

The Game between China-Japan Relations and the Dilemma of China's Diplomacy in the Light of the Ryukyu Issue (1871-1881)

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ABSTRACT

Based on the historical framework of the late Qing Dynasty from 1871 to 1881 and the debate and game between China and Japan on Ryukyu as the main perspective, this paper makes an in-depth discussion on the development and change of modern Sino-Japanese relations and the dilemma faced by China's diplomacy. Through detailed analysis and interpretation of the positions, measures and influence of China and Japan on the Ryukyu Issue, this paper clarifies the origin of the Ryukyu issue, summarizes its far-reaching influence on the political pattern of East Asia and even the world, and extracts important enlightenment for the current Sino-Japanese relations. This paper further points out that the settlement of the Ryukyu issue reflects the dramatic change of the international order in East Asia in modern times, reveals the mutual rise and fall of power between China and Japan, and predicts that the contradictions and conflicts between the two countries will be further intensified in the long history. Such historical experience and lessons are worthy of our deep thinking, and can provide valuable historical reference and strategic advice for us to deal with similar historical issues in the current Sino-Japanese relations and China's diplomatic strategy.

KEYWORDS

Ryukyu Issue; Sino-japanese relations; Diplomacy of the late Qing Dynasty; International order in East Asia

1. TOPIC SELECTION AND RESEARCH INTRODUCTION

In the evolution of Sino-Japanese relations in modern and modern times, the Ryukyu dispute has been presented as an important and sensitive subject. Since the mid-19th century, the Ryukyu dispute has not only involved disputes over territory and sovereignty, but also highlighted the political struggle between China and Japan in the regional and global political environment. This research topic originated from the exploration of the historical relationship between China and Japan in modern times, and was combined with a deep reflection on the challenges facing China in dealing with the issues left over from history.

In ancient times, China and Ryukyu established friendly exchanges for more than 500 years. In modern times, many achievements have been made in the field of research on China-Ryukyu relations, including but not limited to the investigation of trade, migration and society, scientific and technological production and cultural exchanges between China and Ryukyu, as well as the feudal system and the East Asian order. However, on the whole, the research achievements in these fields have not been comprehensive and profound, such as the historical relations between China, Japan and Ryukyu, the folk resistance movement of Ryukyu, and the attitude of foreign powers to the Ryukyu issue.

From the perspective of the actual international environment, in recent years, the spat between China and Japan over the sovereignty of the Diaoyu Islands has been significantly escalated, while Okinawa has been placed in the alliance between Japan and the United States, becoming an important pawn to contain China. From a historical perspective, an in-depth discussion on the historical roots of the Ryukyu issue between China and Japan will help us better understand the Diaoyu Islands dispute and the current China-Japan-US relationship in a broader historical context. Therefore, studying the "Qiu Case" negotiation at the end of the Qing Dynasty can help us to clearly understand why the historical Ryukyu issue still affects many differences in diplomatic cognition between China and Japan.

2. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROJECT AND REVIEW OF RESEARCH STATUS AT HOME AND ABROAD

2.1. Review of research on the origin of Ryukyu Problem

The Ryukyu Islands are located at the intersection of the Pacific Ocean and the East China Sea. Historically, they were the center of the Ryukyu Dynasty and had profound cultural origins, political ties and economic exchanges with China and Japan. There is no consensus among scholars on the origin of the Ryukyu Issue. Some scholars, such as Qian Wenhua and Zhang Mingming, argued that the Ryukyu Issue stemmed from the decline of modern China and the rise of Japan, which also reflected the dilemma of modern China's diplomacy [1, 2]. Other scholars, such as Han Dongyu, believed that the Ryukyu Issue was closely related to the historical issues left over between China and Japan, such as the Japanese invasion in the Ming and Qing Dynasties [3]. In addition, Qi Qizhang, Liang Shuying and others pointed out from the perspective of international law that the sovereignty of the Ryukyu Islands had not been decided, and the Qing government's lack of understanding of the international law system and lack of sovereignty awareness were also important reasons for the Ryukyu Issue [4, 5].

