The Wreck of the Chusan

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At the end of May 1871, the Chusan, a small German schooner commanded by Captain Scholke, departed Chefoo, China, with a load of goods bound for Port Mary, a Russian port on Possiet Bay.1 Sea travel in the north-eastern part of Asia was inherently dangerous. Like many small merchant ships of this period, it had a mixed crew―Chinese as deck hands and Europeans as officers―and was lightly armed to help repel the pirates who infested the Chinese coastline. But pirates were not its only concern.

The waters around Korea were infamous for strong currents and poor weather, especially thick fog and sudden storms. Because of this, ships sailing out of the Gulf of Pechili, through the Yellow Sea and around the west coast of Korea to Vladivostok, were required to pay higher insurance premiums.2 In addition to the normal dangers of the sea, the United States and Korea were on the verge of open hostilities, and it was feared the ship

1 There is some question as to the departure date of the Chusan. According to the North China Herald, May 19, 1871, p. 370, the Chusan, along with several other German merchant ships, was at Tientsin/Taku harbor in China in mid-May. William Elliot Griffis, Corea The Hermit Nation (New York, NY: Charles Scriber’s Sons, 1904), p. 405 notes that the ship began its fateful voyage in May, but Beilage zur Allgermeinen Zeitung Augsburg, Munchen, Nr. 250, September 7, 1871, pp. 4393ff states that it was at the beginning of June. Anglo American Times, September 9, 1871.

2 Cramer, “The Voyage of the Imperial Corvette Hertha―Specifically Concerning Korea,” Verhandlungen der Zietschrift fur Ethnologische, May 1873, pp. 56-57. Cramer’s account, while interesting, is filled with inaccuracies such as dates, names of people, and even locations, but is used as a primary account for the initial shipwreck of the Chusan and the subsequent Hertha expedition.

[page 38] might become entangled in the conflict. Despite the costs and dangers, transporting goods to Russia’s maritime province was extremely profitable and eventually a British firm agreed to insure the Chusan’s voyage— a choice that the insurance company and Captain Scholke would soon regret.

The Chusan sailed across the Yellow Sea into Korean waters and then warily began to follow the Korean coast, careful to keep a fair distance away from the shore. At the beginning of the voyage the weather was fine, but on June 5, near the Sir James Island Group (off Hwanghai province), the Chusan suddenly encountered thick fog, which caused the crew to become disoriented.3 Captain Scholke attempted to sail back out into the middle of the Yellow Sea and away from the island-strewn Korean coast, but compounding the poor visibility, a strong current hindered his efforts. Suddenly the fog dissipated, revealing a small island directly in front of them. Before the crew could react, the Chusan struck some rocks “at the foot of a tremendous wall of cliffs.”4

Scholke and his crew were relatively unharmed, but in the confusion to lower the two small wooden lifeboats, one of the deck cannons, wrenched from its position by the impact of the grounding, slammed into Scholke’s hand, severely smashing several of his fingers.5 Eventually the lifeboats were lowered and the crew made its way to a beach not far from the shipwreck.6

Immediately upon landing, the shipwrecked survivors were surrounded by a group of startled Koreans who, instead of attacking them,

3 North China Herald, August 4, 1871.

4 Cramer, op. cit., pp. 49-57; North China Herald, August 4, 1871.

5 Beilage zur Allgermeinen Zeitung Augsburg, Munchen, Nr. 250，September 7, 1871, pp. 4393ff.

6 Beilage zur Allgermeinen Zeitung Augsburg, Munchen, Nr. 280, October 7, 1871, pp. 4337ff; Cramer, op. cit., pp. 49-57: Beilage zur Allgermeinen Zeitung Augsburg, Munchen, Nr. 250, September 7, 1871，pp. 4393ff, seems to imply that the men made their way to the mainland, but the island was obviously inhabited and it makes little sense that the men would have abandoned their ship, especially considering Captain Scholke’s later reluctance, Griffis, op. cit., p. 405，also has an erroneous account: “...the schooner Chusan, which was wrecked on one of the islands of Sir James Hall group, the Chinese crew only, it appears, being saved.”

