

418  
Memo. No. 10.

Peking, May 12<sup>th</sup> 1878.

Official calls  
and classes of  
foreign diplomatic  
officers residing  
at Peking.

Chargés

Chargés affaires.

Extraordinary

ambassadors.

Has the custom of  
sending ambassadors  
become obsolete?

1. - In connection with official calls I have to remark that there are three classes of diplomatic officers residing at Peking, viz. commencing from the lower grades, *Chargés d'affaires*, who like the agent of the German Empire, are left in charge of legations and substituted in place of the Ministers when the latter leave their posts of duty; or who like the Honorable Mr. Ferguson, have been originally sent and accredited by their Governments. Secondly, *Extraordinary and Ministers Plenipotentiary*, like the representatives of Russia, America, France, Spain, England, and others, who may claim that because of the powers conferred upon them, which are equal to those which in former times were exclusively given to Ambassadors, they should be treated with the same consideration by the Chinese as if they belonged to the first class of Officers. Thirdly, *Ambassadors*, to which class the present representative of Japan belongs.

2. - It is claimed that the custom of sending Ambassadors has of late become obsolete in Europe. In connection with this I would say that several Ambassadors of note have left France for other

countries of late years, among which  
may be mentioned those of the Comte  
de Moray and General Fleury during  
the reign of Napoleon the third, and there  
is no record which goes to prove that  
the rule in virtue of which foreign  
powers may send Ambassadors has been  
abrogated.

Reasons for not  
sending Ambassadors  
to Peking.

3. In point of ability, standing at home,  
and seniority in their respective services,  
more than one of the representatives of  
the Great powers to the Court of Peking  
doubtless belong to that class of officers  
from among which Ambassadors are  
chosen; still, <sup>it is claimed that</sup> the sending of an  
ambassador implies not only an ac-  
knowledgement of the importance of the  
mission entrusted to him, but also  
respect for the Country to which he is  
sent, the peculiar attitude of China  
in her relations with foreign Countries,  
which has fatally lowered her in the  
Estimation of the latter, has deterred  
these powers from sending Officers of  
such high rank, even on the most  
solemn occasions. My own view of the  
subject is that whatever may be the  
reason for not sending Ambassadors to  
China, it cannot be the one assigned  
above. For, if such were the case, in  
every instance, instead of Envoys, the  
foreign governments would have sent  
Chargés.

My views on  
the subject.

Etiquette said to  
prevail in Peking  
is such, why such  
an etiquette might  
subserve the foreign  
representations in their  
negotiations for an  
audience with the  
Emperor.

4. - It is claimed that by General Consent,  
and in virtue of a long established usage,  
the foreign representatives to the Court of  
Peking stand on a footing of equality  
towards each other, they all being equally  
denied admittance to the presence of the  
Emperor, and notwithstanding the rank  
which they hold under their respective  
governments, they must, as *chargés d'affaires*  
generally do, transact their business  
through the Minister of Foreign Affairs;  
and it is held that, under this local rule,  
even an ambassador practically would  
fall from the first to the fifth class  
of diplomatic officers, unless he succeeded  
in obtaining an audience with the Emperor,  
when, having notified the diplomatic body  
that he had been received by the Sovereign,  
they would, at his invitation and at the  
time fixed by him, honor him with a  
personal call. I would venture to say  
that such a custom cannot hold good in  
face of the well known regulations which  
obtain in all diplomatic circles, and which  
the Foreign Ministers have tacitly acknowledged  
to be binding from the fact that they have  
claimed admittance to the presence of the  
Emperor; and if the customs said to be  
followed in Peking were really in force, it  
must be admitted that a representative  
would derive his rank from the pleasure  
of the Sovereign to whom he is accredited,  
and not to his own; and the foreign  
representatives accredited to the Sovereign would

The course which I  
judge the Japanese  
Ambassador should  
follow.