To sum up, the mainstream academia generally believes that the Ryukyu issue originated from the Sino-Japanese relations in modern times and involved the ownership of the Ryukyu Islands. Located between China and Japan, the Ryukyu Islands have been a vassal state of China for a long time in history, but they once belonged to both China and Japan [6]. Since modern times, Western powers, on the one hand, have tried to bring Ryukyu into their sphere of influence through saber-rattling and diplomatic bullying. On the other hand, China and Japan, as the traditional suchmasters and neighbors of Ryukyu, held very different positions on the territorial and sovereignty issues of Ryukyu. This complicated international political situation created conditions for the birth and aggravation of the Ryukyu issue. In the middle of the 19th century, with the invasion of Western powers and the gradual disintegration of the traditional tributary system in East Asia, the Ryukyu Issue came into being. The Ryukyu Dynasty's own political, economic and social changes also had a profound impact on the origin and evolution of the Ryukyu Issue. The Ryukyu Dynasty gradually formed a unique cultural and political system in its exchanges with China and Japan. However, with the invasion of Western powers and the aggravation of internal conflicts, the political stability and social order of the Ryukyu Dynasty were seriously damaged, and its independence faced severe challenges [7].

2.2. Overview of the Game History Research Between China and Japan on the Ryukyu Issue in Modern Times

The game between China and Japan around the Ryukyu Issue in modern times is a complicated historical process, involving many aspects such as politics, economy and culture. In this process, the foreign policy, international status, national interests and other factors of China and Japan all played a key role [8, 9].

For the Qing government at that time, the political struggle throughout the Ryukyu negotiations also had an impact on the subsequent evolution of the Qing court's power pattern. With the defeat of Prince Gong and his faction, led by Li Hongzhang, taking control of the military and political power with the support of Empress Dowager Cixi, the Qing government adopted a relatively conservative position on the Ryukyu issue, still regarded Ryukyu as its client state, and tried to maintain its control over Ryukyu. [10] However, due to the decline of the Qing government's international status and its own strength, the pressure of Western powers and the internal political turmoil, Ryukyu was gradually forced to break away from China's vassal state.

Japan, meanwhile, used Ryukyu as a springboard to expand its power, with the intention of turning it into a vassal state. After the Meiji Restoration, Japan rose rapidly and its ambitions for external expansion grew increasingly large. With its geographical advantages and strategic value, the Ryukyu Islands became the key target of Japan's external expansion. Japan has tried to force China to recognize its sovereignty over the Ryukyu Islands through diplomatic pressure and military deterrence, as well as its long-standing "covert policy" [11]. In December 1871, a Ryukyu ship ran aground on a reef south of Taiwan. After landing, the crew was mistakenly killed by the Pedanshe Gaoshan ethnic group. Although Ryukyu was a Chinese territory at that time, Japan claimed Ryukyu as its territory and planned to invade Taiwan, China, under the pretext of protecting its "subordinate people", which was called the Peony Society Incident [12]. In 1872, Emperor Meiji, who was personally in power, made a congratulation to Ryukyu, declared Ryukyu as its "internal domain", and tried to force China to recognize this fait accompli through diplomatic means. In 1874, under the pretext of Ryukyu fishermen being killed in Taiwan, Japan sent troops and stationed them, and tried to internationalize the Ryukyu issue in order to gain support from the international community. In 1875, Japan forced Ryukyu to stop paying tribute to China and accepting imperial titles from the Qing Dynasty, and replaced the Chinese era with the Meiji era title [13]. In 1879, Japan formally annexed Ryukyu, exiled its king to Japan, and changed Ryukyu into Okinawa Prefecture. Although the Qing government strongly opposed this, it was difficult to fight with Japan in diplomacy, so it turned to the former President of the United States Grant for mediation. However [14], the United States adhered to the "principle of neutrality" and did not directly intervene. It mainly hoped that China and Japan would reach a resolution on their own in the follow-up negotiations, but finally failed to stop Japan's aggression [15, 16]. It is worth noting that some scholars in the academia of Japan, Europe and the United States even defended Japan's aggression. They did not admit that Japan's aggression constituted annexation, but glorified it as "transformation" and "integration" [17]. The continuous adjustment of the positions and strategies of China and Japan on the Ryukyu issue not only reflects the changes in the international political pattern at that time, but also reveals the deep-seated contradiction between China and Japan in territorial disputes and national interests.