[page 39] questioned them as to where they were from and the reason for their arri- val. Scholke explained that he and his men were shipwrecked and would like to return to China. A Korean official agreed and informed Scholke that they would be taken overland to Wiju, a city on the northern border with China, where they would be turned over to the Chinese authorities who would then escort them to Chefoo. There was, however, one stipulation: the crew would not be allowed to take with them anything from the ship. The Chinese members of the crew, having no financial stake in the matter, readily accepted the offer, but Scholke and his European officers refused.7

Scholke was determined to keep his cargo at all costs. In an effort to sail back to Chefoo, he divided the remaining crew into two groups, one commanded by himself and the other by his chief officer. All knew the risks involved in attempting to cross the storm-plagued Yellow Sea in small open lifeboats, but this was their only chance if they were to save any of the cargo.

Fate was not with them. Soon after they departed the island, the life-boats became separated and only the one boat commanded by the chief officer managed to reach Chefoo on June 9.8 The German consul and the British insurance company were informed of the Chusan’s shipwreck and the subsequent events and the French gunboat Scorpion was immediately dispatched in an effort to find Scholke’s lifeboat.9 In addition, the German warship Hertha, commanded by Captain Kohler, was dispatched not only to rescue the missing crew but also to “show the flag.”10

The German government was greatly concerned with the developments in Korea. Just the previous summer, the German Minister to Japan, Maximillian von Brandt, sailed to Fusan, Korea, aboard the Hertha on what was described as an “honorable quest of friendly relations.”11 His

7 Beilage zur Allgermeinen Zeitung Augsburg, Munchen, Nr. 250, September 7, 1871，pp. 4393ff; North China Herald, July 14, 1871.

8 North China Herald, June 23, 1871.

9 Ibid.

10 Cramer, op. cit., pp. 49-57.

11 Griffis, op. cit., p. 435

[page 40]

visit was less-than-welcomed.12 Now that the United States and Korea were in conflict, it was important for the German government to maintain a presence in the area. The Hertha soon arrived at the Prince Imperial Archipelago and anchored at San Fernando Island, a small island not too far from the estuary of the Salee (Han) River. The American navy at this time was engaged in combat with the Koreans on Kanghwa Island a short distance away, and the Germans observed several of the American warships sailing up and down the coast13

Expecting the worst, armed German sailors were sent ashore to search for the wrecked ship, but were surprised when they were met by a group of Koreans who not only greeted them peacefully but even helped beach their boat. At first, the Germans were allowed to wander around the island and even go into some of the Korean homes. This all ended after the arrival of Korean official and the once-friendly Korean natives began to avoid the Germans.14

The Korean official made written inquiries as to the names of the Germans and the reason for their arrival. They informed him that they were searching for some of their fellow countrymen who had been shipwrecked in this region and had then attempted to sail back to China and had not been seen since. The Korean official acknowledged he knew of the incident and then informed them that a lifeboat had been intercepted by a Korean warship and that the Westerners were all safe.15 Surprisingl, Captain Kohler accepted this explanation and made not attempt to even visit the shipwreck of the Chusan. After spending only a short time in Korean waters, and worried about being caught in an approaching typhoon, the Hertha returned to Chefoo.16

A typhoon was encountered—not at sea, but in the local press. Rumors

12 Cramer, op. cit., pp. 49-57; Young-choe Ching, The Rule of the Taewon’gun, 1864-1873 (Cambridge, MA: East Asian Research Center, Harvard University Press, 1972), pp. 109-110; Low to Fish No. 37，November 22，1870，cited E.M. Cable, “United States-Korean Relations, 1866-1871,” Transactions (Seoul, Korea: Royal Asiatic Society Korea Branch, 1938), pp. 130-132.

13 Cramer, op. cit., pp. 49-57.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

[page 41] circulated that Kohler was unconcerned with the whereabouts and well-being of the Chusan’s crew and was only concerned with recovering the ship and its cargo. Naval Chaplain Cramer disputed this and later wrote that the Hertha did not have the responsibility, legal ability or obligation to seek the crew once they were informed that the crew was safe; furthermore, once the Chusan’s crew had abandoned the ship, the ship and its goods were the property of the British insurance company that had insured them.17

About a month after their disappearance, Captain Scholke and the re-maining crew arrived in Chefoo aboard the American warship USS Palos. The Palos, returning from combat in Korea, discovered them drifting in the Yellow Sea and rescued them. For the most part they were in good health and the ship’s surgeon needed to treat them only for exposure and dehydration; the only exception being Captain Scholke whose injured fingers had turned gangrenous and had to be amputated.18

The Recovery of the Chusan

The British insurance company, in an effort to recover some of its losses, quickly held an auction through the German consul at Chefoo and sold the shipwreck to Messrs. Paul Strarich and Thomas Campbell—a Scotsman and an Englishman from Malta―for 80 pounds sterling.19 The new owners intended to sail to the island, repair the ship and then sail it back to Chefoo, cargo and all. To aid them in this enterprise they enlisted the help of Mr. Brinkmann, a German businessman at Chefoo, and his Chinese translator. They also chartered a Chinese junk and a large Chinese crew to transport them to the island and to help with the repairs.

