

East-West Cultural Contact at Dejima Intellectual Exchange and Impact in Edo Period Japan

WILLIAM SHANG*



INTRODUCTION

Dejima, in Nagasaki, Japan, is known as a former Dutch settlement and as having been Japan's sole contact point with foreign countries—literally speaking, the “only window to the outside world”—during the era of “national seclusion” (1639-1854) implemented by the Tokugawa Shogunate. Although this artificial island of Dejima is now recognizable only by a street sign (Fig. 1), during the Edo period an amazing flow of information, invaluable to both Japan and the European countries, passed its shores. The numerous dissenting opinions on Dejima notwithstanding, the island did possess unique circumstances that enabled it to emerge as a centre for “importing” and nourishing western knowledge, especially in the fields of medicine, the arts, and naval strategy. The so-called new information and knowledge derived through cultural exchange was then disseminated throughout Japan. Simultaneously, Dejima functioned as an information-gathering centre for European traders and scholars who travelled to Japan. The information they

gathered, which included paintings and other visual records of Japan, was taken home to Europe, but the process had an immense impact on Japanese painting styles as well.

A number of Western scholars who visited Dejima in its heyday are well documented in Japan. Engelbert Kaempfer (1651-1716), Carl Peter Thunberg (1743-1828) and Phillip Franz von Siebold (1796-1866) are frequently mentioned in both western and Japanese sources. Perhaps it is safe to say that the internationalisation of Japan actually began with Dejima in the Edo period. The present article begins with the records left by Western scholars, in particular Kaempfer, who had a unique approach to understanding Japan. His descriptions of Dejima seem so foreign, so distant from the present era, that they are especially significant. The second half of the article then discusses the artworks created nearly one hundred and forty years after Kaempfer's time; it focuses on a Japanese artist who participated in the exchange of information during the Edo period (1603-1868), as trade at the Dejima foreign factory first flourished and then was maintained at a more moderate level. In other words, this article will analyse the information Kaempfer took back to Europe with him, and the visual records created by a Japanese artist working for Siebold. Needless to say, this article will merely touch upon certain aspects of this unique era in Japanese history. However, a different perspective will be provided by the use of Japanese source materials, including translated documents.

* Professor in the Kibi International University, Okayama, Japan, since 2001. Concurrently, Honorary Research Fellow at the Centre of Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong. Specializing in China Trade paintings of South China Coast and Southeast Asia.

Professor na Universidade Internacional de Kibi, Okayama, Japão, desde 2001. Investigador Honorário no Centro de Estudos Asiáticos da Universidade de Hong Kong. Está a especializar-se em pintura do período da China Trade da costa sul da China e do Sudeste Asiático.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON DEJIMA

The Portuguese first arrived in Japan in 1543 hoping to expand trade and recruit converts to Christianity. Eventually, beginning in the 1570s, they were allowed to trade at Nagasaki. But in 1600, four ships from Rotterdam arrived at Nagasaki, marking the entry of the Dutch into Japan. Tokugawa Ieyasu (also known as the Shogun) was overjoyed to hear that the Dutch were enemies of the Portuguese, since that could conceivably allow him to safeguard Japanese interests by playing the two rivals off against each other. In 1612, and again in 1614, Ieyasu prohibited Christianity, fearing that this faith would provide his opposition with new momentum. In 1641, the Portuguese were expelled from Japan, which opened the way for the Dutch to expand their influence. Prior to this change in the Western presence in Japan, the Dutch had built Fort Zeelandia in Anping, Taiwan, in 1624; using this fort as a base, they traded with China and Japan at Hirado, in Nagasaki prefecture. Afterwards, the trade at Hirado was moved to the artificial island of Dejima

(also spelled Deshima, Dezima, Decima, Desima) in Nagasaki Bay.

The construction of Dejima began in 1633 and was completed in 1636, at which point the Portuguese were relocated onto the island. The Dutch followed suit cautiously, not expecting that this man-made island would eventually be theirs. Initially the construction began when twenty-five wealthy merchants in Nagasaki were persuaded to fund the project in order to intern the Portuguese residents of the city. The shogunate's antagonism towards foreigners grew until 1639, when all Portuguese were expelled and barred from re-entry into Japan. The Dutch proved their loyalty to the Japanese leader during the Shimabara Uprising in 1637-38 by striking at Hara Castle from the sea, and were promptly rewarded with the monopoly on trade that they had been seeking for years.¹

Dejima is approximately 600 feet in length and 240 feet across, and is situated just a few yards from the shore upon which stands the town of Nagasaki.² As of 1639, the Tokugawa Shogunate designated Dejima

Fig. 1. Dejima Street sign. (All photos by the author, December 2004).



HISTORIOGRAFIA

to be the only port open for trade with the Dutch and the Chinese. Four years earlier, in 1635, the Shogunate forbade Japanese citizens from travelling abroad, thus making this port the only location where Westerners and Japanese could meet.

In late 17th-century China, the collapse of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) led to the destruction of kilns and the interruption of trade within the country. The Japanese attempted to fill the European demand for porcelain tableware and figurines. There also developed a demand in Europe for superior Japanese lacquered furniture and accessories, and soon a specialized export market had developed. The Western fondness for lacquer resulted in the creation of a European imitation known as “japanning,” which became just one of the enduring legacies of Japan’s influence on the West.