2.3. Review on the History of the Ryukyu People's Struggle

In the treatment of the Ryukyu Issue between China and Japan since the late Qing Dynasty, the self-identity of the Ryukyu people and the national liberation movement are also involved. For Ryukyu, the small state is weak, and it is its consistent survival law to maintain the "two-genus state" between China and Japan in order to achieve national independence. Under the colonial rule of Japan, the Ryukyu people suffered greatly, and without developing a national identity with Japan, many people began to seek independence and liberation [18]. Since 1872, in the face of Japan's increasing pressure, the Ryukyu Kingdom felt that the crisis of national extinction was imminent. They petitioned the Japanese government many times, demanding to maintain relations with the Qing Dynasty without changing the state system, but were rejected by Japan. For many years after that, the elites of Ryukyu sought help from all sides and continued to fight for the restoration of the Kingdom [19-21]. These Ryukyu people's self-identity and national liberation movement had an important impact on the game between China and Japan on the Ryukyu issue, which made the issue more complex and sensitive.

Xiu Bin and other Chinese and foreign scholars pointed out that the Ryukyu self-rescue movement itself was on the one hand, the Ryukyu Kingdom was forced to choose between two "great powers". Between China and Japan, the Kingdom of Ryukyu had to make appeals between the two countries, so as to cause the negotiation between China and Japan, and regain the independent power of the kingdom of Ryukyu through the negotiation of the Qing government. On the other hand, the Kingdom of Ryukyu chose to run to the ruling and opposition parties of China and Japan to call for annexation of the Kingdom of Ryukyu, which also reflected that the Kingdom of Ryukyu had no enough force to resist Japan's annexation at that time [22-25].

2.4. Significance of Research

2.4.1. Significance of theoretical research

The existing literature on the Ryukyu issue mainly focuses on several landmark events of Japan's occupation of Ryukyu, but relatively ignores the analysis under the background of China's domestic diplomatic dilemma and foreign negotiation events at that time, as well as the influence of foreign powers' intervention on the change of China-Japan relations. In addition, the role of the Ryukyu people's resistance and liberation movement in the game between China and Japan, as well as the impact of the Ryukyu incident on the Sino-Japanese relations and China's foreign relations in the late Qing Dynasty, the Republic of China and even contemporary times, also need to be further explored. This project intends to supplement and improve these weak links in the study of the Ryukyu issue in China-Japan relations.

2.4.2. Practical significance

To sum up, the Ryukyu Issue is a complex issue left over from history. An in-depth study on it will help us fully understand the game process of China-Japan relations in modern times and the dilemma faced by China's diplomacy. The Ryukyu issue not only involves territorial disputes and sovereignty issues between China and Japan, but also reflects the evolution of the international political landscape and the deterioration of China-Japan relations at a deeper level. By examining the history of the Ryukyu issue, we can reveal the struggle for power, conflicts of interest and diplomatic strategies between China and Japan in modern and contemporary history, and deepen our understanding of the complexity of China-Japan relations. At the same time, the research of this topic can also provide historical reference and strategic reference for China's diplomacy to deal with similar issues left over from history.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This project plans to use the historical literature analysis method, comparative research method and case analysis method and other research methods. The technical route mainly includes: first, extensively collect and systematically sort out the relevant documents on Ryukyu issue in the historical materials of Sino-Japanese relations from 1871 to 1881, conduct in-depth analysis and interpretation of the documents by using the historical document analysis method, and expound the East Asian countries by examining the historical development of Ryukyu and the changes in the attitudes of various countries towards Ryukyu in different periods The course of the change of international order. Secondly, this paper makes a comparative analysis of the positions and strategies of China, Japan and Ryukyu on the Ryukyu Issue, explores the relationship between the ownership of Ryukyu and the change of the international order in East Asia and the trajectory of the evolution of the order in East Asia, and makes a case study combining with typical events. Thirdly, on the basis of the previous two steps of research, a systematic research conclusion and strategic suggestions are formed.