About June 15，loaded with tools and supplies, they set sail for the

17 Ibid.

18 Beilage zur Allgermeinen Zeitung Augsburg, Munchen, Nr. 250，September 7, 1871, pp. 4393ff 19 New York Times, September 21，1871; Cramer, op. cit., pp. 49-57 claims the Chusan was sold to two Americans for 8 dollars. North China Herald, August 4, 1871; Beilage zur Allgermeinen Zeitung Augsburg, Munchen, Nr. 250, September 7, 1871, pp. 4393ff each describe the Chusan as being sold to two British subjects for 80 silver sterling; Anglo American Times, September 9，1871 states the wreck was purchased for 80 dollars.

[page 42] Sir James Island Group and the wreck of the Chusan. For nearly a month nothing was heard of the new owners. Their absence was not noted because of other events, such as the American-Korean incident, which occupied the Western community’s attention.

In early July, a Chinese junk sailed into the small harbor of Li-tau, about sixty miles from Chefoo. Many junks sailed into this harbor daily, and most went relatively unnoticed, but the discovery of European clothing and goods on board the ship caught the attention of the customs department. There were no Europeans present and, fearing the worst, the Chinese authorities arrested the junk’s navigator and escorted him to Chefoo where he was interrogated by the Chinese police on the evening of July 5.20

He eventually informed the authorities that his junk had been hired by the two Englishmen who had bought the Chusan and that they had taken on Mr. Brinkmann, and his interpreter to aid them in the Chusan’s recovery. As soon as the junk had arrived at the Chusan shipwreck, the three Europeans, their Chinese interpreter, and three other Chinese sailors went ashore in one of the launches and were immediately surrounded by Koreans who bound them with ropes and took them to the interior of the island.21 The Koreans then demanded that the remaining Chinese aboard the junk leave immediately or they would all be killed and the junk set afire. With no other choice, the Chinese junk reluctantly sailed to Li-tau harbor.

The Rescue Mission

Immediately the acting British consul, William Frederick Mayers, was informed that the three Westerners who had gone to recover the Chusan had been captured by the Koreans and had presumably been murdered.22

20 North China Herald, July 14 and 21 and August 4, 1871; Beilage zur Allgermeinen Zeitung Augsburg, Munchen, Nr. 280’ October 7, 1871, pp. 4337ff.

21 North China Herald, July 21, 1871. The correspondent also noted that the Chinese sailors from the earlier Chusan shipwreck were also still being held on the island.

22 William Frederick Mayers (1839-1878) served with the British diplomatic service in China for a great many years and was a noted Chinese scholar. He died in Shanghai on March 24, 1878 after a brief illness.

[page 43] Mayers immediately informed Captain Hewett, commander of the HMS Ocean and the senior officer of the British warships at Chefoo, of the situation. Mayers argued that “it seemed extremely probable that the lives of the prisoners would already have been sacrificed, and one more outrage thus added to the list of Corean transgression; but there was still a chance that the men might be recovered, or their fate at least ascertained, by prompt action.”23

Hewett agreed and instructed Captain Maquay of the HMS Ringdove to convey Mr. Mayers to the shipwreck and determine the status of the three Europeans and, if they were still alive, to secure their release. By this time the German warship Hertha had returned to Chefoo from its voyage in Korean waters. Even though the Chusan was no longer considered German property, Mr. Brinkmann was a German citizen, so it was decided to attach Captain-Lieutenant Hassenplug to the Ringdove to investigate his disappearance.24 A Korean who could speak a little broken Chinese was obtained through the assistance of the officials of the U.S. military expedi-tion to Korea and was hired as a guide and interpreter.25

Even as Mayers and the Ringdove were making preparations, the local press was denouncing Korea as barbarous. On July 5, a correspondent in Chefoo wrote:

What course the Consul will take is not yet known, but we pre-sume he will not do less than send a vessel to the scene of the seizure, and enquire from the natives into the unhappy fate of his fellow subjects. We believe the Consular notification that any one going to Corea would do so at his own risk and not his Queen’s was issued after these three unfortunate men sailed; but in any case it is one thing to warn the venturesome that if they are barbarously murdered they shall have no sympathy, and

23 North China Herald, August 4, 1871.

24 Captain-Lieutenant Hassenpflug served with the Austrian navy until 1868, at which point he joined the German navy. His father was the former Minister of Hessen. Beilage zur Allgermeinen Zeitung Augsburg, Munchen, Nr. 280, October 7, 1871, pp. 4337ff; North China Herald, August 4, 1871.