It is impossible to separate  
the right of claiming seniority  
with the reception  
given by an Ambassador,  
after he has been  
received by the  
Sovereign.

not be justified, in my mind, in offering an audience until the pleasure of the Emperor of China had been made known. Under the circumstances I quite agree with Mr. Soyeshima when he considers that not only his duty to his own Sovereign who has vested him with the high rank which he now holds, but the respect which he entertains for foreign usages and customs, which, mainly through his influence, have lately been adopted by the ruling classes in Japan, would, in his relations with his colleagues in Peking, and with the Chinese, bind him to the rules framed at the Congress of Vienna, March 19<sup>th</sup>, 1815, or the Congress at Aix la Chapelle of the 21<sup>st</sup> of November, 1818. He must not confound the right of claiming seniority, under these rules, with the reception which an Ambassador gives to his colleagues after having received an audience from the Sovereign to whom he is accredited. I concede that in point of etiquette, and usage in Western countries, no strictly official call could be made upon an Ambassador before he has been received by the Sovereign. But I maintain that under the rules of the Congress of Vienna of 1815, the seniority of an Ambassador over all other diplomatic officers is fully established, and as the only means for the diplomatic body in Peking to acknowledge

that superiority of rank is by honoring him with the first call, after he has notified them that he shall be pleased to receive it although he has not been granted an audience by the Sovereign. And unless that call be made, no intercourse is possible between himself and his colleagues, unless he breaks the rules by waiving his rank and making the first call himself. The Chinese will not fail to note that <sup>in the present instance</sup> the officer to be called upon is a Japanese and not an European or American, and I concur with Mr. Soyeshima in thinking that the consequences may be very deplorable.

Other objections on the part of the foreign representatives to pay the first call to the Ambassador of Japan.

I understand that another objection on the part of the foreign representatives to show Mr. Soyeshima the special mark of respect which his rank entitles him to, is that by so doing they would greatly damage the very important case in connection with the Audience Question, now pending in the Shung li Yamen, and which it is to the interest of Western powers, American and Japan to have satisfactorily settled as promptly as possible. I must confess that I cannot see how this can be, unless, as Ambassador, they consider that Mr. Soyeshima must become the Voyn of the Diplomatic body here, and be substituted in the place of General Ulagaly, who, from a personal acquaintance with China and its people,

It is not desirable  
that the Ambassador  
should act as  
Doyew.

gained during an unexceptionally long  
residence as Minister at Peking, coupled  
with his rare talents, is peculiarly fitted  
for the position; certainly more so than  
any new-comer could be. But on  
this score the diplomatic body need  
be under no apprehensions. Mr. Soze-  
Shima's character of Ambassador Extra-  
ordinary, sent here simply to inaugurate  
relations of amity between China and  
Japan on a durable footing, a task  
which will not require a long stay  
in Peking, would render his assuming  
the duties of Doyew undesirable.  
In fact, as Mr. Soze-Shima has not  
had time to become thoroughly acquainted  
with the important questions upon  
which the joint action of the diplomatic  
body has become a matter of necessity,  
he could not, without endangering  
the success of his colleagues' plans  
take the place of General Hwangshy.  
In this position, although he would,  
in a measure, be debarred from the  
advantage of joint action with his  
colleagues in his relations towards  
the Chinese, there is no reason why  
he should fail to remain in constant  
communication with them, pay a  
respectful consideration to the views  
which they express on subjects in which  
both Japan and foreign countries  
would be interested, and if they so desired  
cooperate with them to the utmost

3  
if his power, whenever practicable,  
or if they could do so consistently  
with their duty, give him their support  
whenever he applies for it.

Calls made  
at Shanghai  
and Tientsin.