4. ANALYSIS OF THE CAUSES OF THE RYUKYU PROBLEM

The Ryukyu Problem in the late Qing Dynasty (1871-1881) was the result of the interaction of multiple factors, among which Japan, domestic and foreign factors of the Qing Dynasty and the international situation at that time all played an important role.

4.1. A Brief Comparative Analysis of the Motivations of China and Japan

From the political point of view, the game between China and Japan on the Ryukyu issue in modern times profoundly reflects the great changes in the international political pattern of East Asia. With the decline of China and the rise of Japan in modern times, the balance of power between China and Japan has undergone fundamental changes. Japan tried to expand its political influence in East Asia by controlling the Ryukyu Islands, while China tried to maintain its traditional such-vassal system to maintain its suzerainty status over the Ryukyu Islands. From an economic point of view, the dispute between China and Japan over the Ryukyu issue in modern times also involved the competition for resources. The Ryukyu Islands, with their rich resource endowments and important geostrategic value, are of great significance to both China and Japan. Japan seeks to gain more strategic resources and advantages by controlling the Ryukyu Islands, while China is committed to maintaining its traditional trade routes and resource supply [8]. From a cultural point of view, the tussles between China and Japan over the Ryukyu issue in modern times also involve the continuation of cultural traditions. As an important link in cultural exchanges between China and Japan, the Ryukyu Islands have exerted a profound influence on the cultural development of both countries. China tries to maintain its traditional suzerain-vassal relationship and cultural inheritance, while Japan tries to radiate its cultural influence to the Ryukyu Islands, so that they can have a sense of cultural belonging to Japan, and thus "legitimately" the Ryukyu Islands into the territory. As Sun Xiaoguang and other scholars have pointed out, the principle of trust, harmony, benevolence and good neighborliness, and the concept of courteous and trustworthy relations, which are the core of the excellent traditional Chinese culture, highlight the unique inclusiveness and peace of the Chinese civilization. The fact that Ryukyu actively integrated itself into the tributary trade system and maintained friendly exchanges with the Ming and Qing Dynasties for over 500 years is a strong evidence of this historical fact. It is worth noting that Japan forced Ryukyu to become a state of the two kingdoms and even annexed them by force, which was in sharp contrast to Ryukyu's active tribute to the Ming and Qing Dynasties [9].

4.2. Factors Concerning Japan

After the Meiji Restoration, Japan started the process of transformation to modernization. In order to get rid of the shackles of unequal treaties, Japan needed to expand its sphere of influence and establish its own colonial system. Ryukyu, on the other hand, was adjacent to Japan and historically influenced by Japan, making it a preferred target for Japan's foreign expansion. On the economic level, Japan needed to acquire more resources and markets, and Ryukyu could provide an important strategic fulcrum and trade transit station for Japan. Annexing Ryukyu would not only serve Japan's economic interests, but also provide a springboard for further aggression against China and Korea [26, 27].

At the same time, Japan hoped that by annexing Ryukyu, it would demonstrate its military strength and show the great powers of Asia that Japan had become one of them. This was not only to show the Meiji government's achievements to the domestic public, but also to gain more voice and influence on the international stage. In addition, Japan was filled with a wave of nationalistic sentiment for external expansion, advocating "leaving Asia and entering Europe ", believing that Japan should follow the example of Western powers and become the leader of Asia. Annexing the Ryukyu Islands would cater to this nationalist demand and meet the expectations of hardliners at home.

4.3. Factors Related to the Qing Government

In the late Qing Dynasty, the Qing Dynasty ruled the western mountains, and domestic troubles and foreign aggression were intertwined. The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom Movement and the Nian Army uprising broke out one after another, shaking the foundation of Qing rule. At the same time, the strong ships and guns of the foreign powers also put the Qing Dynasty at a disadvantage militarily. The Qing Dynasty was unable to cope with internal and external difficulties, and its ruling power was gradually declining [27].

