

Tadasu Hayashi

The Japanese Diplomat Who Became An English Freemason

By James L. Johnston,

PGM, Japan

M.W. Brother Johnston, PGM of Masons in Japan, serves as Grand Historian of the Grand Lodge of Japan. He has shared this paper with M.S.A. in hopes that it will serve to point up the universality of Freemasonry and promote a better understanding. We thank him for sharing this fascinating account with our readers.

Variously described as a great, brilliant Diplomat and Statesman, an Anglophile, a world famous figure, patriotic, and a man who lived up to the noble teachings of Freemasonry, Tadasu Hayashi served Japan with uncommon devotion and dedication throughout his life.

He was born in Shomofussa Province (now a part of Chiba Prefecture) on February 22, 1850 into the Sato family and given the boyhood name of Shingoro. His father was a progressive physician who practiced and taught Dutch (western) medicine. At an early age he was adopted into the Hayashi family who lived in Edo (now Tokyo) and were the hereditary physicians to the Tokugawa Shogunate. His surname thus became Hayashi and his first name was changed to Tadasu.

At the age of twelve Hayashi was sent to Yokohama to study English under Dr. James C. Hepburn, an American medical missionary, who was credited with romanizing the Japanese language, translating the Bible into Japanese, and compiling the first Japanese-English dictionary. Dr. Hepburn was alluded to by the Japanese as "Kunshi," a term signifying a superior person, and Mrs. Hepburn was responsible for establishing the first co-educational school in Japan. The Hepburns considered Hayashi one of the family and through them he received a thorough foundation in the English language.

In 1866 – thirteen years after Commodore Matthew C. Perry (a member of Holland Lodge No. 8 in New York City) had made his first visit to Japan – Hayashi was among the fourteen youths selected by the Tokugawa Shogunate to study the English language, manners and customs in London. At first the students lived in a lodging house, but Hayashi disliked this arrangement (recalling his experience with the Hepburns) since all of them tended to speak only Japanese

except when they were attending the University College School. He petitioned to have the group separated and live with private families which was granted.

In 1868 the Tokugawa Shogunate was in process of being overthrown by the Restoration forces and the students returned to Japan. Hayashi joined the Tokugawa loyalists commanded by Admiral Takeaki Enomoto, was captured at the Battle of Goryokaku at Hakodate, Hokkaido and incarcerated at the infamous Kangoku prison located at Tenma-cho, Nihonbashi, Tokyo where hundreds of prisoners were executed. Mrs. Hepburn visited him and petitioned for his acquittal which was finally effected during 1870.

In 1871 Hayashi was selected to be an interpreter with the rank of Second Secretary with the Iwakura Mission (considered as "One of the most remarkable journeys in world history") that visited the United States and Europe to study their political systems and material culture. When the mission arrived in London, Hayashi returned to Japan with Takayoshi Kido who had been recalled.

Count Munemitsu Mutsu (later to become Ambassador to the United States and also Foreign Minister under Hirobumi Ito), observing Hayashi's vast potential, was instrumental in guiding his career for the next few years. Hayashi received appointments to the Industrial and Imperial Household Bureaus, the Ministry of Public Works, and served as Governor of Kanagawa and Hyogo Prefectures in 1888 and 1889. By 1891 he had become Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs. In this position Hayashi successfully coordinated the Tripartite Intervention negotiations for the relinquishing of Port Arthur, and participated in finalizing the Shimonoseki Treaty which ended the Chinese-Japanese War.

Hayashi was appointed Minister to China in 1895 and received the rank of Baron. In 1897 he became Minister of Sweden and Denmark. Two years later he was Minister to Russia and also a delegate to the International Peace Conference at The Hague, and in 1900 received a Ministerial appointment to England.

Significant in Hayashi's career was the signing of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1902 and being elevated to the rank of Viscount. He was also responsible for the expansion and renewal of the Alliance in 1905. When the Japanese Legation in London was raised to Embassy status in 1905, Hayashi became the first Japanese Ambassador to the Court of St. James. He was the recipient of honorary degrees from Oxford and Cambridge, translated several English and European classical works on politics and political economy into Japanese, and wrote "For His People" in English.

In 1906 Hayashi was recalled to Japan to fill the Minister of Foreign Affairs post, and had to deal with the difficult situation in Manchuria the American immigration issues, and the problem subsequent to the Russo-Japanese War. He also concluded agreements with France and Russia for maintaining the status quo. The rank of Count was conferred on him in 1907. In 1911 he was concomitantly the Foreign Minister ad interim and the Minister of Transportation and

Communications. By this time Hayashi was suffering from acute diabetes and at his request retired in 1912. An exception to the general rule, he had not acquired a fortune like other statesmen. He sold his home in Tokyo and moved to Hayama. During 1913 Hayashi fractured his leg in a ricksha accident and amputation was required. He did not recover and died on July 10th. The Government of Japan posthumously conferred upon him the Junior Grade Second Court Rank and donated the sum of five thousand yen for his funeral (a considerable sum in those days).

Brother Hayashi's Masonic career was no less remarkable. He was initiated in Empire Lodge No. 2108, E.C., London, on February 24, 1903. There were over 150 in attendance at either the ceremony or subsequent proceedings, including Grand Lodge Officers, civic officials of London, officials from Ireland, Scotland, Wales, the Channel Islands, and many members of Parliament. He was then passed on March 24th, raised on May 29th, and installed as Master on January 20, 1904. In 1905 he was honored with the rank of Past Senior Warden of the United Grand Lodge of England by the Most Worshipful Grand Master, the Duke of Connaught. He resigned from the Lodge in 1907. Due to his Masonic activities during his residence in London (according to A. M. Pooley, a former Tokyo-based Reuters correspondent), Brother Hayashi was excluded from the Sumitsuin – Privy Council, or Advisors to the Emperor, a position which should have been his reward for eminent services – by the political manipulations of Shuzo Aoki and Prime Minister Taro Katsura.

Clearly, Brother Hayashi was a Masonic pioneer because then Masonic membership in Japan was restricted to only the foreign population with the agreement that no Japanese would be accepted into membership. Today, if our esteemed Brother Hayashi could visit the Masonic community in Japan, what would he encounter? He would find Freemasonry operating without restraint; not only a universally recognized Grand Lodge of Japan with constituent Craft Lodges from Hokkaido to Okinawa, but also Craft Lodges under the English, Scottish, Massachusetts and Philippine Constitutions. He would learn that the ritual and related material had been translated into the Japanese language and that hundreds of Japanese had become Masons, including Prime Ministers Naruhiko Higashikuni and Ichiro Hatoyama. He would also observe a broad spectrum of Masonic appendant bodies and groups, including the Scottish and York Rites, Red Cross of Constantine, Order of Eastern Star, DeMolay, Rainbow, Shrine and High Twelve Clubs. He would be pleased and honored that in 1984 Pro Grand Master Lord Cornwallis of the United Grand Lodge of England had visited his final resting place in Tokyo's Aoyama Cemetery, and he could visit the modern Tokyo Masonic Center and see his name on the Honor Roll in the lobby.

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