6. - Perhaps it will be argued that  
Mr. Soyeshima waived his rank of  
Ambassador by making certain calls  
in Shanghai and Tientsin. Were  
Ambassadors debarred from the privilege  
of making such calls, which are  
less official than friendly, they would,  
from the time they leave their own countries  
until they reach their posts of duty,  
be kept under such restrictions as  
would become perfectly intolerable.  
The call which the Ambassador made  
upon his Excellency Li Hung Chang  
in Tientsin cannot be brought  
to bear against his case. Mr.  
Soyeshima sent his Secretary to that  
officer informing him that he had  
arrived in Tientsin on his way  
to Peking. His Excellency notified  
the Ambassador that he had been  
appointed with two others, to exchange  
the ratification of the treaty concluded  
between China and Japan. One of  
these two officers, wearing a red  
button, called upon the Ambassador  
and handed him an official communication  
from His Excellency Li Hung Chang informing him  
that he also was an ambassador. Therefore  
Mr. Soyeshima paid him the first call.

Notification which  
might be issued  
to the foreign  
representatives.

4. - In view of the peculiar circum-  
stances of the Court of Peking, and  
in order to acquaint his Colleagues  
that, although he has not had the  
honor of having been admitted to  
the presence of the Emperor, still he  
is anxious to meet them that they  
may confer upon subjects of mutual  
interest, it would be well, as  
Mr. Soyeshima has proposed, to  
notify them in writing of the  
arrival of the Ambassador of Japan  
at his post in Peking; and the  
officer whom it is purposed to send  
on the same mission to His Imperial  
Highness Prince Tung, might be  
instructed to call upon the various  
Ministers handing this notification  
together with the Ambassador's card.  
On the same day I would officially  
call upon all the representatives  
of foreign powers, and, as far as  
possible, furnish them with what-  
ever explanations they might desire,  
and which, under the circumstances,  
the Ambassador would be unable to  
afford them personally.

Conclusion. 1. - Should however, the foreign  
representatives, after they have received  
the communication of the Ambassador,  
consider it their duty to persist in  
their course, and desire making  
the first call, although they may



claim that they cannot pay  
 Mr. Soyeshima that mark of respect  
 on account of technical difficulties,  
 and of the Ambassador's opinion  
 when he says that it will not  
 be taken in this light in Japan,  
 Therefore as one of the leaders  
 of the reform party in that  
 country, I think that Mr. Soyeshima  
 is in duty bound to try all in  
 his power to prevent such a  
 conflict between his colleagues  
 and himself taking place.  
 Therefore I have no hesitation in  
 recommending that this memo be  
 submitted to His Excellency, the  
 Viceroy of the Diplomatic body  
 in Peking, that the Ambassador  
 of Japan may have an early  
 opportunity of receiving the benefit  
 of the expression of his views and  
 the views of his colleagues on the  
 subject.

Respectfully Submitted,

Chas. W. Lauder

His Excellency Taniomi Soyeshima,  
 Ambassador Extraordinary, etc. etc

Peking, May 13<sup>th</sup>, 1898,

My dear General,

I have lost no time in acquainting Mr. Soyeshima with the result of your meeting with the diplomat's body last night. I again explained to him my views on the subject of calling, and the views which you take somewhat in opposition to mine, and he thinks that now that the matter is so well understood, and that there is no possibility of a private call on his part being transformed into an official one, he will be only too happy to follow the Customs of Peking, and call upon each member of the diplomat's body, as soon as he shall have notified the Kang li Yamen of his arrival as his part of duty.

Under the circumstances, I quite regret that I have tired you with the care, which you have so kindly accepted of communicating to your colleague the contents of the memo which I had the honor to leave with you this morning, and if you have not done so, pray consider that it was not submitted, and I will beg privilege to receive it back the next time we meet.

Thanking you for the kindness you have displayed, and the trouble you have taken in this matter, I remain

Very truly & respectfully yours

(signed) Chs. W. Le Gendre.

His Excellency,  
General, Bangalore  
re re re

Peking, May 13<sup>th</sup>, 1873.

My dear General,

I have received your kind note and on your request I send to you back herewith the memo you left me.

I am very glad for the resolution taken by Mr. Szeghina and please receive my best Compliments.

Yours very truly

(Signed) A. Vaugaly.

General C. W. Le Gendre,  
etc. etc. etc.