25 North China Herald, August 4, 1871.

[page 44] quite another to leave them without assistance when their fate is closing down upon them.26 From the spirit of all in the place, there is no doubt that, if the Navy were not to inquire into their fate, private individuals would be inclined to go unaided to those in distress. The only thing discouraging to such action is the extreme likelihood that the three men have been already beheaded， and their heads sent upon the circuit of the Kingdom.27

The following morning, July 6, the Ringdove departed Chefoo, bound for Korea.28 Late on July 7 the Ringdove arrived at the Sir James Hall Group off the coast of Korea, but because of the thick fog was not able to send a boat ashore until the following afternoon. It was decided that Mr. Mayers, Captain-Lieutenant Hassenplug, Mr. Vinning (Ringdove’s paymaster) and Lieutenant Prichard and his ten-man cutter crew would go ashore and make initial contact with the Koreans.

The cutter, her crew of ten men being fully armed in preparation for all eventualities, displayed a white flag at the bow, while from the Ringdove an immaculate tablecloth was unfurled at the mainmast head. As the boat approached the landing place selected numbers of Coreans were seen hurrying towards the hill tops, but a small group of men were seen awaiting the arrival of the strangers. These, too, however, as the boat approached, turned as if for flight, but halted on being hailed by the Corean in their own language. Owing to the heavy surf the boat could not be beached, so jumping into the rollers waist deep, the party

26 Apparently there were some Europeans willing to travel to Korea in order to make a quick profit “There has been no further news up to the 22nd inst., from the U. S. squadron in Corea, but a small sailing boat which ventured over to that coast with two Europeans on board, who made the voyage with stores intended for sale to the American vessels, returned to Chefoo on the 20th inst., having been driven back from the mouth of the river leading to Kanghoa by an attack on the part of the armed natives, at a point below the spot where Admiral Rodgers’ ships were supposed to be lying.” North China Herald, June 30, 1871.

27 Ibid., July 14, 1871.

28 Ibid., July 14 and August 4, 1871.

[page 45] waded on shore. Here they had an amicable interview with the natives, to one of whom, apparently the village schoolmaster, being able to read Chinese, was handed a notice written in that language (previously prepared by Mr. Mayers), and it was gathered from him that although he had heard of a party of Chinese being detained on the adjacent island of Peh-ling Tao, he knew nothing of the three Europeans. He stated that the name of this island was Sho-cheng Tao, and the northern Peh-ling Tao. After about half an hour’s colloquy the cutter’s party re-embarked and returned to the Ringdove, which at once got under way. Passing along the Eastern face of the island, Captain Maquay drew in as close as possible to a landing place discerned on the shore of the middle island, and the same party as before again landed, opposite to a small village consisting of some 20 thatched huts, where they were met by several of the inhabitants, the majority having, however, taken to flight. Their white garments could be seen peeping out from the dense thicket which clothed the hillside in the background. One of the elders having perused Mr. Mayers’ handbill, acknowledged having heard that some Europeans were detained on the northern island, and advised the party to proceed thither without delay, as he believed they were shortly to be conveyed to the mainland. He volunteered at the same time to send the handbill on to the headman of the Island, and two runners were at once despatched with it across the hills.29

The landing party then returned to their ship and the Ringdove sailed for another couple of hours through a treacherous strait that was described as “most dangerous.”30 It was about 7:30 in the evening that they discovered a beach where boats were seen hauled up. The landing party was again sent ashore and they were heartened to discover that the boats had recently been set afire―some of them still smoldering. They made their way inland, following the dikes of rice paddies and the barking of dogs,

29 Ibid., August 4, 1871.

30 Ibid.

[page 46]until they came to a number of small and recently deserted Korean homes. Mayers left a note, written in Chinese and explaining why they had come, under a rock in front of one of the Korean homes. They then returned to the Ringdove, pausing only long enough to attach a similar note to the stern of one of the smoldering boats.