There were many loopholes in the Qing Dynasty's control over Ryukyu. Nominally, Ryukyu was a vassal state of the Qing Dynasty, but in fact the suzerain-vassal relationship between the two sides became increasingly loose. The Qing Dynasty's mismanagement of Ryukyu failed to provide strong protection and timely response to Japanese infiltration and provocation. At the same time, there were serious divisions within the Qing ruling clique over the Ryukyu issue, with the main warring faction (such as Zuo Zongtang et al.) and the main peace faction (such as Li Hongzhang et al.) holding different positions. In the face of Japanese provocations, the Qing Dynasty adopted a passive war-avoidance strategy and tried to resolve the crisis through diplomatic negotiations, but it lacked the necessary military deterrent power. This feeble performance further stimulated Japan's aggressive ambitions. In addition, the Qing Dynasty's perception of Western powers was biased, underestimating their influence in East Asia. The Qing Dynasty was too superstitious in the traditional concept of "the kingdom of heaven" and believed that the crisis could be resolved by means such as "subduing the barbarians with barbarians". But in fact, the competition between the great powers in East Asia intensified the contradiction between China and Japan, and also provided an opportunity for Japan's external expansion.

4.4. Factors of the International Situation

In the late 19th century, Western powers accelerated their pace of colonial expansion in Asia, and China and Japan faced the danger of being divided up and invaded. The great powers exerted great pressure on East Asian countries in military, economic, cultural and other dimensions, forcing China and Japan to speed up the process of modernization and reform. As scholars have pointed out, the deterioration of China-Japan relations in modern times is inseparable from the struggle of great powers in Asia. Japan's attempt to emulate Western powers and become the dominant power in Asia through external expansion is bound to clash with the traditional sphere of influence of the Qing Dynasty in Asia. The Qing Dynasty, on the other hand, tried to maintain its suzerain status and resist the aggression of foreign powers and Japan, and the geopolitical game between the two countries became increasingly fierce.

At the same time, the attitude of the great powers to the Ryukyu issue also had a profound impact on the decision-making and interaction between China and Japan. Based on their own geostrategic interests, the United States, the United Kingdom and other countries supported or were neutral to Japan's annexation of Ryukyu, which objectively encouraged Japan's aggression. Russia, on the other hand, sought to expand its influence in the Far East and was cautious about Japan's expansion. The subtle attitude of the great powers on the Ryukyu issue intensified the strategic game between China and Japan.

In addition, the introduction of international law also provided the basis of "legitimacy" for Japan to annex Ryukyu. Japan claimed that Ryukyu had been a vassal state of Japan since ancient times and was not affiliated to the Qing Dynasty. Japan claimed sovereignty over Ryukyu by invoking the "first occupation principle" in Western international law [28]. This approach won the acquiescence of some foreign powers and brought great challenges to the diplomatic work of the Qing Dynasty. As some scholars pointed out, the introduction of international law changed the rules of the game in East Asian international relations and put forward new requirements for the diplomatic work of the late Qing Dynasty.

In general, Japan's expansion ambition, the internal and external difficulties of the Qing Dynasty and the complex international situation jointly gave birth to the Ryukyu Issue in the late Qing Dynasty. Japan took advantage of the increased national strength after the Meiji Restoration and seized the favorable opportunity of the Qing Dynasty's ruling crisis and the competition among foreign powers to launch an invasion of Ryukyu. However, the Qing Dynasty was unable to deal with the situation due to internal troubles and foreign aggression and misjudgment of the situation, which ultimately led to the tragic outcome of Ryukyu being annexed by Japan. The emergence of the Ryukyu issue reflected the structural change of the international order in East Asia, foreshadowed the further intensification of the conflict between China and Japan, and laid the groundwork for Japan's full-scale invasion of China in the future. As scholars have pointed out, the Ryukyu Issue was a turning point in the history of modern China-Japan relations and had a profound impact on the future trend of the relations between the two countries.

5. THE SPECIFIC GAME PROCESS AND RESULTS BETWEEN CHINA AND JAPAN (1871-1881) ON THE RYUKYU ISSUE

Based on the analysis of the reasons in the previous part of the article, it can be seen that from 1871 to 1881, Japan annexed Ryukyu through invasion step by step, but the resistance of the Qing government and Ryukyu could not prevent this result from taking place. The intervention of foreign powers also failed to fundamentally change the situation in East Asia.

