russians “defeated the Mongols – and that is something that even Chinese troupes couldn’t do. [...] If our weak with no spirit warriors are even thinking of fighting with Russians, who won the war with the Chinese emperor of the Qing dynasty, I believe that the outcome is obvious.<sup>48</sup>” – summers up the author.

It’s quite interesting that Sugita was one of the very few people who did not fully trust and was critical about all the reports with the horrifying information about Russians at Sakhalin in 1806-1807. In fact, they were exaggerated. The first Russo-Japanese conflict at Sakhalin in 1806

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<sup>40</sup> 三味線 *shamisen* – is a three-stringed traditional Japanese musical instrument.

<sup>41</sup> 唐揚げ – *karaage* – fried chicken.

<sup>42</sup> *Dainippon shiso: zenshu*: 大日本思想全集 (The thoughts of Great Japan), Volume 12. Tokyo. Yoshida shoten shuppanbu. 1934. P. 273.

<sup>43</sup> *Dainippon shiso: zenshu*: 大日本思想全集 (The thoughts of Great Japan), Volume 12. Tokyo. Yoshida shoten shuppanbu. 1934. P. 274.

<sup>44</sup> *Dainippon shiso: zenshu*: 大日本思想全集 (The thoughts of Great Japan), Volume 12. Tokyo. Yoshida shoten shuppanbu. P. 275.

<sup>45</sup> *Dainippon shiso: zenshu*: 大日本思想全集 (The thoughts of Great Japan), Volume 12. Tokyo. Yoshida shoten shuppanbu. 1934. P.276.

<sup>46</sup> *Dainippon shiso: zenshu*: 大日本思想全集 (The thoughts of Great Japan), Volume 12. Tokyo. Yoshida shoten shuppanbu. 1934. P. 277.

<sup>47</sup> *Dainippon shiso: zenshu*: 大日本思想全集 (The thoughts of Great Japan), Volume 12. Tokyo. Yoshida shoten shuppanbu. 1934. P. 277.

<sup>48</sup> *Dainippon shiso: zenshu*: 大日本思想全集 (The thoughts of Great Japan), Volume 12. Tokyo. Yoshida shoten shuppanbu. 1934. P. 276.

was described as a large scale armed conflict with 500 - 600 “red people”<sup>49</sup> involved, when in fact it was fight between three Russians<sup>50</sup> and four Japanese<sup>51</sup>. According to the revealed historical documents that shed the light on the course of the fight it becomes obvious that it was basically a small fist fight in course of which the Japanese were “bighting buttocks and legs of the Russian soldiers”.<sup>52</sup>

That’s how Sugita Genpaku describes the events that happened within the period of two years 1806-1807:

*There is shocking news that Nagasaki bugyo<sup>53</sup> refused the foreign mission. There is nothing one can do about it now. Our government sees it as a cause of all the trouble and chaos which is happening at the land of Edzo now. But there were almost no casualties on our side and even though some huts (shacks) and encampments at the Karafuto<sup>54</sup> and Etorofu<sup>55</sup> were burned down to the ground, and some food was taken, all people that were captured got returned back home safely. Of course, if we believe all the rumours saying that implements of the ceremonial kimono of some government officials were taken, then it does look like a violent disorder. On the other side our own defences were weak, which in its turn allowed foreigners to reach our shores and move freely around our land. If we were strong it would have never happened. Therefore, it would be wiser to except their offer to trade while they are giving us this opportunity peacefully. We shouldn’t start the war without being sure in our own forces.<sup>56</sup>*

Sugita Genpaku, being sure of the fact that it all happened due to the common misunderstanding, claims that Russia doesn’t want to colonize Japan. “We should satisfy their wish to trade with us for our own sake. It will make common people of our country only happier”<sup>57</sup> – adds the author. Moreover, he suggests quite a revolutionary for those days, way to solve this problem. The idea was to conquer the fear, send people to Russia, talk, discuss all the problems, ask for forgiveness and open the doors to trade with the Russian Empire.

*It is unclear if that has happened upon the orders of their monarch or it was a random act of violence of people from the north. That’s why it would be wiser to send a talented patient messenger escorted by the experienced in sailing Ainu from Edzo to Kamchatka as soon as the ice*

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<sup>49</sup> Akajin (赤人) – the Russians.

<sup>50</sup> Lieutenant Khvostov, Karpinskyi, Koryukin

<sup>51</sup> Torizo, Genshiti, Tomigoro, Fukumatsu

<sup>52</sup> *Roshia ibun*.

<sup>53</sup> 奉行 *bugyo*: – often translated as "commissioner" or "magistrate" or "governor," was a title assigned to samurai officials of the Tokugawa government in feudal Japan.

<sup>54</sup> 樺太 – Karafuto – the name of the Sakhalin Island.

<sup>55</sup> 択捉 – Etorofu – the Iturup island.

<sup>56</sup> *Dainippon shiso: zenshu*: 大日本思想全集 (The thoughts of Great Japan), Volume 12. Tokyo. Yoshida shoten shuppanbu. 1934. P. 280.

<sup>57</sup> *Dainippon shiso: zenshu*: 大日本思想全集 (The thoughts of Great Japan), Volume 12. Tokyo. Yoshida shoten shuppanbu. 1934. P. 286.