The following morning a group of Koreans were observed on the beach and once again the landing party was sent ashore. Mayers was met by a Korean official wearing a “curious round broad-brimmed hat of horsehair network” and who described himself as the District Magistrate. He admitted to Mayers that the foreigners, along with nine Chinese, were on the island and “would be given up at once.”31 It wasn’t long before the governor of the island, also referred to as a general, arrived with a small entourage of men—amongst them were a respectably-dressed Chinese man and Paul Starich.

The governor invited the Europeans to sit with him and he assured them that Campbell and the other Chinese were safe about ten miles inland and would arrive in the early afternoon. Starich confirmed this and stressed that they had all been treated well. They “were allowed three meals of rice, &c., per day, and, though restrained in liberty, not otherwise harshly treated.”32 As to Brinkmann, the governor insisted that he had never landed upon the island and had sailed away in the Chinese junk.

During this entire time, Captain Maquay, still aboard the Ringdove, grew alarmed at the ever increasing crowd of Koreans on the beach. The Ringdove’s guns were kept carefully trained upon the Koreans in case of any treachery on their part, but it soon became apparent that the Koreans were sincere in their kindness. Reassured, Maquay and some of his sailors went ashore to keep the landing party company while they waited for Campbell and the other Chinese. While they waited, they attempted to explore the area, “but every effort to elude the vigilance of the mandarin’s followers, who politely but immovably objected to any departure from the neighbourhood of the beach, entirely failed.”33

It was about 5 p.m. when they were startled to see a long “file of bullock

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid, July 21, 1871.

33 Ibid, August 4, 1871.

[page 47] waggons, drawn by remarkably fine cream-coloured shorthorns, resembling English cattle rather than the Chinese, which wound their way over a hillside and delivered on the beach an extraordinary medley of articles recovered from the wreck of the Chusan―chains, parts of sails, cabin furniture, boxes of wine, clothing, cooking utensils, etc., etc.”34 Nearly forty wagons of goods were delivered, much to the surprise and dismay of Maquay, who protested that he was only to recover the shipwrecked survivors and nothing else.35

The governor, however, insisted all the items were to be loaded aboard the Ringdove and removed. According to the governor, the king had ordered that everything was to be handed over to the foreigners, and that any items not taken away were to be burned Starich and Campbell, much to their relief, were granted permission to load as much of their property as they could aboard the Ringdove. A great amount of valuable goods including metalwork and boxes were abandoned to the governor’s attendants, who gathered and piled them up into a large mound which they then covered with brushwood and set afire.

Several times Mayers attempted to present the governor with gifts as compensation for the kind treatment given to the European and Chinese and for safeguarding and transporting the goods, but the governor steadfastly refused and explained that he would lose his head if he accepted even one small item. As demonstrations of the “despotic power wielded by Corean officials,” one of the governor’s servants was severely beaten in front of the Europeans for having accepted a cigar/cigarette from one of the sailors. Four peasants accused of pilfering some small articles from the baggage of the Chinese were suddenly seized, tied up and ordered to be carted off for execution. It was only through Mayers’ efforts that the men were eventually released.36

Once all preparations were completed, the Europeans shook hands with their “grave but courteous entertainer” and departed for Chefoo.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid., August 4，1871; New York Times, September 21，1871; Beilage zur Allgermeinen Zeitung Augsburg, Munchen, Nr. 280, October 7, 1871.

36 North China Herald, August 4, 1871; Beilage zur Allgermeinen Zeitung Augsburg, Munchen, Nr. 280, October 7, 1871.

[page 48]

Brinkmann’s Fate

The Ringdove sighted the Chinese Shantung peninsula on July 11 and sailed to Li-tau, the small port where Starich’s junk was still being held by the port officials. All but one of the crew members had been taken to Chefoo for questioning by the Chinese authorities. Mayers confronted the lone Chinese sailor and demanded to know the truth of Brinkmann’s disappearance. Confronted with the new evidence, the Chinese sailor broke down and confessed that only the two Englishmen and a number of Chinese sailors went ashore on the Korean island and were immediately captured. Mr. Brinkmann and his Chinese interpreter refused to go ashore and argued that they should wait until the Englishmen were freed, but the Koreans refused to release them. The Koreans did, however, release the Chinese and demanded that they immediately leave the island’s vicinity or they would all be killed.