Japan's invasion of Ryukyu was a gradual process. First, Japan took advantage of the Ryukyu people drifting incident to send troops to occupy the Senkaku Islands in Ryukyu under the pretext of "protecting the diaspora". In July 1871, after the implementation of the abolishment of the prefectures, Kagasima Prefecture submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs the Proposal on the Handling of the Investigation Report on the State Affairs of Kagasima Prefecture and Ryukyu, which marked the official start of the plan of annexing Ryukyu. Later, Japan forced the king of Ryukyu to admit that Ryukyu had been a vassal state of Japan since ancient times, and denied the suzerain-vassal relationship with the Qing Dynasty. In 1879, Japan abolished the State of Ryukyu by force, changed it into Okinawa Prefecture, and formally annexed Ryukyu. In a unilateral move, the Japanese government brought Ryukyu's foreign affairs under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs without the consent of the Ryukyu government, and deprived Ryukyu of its "right of external independence". In addition, by enlisting the first rank of the King of the Ryukyu, the Japanese government replaced the king of the Ryukyu with the highest authority at home [26, 27]. As a result of these measures, Ryukyu lost its internal sovereignty, external independence and self-defense rights, which symbolized a sovereign and independent country, and thus became a dependency of Japan from an independent kingdom. In this process, Japan used diplomatic, economic, military and other means to achieve complete control over Ryukyu.

These actions were part of Japan's expansionist policy on its modern nation-state path, aiming at strengthening its pace of external expansion by forcibly incorporating the Kingdom of Ryukyu into its territory.

In the face of Japanese aggression, the Qing government tried to solve the problem through diplomatic negotiations, but with little success. The Qing government first sent a diplomat, He Ruzhang, to Japan to negotiate and ask Japan to recognize Ryukyu as a such-and-vassal state, but Japan refused. Later, the Qing government proposed that the president of the United States mediate the dispute between China and Japan over the ownership of Ryukyu, but no substantial progress was made. The Qing government lacked effective military deterrence and diplomatic support from neighboring powers, so it was difficult to prevent Japan's annexation.

Ryukyu itself tried to resist the Japanese invasion, but it was ultimately unable to recover. Shang Tai, the king of Ryukyu, once sent an envoy to Beijing to ask the Qing government to send troops for help,

but received no positive response. There were also people in Ryukyu who advocated independence and resisted Japanese rule, but these resistance actions were eventually suppressed by Japan [7]. In 1879, Japan sent troops and occupied Shuri City, the capital of Ryukyu. The king of Ryukyu was forced to abdicate and the kingdom of Ryukyu was destroyed.

In this process, Japan also took advantage of the attitude of the Qing government. In the second half of the 19th century, Japan began its plan to annex Ryukyu by force, trying to block the five-hundred-year tributary relationship between Ryukyu and China. The reaction process of the Qing government shows that due to internal and external pressure, the Qing dynasty began to change its diplomatic strategy from traditional tributary relations to modern diplomacy. However, the reaction process of the decision makers and ministers of the Qing government to the "Qiu Case" shows that the Qing government failed to effectively prevent Japan from annexing Ryukyu

In the whole event, the attitude and interference of the foreign powers also had an important impact. The United States, the United Kingdom and other countries were neutral or supportive of Japan's annexation of Ryukyu, believing that it was conducive to maintaining stability in East Asia and expanding trade with China. Russia, on the other hand, was cautious about Japan's expansion, fearing that Japan would threaten Russia's interests in the Far East. On the whole, however, the great powers did not impose effective restrictions on Japan's annexation, but instead gave Japan the confidence to invade.

The game between China and Japan on the Ryukyu issue fully reflected the fragility of the international order in East Asia at that time and the complexity of the great powers' competition. With its rapidly growing national power and imitation of Western powers, Japan emerged as an emerging imperialist country in East Asia. On the other hand, the Qing Dynasty, weakened by internal troubles and foreign aggression, was unable to maintain its traditional sphere of influence. The competition between the two sides in military, diplomatic and economic aspects finally ended in Japan's victory.

