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Summary

Borderless Space: Discovering the Borodino Islands

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There are two coral islands 360km east of the main island of Okinawa in the Pacific Ocean. They are the Northern and Southern Daito Islands. In August 1820, the Russian naval captain Z. I. Ponafidin discovered these islands, and he named them the Borodino Islands after the name of his ship. The existence of both islands became known worldwide through an atlas created by the Russian Naval Ministry Cartography Agency. Almost 30 years were to pass, however, before anybody visited the islands using these sea charts. This was at a time when American and Imperial Russian envoy ships arose, visiting Japan to seek amity and trade with the closed country of Japan. Ships from both countries saw an opportunity to visit the islands to verify their existence during a period of difficult negotiations. The crew of the Russian "Vostok" came ashore and even went so far as to take plant samples home with them.

The objective of this paper, however, does not stop at reexamining the mere facts. This paper dares to take this historical fact and to thoroughly read the primary sources to establish evidence that today's concept of borders is in no way universal or unchanging, and samples the "common knowledge" of people from that time.

Following the introduction, this paper comprises Chapter 1 "The Russian-American Company and Global Circumnavigation by Russian Ships," Chapter 2 "The Discovery of New Islands by Captain Ponafidin of the Borodino," Chapter 3 "Two Atlases that Reflected the New Information of the Pacific Ocean," Chapter 4 "Putiatin and Perry, Enchanted by the Borodino Islands," and a conclusion. First, I examined in great detail the archive sources written by Ponafidin, the discoverer himself, and analyzed his actions and judgments from a historical-cultural standpoint. Next, drawing on primary sources, I revealed the process through which Ponafidin's reports about the discovery of the new islands were recognized as fact and included in the sea charts. Based on this, I then performed a similar historical-cultural analysis on the attitudes adopted unconsciously with regard to "borderless space" by the people of the time by understanding the mentality of the people involved in the work. Further, I also considered the reasons why Commodore Matthew C. Perry, who came to Japan as leader of a group of

American envoys, and Russian plenipotentiary Evfimii V. Putiatin, who signed the Treaty of Commerce, Navigation and Delimitation between Japan and Russia (the Treaty of Shimoda) and noteworthily drew the first Russo-Japanese border, both expressed uncommon interest in the Borodino Islands, and took the specific actions of surveying and landing despite the difficulties. The paper concludes by pointing out that a “period of sickness” came in which various struggles were repeated due to the start of the common modern concept of “borders” between Japan and Russia.