The Chinese immediately complied and began to sail back towards China, the entire time pursued by several Korean warships. At some point, Brinkmann and his Chinese interpreter were spotted by the Koreans and shot, their bodies falling overboard into the sea.37 The Chinese had made up the earlier story because they were afraid no one would believe the real account. Somewhat satisfied, Mayers and the Ringdove continued on to Chefoo the following day. Their arrival was greeted with great excitement.

A few days later, another arrival stirred renewed interest. A Chinese man who had served as the scribe for Brinkmann’s Chinese interpreter had abandoned Starich’s junk as soon as it had landed at Li-tau and, probably fearing for his life, walked to Chefoo to report the fates of Brinkmann and his master. According to him, Starich, Campbell, and a group of Chinese sailors had gone ashore, leaving Brinkman and his translator behind on the junk. This was probably a precaution they had taken to prevent the Chinese from sailing away and abandoning them. As soon as the Englishmen landed, they were approached by an apparently hostile group of Koreans who quickly bound them to bamboo poles and then dragged them into the interior of the island. The Chinese were soon released, but were told that if they and the junk did not leave immediately they would

37 Cramer, op. cit., pp. 49-57; North China Herald, July 21 and August 4, 1871; New York Times, September 21, 1871.

[page 49] all be killed.

The Chinese informed Brinkmann of the Koreans’ threat and the junk soon departed Korean waters, possibly followed by a couple of Korean warships to ensure they left It isn’t clear whether the junk left because Brinkmann wanted to return to China and get help, or whether the Chinese crew, in an effort to save themselves, sailed back to China despite his pleas. At some point the Chinese sailors figured they would be blamed for abandoning the Englishmen and in desperation they murdered Brinkmann and his interpreter in hopes of concealing their inaction. Stripping them of their goods, they threw the bodies overboard for the sharks to eat and then made a pact amongst themselves that they would all swear that the three Westerners had been captured and killed by the Koreans. Believing Starich and Campbell would never be rescued, they were convinced that there would be no one to dispute their claims.

After the man’s testimony, Mayers turned the matter over to the German and Chinese authorities. Unfortunately, the fates of these Chinese murderers are not recorded. Considering the harshness of Chinese justice at the time, they were probably summarily executed.

Conclusion

Over the next couple of months, stories of German encounters with Korea peppered the local newspapers and even the newspapers in Europe. According to the New York Times, in early July the German iron-schooner Volador was wrecked in the Korean Straits but fortunately the crew managed to escape in the lifeboats and was soon rescued “after suffering great hardships.”38 The article seems to imply that the great hardships the crew suffered were somehow related to Korea, and yet it was the Chinese who were the culprits. According to the North China Herald:

...the ill-fated vessel was bound with a full cargo from Chefoo to Asiatic Russia, and, when about 500 miles off the Shantung Promontory, struck on a rock, the name of which we have not learned. About 8 o’clock on the previous evening, this rock bore S., and Capt. Torgow consequently steered to the S. E., but, as

38 New York Times, September 3, 1871.

[page 50] the night approached, a dead calm with dense fog came on, rendering it impossible to see anything about the vessel at the time, and at about 3 a.m. the vessel most unexpectedly struck, to the amazement of all on board. She bumped twice, and immedi- ately began breaking up. The Captain instantly got his chief officer, who was laid up with a broken leg, into the longboat, and had barely time to get out another boat and place in it some provisions when the vessel went to pieces. The only thing of any value saved from the wreck was a compass and chronometer; and the Captain, who was interested in the vessel, is completely ruined by his loss. The crew, which consisted of five Europeans and five Chinese, after their third day at sea, hailed a junk, but those on board refused to receive them or give them any help; but on the fifth day out, a junk, bound for Shanghai, picked them up and carried them safe to port.39

The allegations of Korean brutality toward shipwrecked Westerners seem to have been exaggerated, if not fabricated outright. Even during the American-Korean conflict of 1871, Koreans demonstrated acts of charity and concern for shipwreck victims. Yet despite the facts that these acts of Korean kindness were often described in detail in newspapers in Europe, the United States and the open ports of the Far East, editorials continued to call upon their respective governments to take measures to ensure the safety of mariners from the maligned Koreans. This concern for shipwrecked crews would be echoed over and over as an excuse, much like it had been used with Japan, to open Korea to the West.

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39 North China Herald, July 21, 1871.