In general, the game between China and Japan on the Ryukyu issue from 1871 to 1881 was a process of multi-sided struggle, which included both direct confrontation between the two sides and the interference and influence of foreign powers. The outcome of the game not only changed the fate of Ryukyu, but also had a profound impact on the trend of international relations in East Asia. Japan's annexation of Ryukyu marked its emergence as a new colonial empire in Asia, and also foreshadowed the further intensification of conflicts between China and Japan. The failure of the Qing Dynasty in this event exposed its ruling crisis and diplomatic dilemma, and accelerated the process of its decline.

6. INFLUENCE AND ENLIGHTENMENT OF THE RYUKYU INCIDENT

The game between China and Japan on the Ryukyu issue in the late Qing Dynasty ended with Japan annexing Ryukyu and the Qing government falling into a greater diplomatic dilemma. This result had a profound impact on China and Japan, as well as the pattern of East Asia and the world, and left a lot of enlightenment for the future generations.

6.1. Impact of the Ryukyu Incident

From the perspective of the Qing government, the failure of the Ryukyu Issue exposed many disadvantages in its internal affairs, diplomacy and military affairs. In terms of internal affairs, the ruling efficiency of the Qing government declined, and its centralization was challenged by local forces, which made it difficult to provide strong protection for vassal states. In foreign affairs, the Qing government still adhered to the traditional tributary system and suzerain-vassal relationship, and lacked strategies and means to deal with the rise of Western powers and Japan. Militarily, the Qing government's troops were far behind the Times in terms of weaponry and combat ideas, and were unable to resist the invasion of foreign enemies. The fall of Ryukyu indicated that the Qing Dynasty

would face a greater crisis of territory and sovereignty, which became a turning point in the process of its downfall.

For Japan, annexing Ryukyu was a crucial step in its colonial expansion. By imitating the colonial practices of Western powers, Japan began its transformation from a feudal state to a modern imperialist state. The settlement of the Ryukyu issue not only provided Japan with a model for territorial expansion, but also greatly enhanced its confidence and ability to fight against the Qing government. The rise of Japan has broken the original balance of power in East Asia, had a huge impact on the traditional China-centered international order, and exacerbated regional instability.

From the perspective of the evolution of the East Asian pattern, the Ryukyu issue reflects the complex process of the disintegration of the traditional international system and the establishment of the modern international system. As a late-comer imperialist country, Japan actively used the "preemption principle" in western international law to cover its annexation with the cloak of "legality", while the Qing government tried to defend its own interests by invoking the traditional suzerain-vassal relationship. The clash of the two logics of international relations highlights the characteristics of the transition period of the international order in East Asia. In the process of changing the old and new systems, conflicts among East Asian countries have become increasingly intensified, with frequent disputes over sovereignty and territory. This gave rise to disputes between China and Japan over issues left over from history, which have continued to this day. How to redefine state-to-state relations under the modern international system has become a common task facing East Asian countries [29].

From a global perspective, the Ryukyu issue reflects the complexity and cruelty of great power competition in the era of imperialism. The expansion of Western powers in East Asia reshaped the geopolitical map of the region and also influenced the formation and evolution of the global colonial system. As an emerging imperialist country, Japan's rise was supported and abetted by Western powers as well as due to its own ambition and strength. Japan's expansion in East Asia exacerbated contradictions within the imperialist camp, setting the stage for the Pacific War during World War II. The Ryukyu issue once again proves that in the international system dominated by power politics, the fate of small and weak countries is often reduced to a chip in the game between major powers, and international law and morality are difficult to effectively constrain powers.

In addition, Japan's annexation of Ryukyu also had a series of far-reaching geopolitical impacts. The Ryukyu Islands not only strengthened Japan's strategic presence in East Asia, but also provided an important fulcrum for the postwar "First Island chain" strategy of the United States to contain China. This has further intensified the strategic game between China and Japan, making the sovereignty dispute over the Diaoyu Islands and other issues left over from history more complicated. It can be seen that the Ryukyu issue is by no means an isolated historical event, but a key link affecting East Asia and the world at large. Its development process and final outcome profoundly reflect the power logic and operation rules of the international system since modern times, and have important implications for understanding and grasping contemporary international relations.