*breaks and the navigation starts. As there are people who understand Japanese, we should carefully with no anger gather all necessary information to be able to understand the current situation. Ask about their desires and wishes, repeatedly apologies to them and if the only thing they are asking for is trade we should forget about what happened, and with the words that wouldn't be too shameful (disgraceful) to our country we should grant them a permit to trade with us. That way, if we succeed to achieve mutual understanding, Russia would be pleased and will bury all the problems in the past. Of course it wouldn't solve a problem if Russians, after satisfying one need would want more or another problem arise, then it would be time to use force. However, until that time comes we have at least 10-14 or even 15 years.<sup>58</sup>*

*If we don't change anything within the next decade, then nothing is going to help us. It is very important to use this time wisely to raise the spirit of the warrior, reform the army and train our soldiers [...] In this case, even if Russia attacks us, we will be able to chase them off our land. If for the sake of the people bakufu will agree to trade, it will of course feel some shame, but this feeling will fade away within the time – of that I am sure.<sup>59</sup>*

### Section 3

#### **The Third volume of the “*Yaso:dokuwa*”: “to trade or not to trade” – Russia as a possible trade partner.**

In the third volume of his work Sugita Genpaku explains his thoughts about the ways Japan could use the trade with Russia for its own benefits and turn into prosperous country that could face any enemy that will dare to attack Japan.

According to Sugita Genpaku the most important thing was to gather all the necessary forces and finances to strengthen the Edzo. Sugita admits that it is one of the crucial and most difficult problems that should be immediately solved and accuses the government and feudal lords of their unwise way of spending money on different kinds of unnecessary old rituals.

The author encourages the government and the vassals to spend less money on different kind of meetings and gatherings and to make decision making process faster in case foreign ships show up at the shores of Japan. As an example, he brings up the case of one Chinese ship that reached the borders of Japan in the 4<sup>th</sup> year of Bunka<sup>60</sup>. Then it took almost half a year to go through all bureaucracy procedures to let the ship enter the waters of Japan. “That wouldn't create a good image of Japan if the same happens when Russian ships come”<sup>61</sup> – worries the author. It becomes obvious that Sugita Genpaku was thinking of the global image of Japan as an open country, which would only profit from the trade with the Russian Empire.

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<sup>58</sup> *Dainippon shiso: zenshu*: 大日本思想全集 (The thoughts of Great Japan), Volume 12. Tokyo. Yoshida shoten shuppanbu. 1934. P. 281.

<sup>59</sup> *Dainippon shiso: zenshu*: 大日本思想全集 (The thoughts of Great Japan), Volume 12. Tokyo. Yoshida shoten shuppanbu. 1934. P. 282.

<sup>60</sup> 1807

<sup>61</sup> *Dainippon shiso: zenshu*: 大日本思想全集 (The thoughts of Great Japan), Volume 12. Tokyo. Yoshida shoten shuppanbu. 1934. P.290.

The only way to save Japan, according to Genpaku, is to bring the samurai spirit back to life, make aristocrats and officials send their families away from the capital to the villages – from which the country’s financials will only benefit – and make everybody work hard towards the common goal – to make everything possible and impossible to restore the country.

Why didn't Sugita Genpaku make a proposal to the government and shared his ideas with the officials? The answer that the author gives us on the pages of his book is simple: he didn't want to be considered crazy out of his mind person, because he was sure that nobody would believe him and take him seriously. As an argument proving his point of view he finishes his work with the following words:

*In the Tokugawa Yosimune's<sup>62</sup> time ronins<sup>63</sup> in the head of Yamashita Konai shared their thoughts<sup>64</sup> but they got nothing but some compliments. Time has changed and nobody knows how it will go this time. I do not mind to take a sin [and share my thoughts with everybody], but I am silent and will stay that way only because I do not want to be considered crazy (mad), because I am not. We have been talking about sorrow things for such a long time that I started feeling ill and sick to my stomach. Promise me that you will keep everything we talked about here as a secret". The shadow against the shoji that has talked to me for a long time – disappeared. I looked around and realized that the night has passed, the light of my lantern got almost invisible and that I am silently seating all alone in my room.<sup>65</sup>*

## Conclusion

On the pages of “*Yaso:dokuwa*” Russia appears as a prosperous, spreading its influence country that was impossible to defeat. The Russians are described as people with strong spirit who would never stop until they reach their aim, while the Japanese – as lost its spirit nation, with “women-like feudal lords”, “chewing chicken soldiers”, and weak with no spirit samurais.

Sugita Genpaku is making clear that the true enemy is not outside Japan, but within the country: it is in its old rituals and bureaucratic procedures that became obstacles to the further growth of the country. As a solution he proposes to renovate the country on all levels: political, financial, military and economical. The author suggests that opening the trade with Russia could only help in these undertakings. The main goal would be restoring the spirit of Japan – the spirit of the samurai.

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<sup>62</sup> Tokugawa Yoshimune 徳川吉宗 (1716-1745).

<sup>63</sup> 浪人 – *ronin* – a samurai with no lord or master during feudal period in Japan (1185-1868).

<sup>64</sup> In 1721 Yamashita Konai (山下幸内 (?-?)) sent a proposal to the government. He criticized the reforms of the Kyo:ho: era (*Kyo:ho: kaikaku* 享保の改革) – which were aimed to reform Japan on a social and economic levels and were implemented during the 30 years rule of the eighth Tokugawa shogun – Tokugawa Yoshimune (徳川吉宗 (1716-1745))

<sup>65</sup> *Dainippon shiso: zenshu*: 大日本思想全集 (The thoughts of Great Japan), Volume 12. Tokyo. Yoshida shoten shuppanbu. 1934. P. 301-302.

“*Yaso:dokuwa*” gives us a chance to see Japan and its people in a new perspective. In a quite unusual way Sugita Genpaku provides the evidence which prove that N.P. Rezanov (1764–1807) – the head of the first Russian diplomatic mission to Japan – was right assuming that “a lot of Japanese minds are supporting Russia”<sup>66</sup>.

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