6.2. Enlightenment from the Ryukyu Incident

For future generations, the Ryukyu Issue offers many lessons worth reflecting on and drawing lessons from.

6.2.1. Comparison between the Suzerain-vassal system and the treaty system

The Ryukyu Issue in the late Qing Dynasty reflected the tension and conflict between the traditional suzerain-vassal system and the emerging treaty system. Under the suzerain-vassal order centered on the Chinese Empire, China enjoyed certain suzerainty over the vassal states, but this power relationship was gradually declining with the changes of The Times. In contrast, the treaty system with sovereign states as the basic unit and international law as the code of conduct began to rise, emphasizing equality, mutual benefit and win-win cooperation among countries. When dealing with the Ryukyu Issue, the

Qing government tried to defend its own interests by invoking the suzerain-vassal relationship, but it was ultimately unable to recover. However, Japan skillfully used the principles of the treaty system to justify its annexation, and finally incorporated Ryukyu into its territory. This process highlights the fierce competition between the two international systems, and warns us that we must keep pace with The Times and dynamically adjust our foreign strategy in response to changes in the international situation in order to safeguard our core national interests [30]. The suzerain-vassal system and the treaty system represent the pre-modern and modern paradigms of international order respectively. The collision of the two logics in the process of transformation is inevitable. In the face of the change of rules and the transfer of power, countries can occupy a favorable position in the new international system only if they assess the situation and adjust their domestic and foreign policies in time.

It should be pointed out that the pre-modern suzerain-vassal order maintained peace and stability in East Asia for a long period of time and enhanced exchanges and mutual trust among countries in the region. Compared with Japan's colonial expansion, the concepts of mutual benefit and non-interference in internal affairs advocated by the suzerain-vassal system still have enlightenment significance for the construction of international relations today.

6.2.2. The impact of diplomatic games on state-to-state relations and international relations

The Shaping of bilateral and International Relations by Diplomatic Games The diplomatic games in the Ryukyu Issue in the late Qing Dynasty had a profound impact on the national relations and international pattern of China and Japan and even East Asia. The fierce diplomatic competition not only aggravated the tension and opposition of bilateral relations, but also laid the groundwork for the future military conflict. The game process has also become an arena of strength and wisdom among countries. The outcome depends on the strategic planning and negotiation skills of each party, and has an important impact on the power allocation of the international system. In the process of complex game, military strength is of great importance, but diplomatic wisdom and negotiation art are also indispensable.

6.2.3. How does China deal with the territorial disputes between China and Japan and the relations between the two countries

Today, China and Japan should take history as a mirror, examine bilateral relations from a more comprehensive and in-depth perspective, and properly manage territorial disputes and other issues left over from history. As two major economies in East Asia, the improvement and development of China-Japan relations bears on regional peace, stability and prosperity. The two sides should adhere to the concept of win-win cooperation, resolve differences through dialogue and consultation, enhance political mutual trust, expand practical cooperation in various fields, and jointly uphold the rules-based international order. China should adhere to the foreign policy of peaceful development and win-win cooperation. While firmly safeguarding its territorial sovereignty, China should engage in constructive dialogue with Japan in a more confident and calm manner and explore a win-win cooperation path. At the same time, China needs to strengthen its overall national strength and international influence, enhance its voice and rule-making power on the international stage, and participate in global and regional affairs on a more equal footing.

7. CONCLUSION

In general, the result, influence and enlightenment of the Ryukyu Problem in the late Qing Dynasty are worth thinking about today. Looking back on this period of history a century later, we should not only see the tragedy and historical lessons contained in it, but also draw on its wisdom and strength, so as to respond to today's international situation and China-Japan relations with a more open, rational and pragmatic attitude. Only by taking history as a mirror and drawing wisdom from it can we avoid repeating past mistakes and create a brighter and more prosperous future. The history of the Ryukyu

issue shows us that in the rapidly changing international competition, only by keeping pace with The Times, judging the situation and adjusting domestic and foreign strategies in a timely manner can we remain invincible and safeguard the long-term interests of the country and the nation.

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