Although the Dutch East India Company gained momentum through their monopoly on trade with

Japan, Dejima remained a small enclave compared to the other Dutch trading ports around the world. The Dutch supplied the Japanese with Chinese silk and textiles from Europe, spices from the Dutch-controlled East Indies, hides from Thailand and Taiwan, and ivory from Africa and Southeast Asia; exports from Japan included silver, gold, copper, camphor, porcelain, lacquer-ware and grain.³ In addition to trade, the foreign influence can be seen in various facets of the Japanese language. Terms such as “orugan” (organ), “tabako” (tobacco) and “botan” (button), from the Portuguese, and “raketto” (racket), “kamera” (camera), “koppu” (cup), “doropu” (drop-candy), “chokoreto” (chocolate), “hamu” (ham), “birru” (beer), “garasu” (glass), “kohii” (coffee) and “renzu” (lens), from the Dutch, found their way into the Japanese language in the 17th and 18th centuries, and are still commonly used today.⁴ In addition, medical terms such as “cholera” and “influenza” entered Japan from the Dutch in this period.

Fig. 2. The Dejima Gate.



HISTORIOGRAPHY

A small wooden bridge at the gate (Fig. 2) connected Dejima to Edo-machi on the mainland of Nagasaki until 1678, when a sturdier stone structure was built in its place. In front of the bridge on the Edo-machi side there were signs warning local Japanese citizens that the area was off-limits. The Dutch were not allowed to leave Dejima without permission, and no women except courtesans were allowed to set foot on the island. Watchmen guarded the crossing point to ensure that these orders were strictly implemented.

Dejima became the Japanese home for the Dutch from 1641 until the arrival of the American fleet led by Commodore Matthew Perry in 1853. Thereafter, Japan signed a series of commercial treaties with the West, opening the ports of Hakodate (in Hokkaido) and Yokohama as well as Nagasaki. Subsequently, in 1859, the former Dutch factory became the Dutch consulate. Two years later, in 1861, Kobe, Osaka, Edo (present-day Tokyo) and Niigata in north-eastern Japan were also opened to foreign trade. In 1866, Dejima became part of the foreign settlement (Figs. 3 & 4).

Two major reclamation projects at Dejima have been recorded. In 1885, the Nakashima River was rerouted, leading to the first reclamation in 1893. The second harbour reclamation was in 1904, at which point the island became connected to the city of Nagasaki. Through gradual reclamation and an extensive redesign of Nagasaki Harbour, Dejima lost its original crescent shape. Dejima was designated a national historic site in 1922, and a project to repair the Dutch quarters at Dejima began in 1957. More recently, five buildings (Figs. 5, 6, 7) on the west side of the former island have been restored.⁵

CHINESE AND OTHER INFLUENCES

Dejima was not a trading port only for the Portuguese and the Dutch; the Chinese also played a major role in exchanging goods and information to and from the east. Starting in 1641, the Chinese brought silk, sugar, medicines and spices to Japan, and returned home with gold, silver, and copper; as trade expanded, the number of Chinese residing in Nagasaki increased. In 1608, the number of Chinese stood at approximately 20, but ten years later, in 1618, the Chinese population has been estimated at between 2,000 and 3,000.⁶

In 1644, a Chinese monk, Yiran (known as Itsunen in Japanese), arrived at Kofukuji (the Temple



Fig. 3. Foreign Settlement International Club.

of Happiness) in Nagasaki. Yiran was respected for his religious practice as well as for his skill as an artist. In 1654, Yiran invited the famous artist Yinyuan (known as Ingen in Japan) from Fuzhou to Nagasaki. Yinyuan's influence throughout the Edo period in Japan has been well recorded; the Nagasaki Municipal Museum held a 350-year Commemorative Exhibition in his honour from December 7th, 2004 through February 20th 2005. The two Chinese arrivals established a new artistic trend in Japan, called "Obaku" painting. The term refers to both Obaku monks (Obaku being a late Ming religious sect) and their portraits.⁷ Such portraits depict the sitter from a frontal view, illustrating the upper torso in a manner similar to Chinese ancestral paintings, or in a seated position holding a walking stick or a cane. The loose-fitting robes are rendered extremely accurately; each small fold in the fabric is clearly illustrated. Shading is applied for depth, to give the paintings some volume. There are portraits of Chinese residents

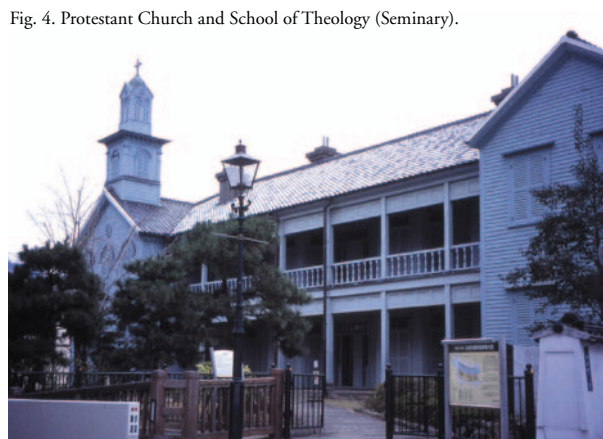


Fig. 4. Protestant Church and School of Theology (Seminary).

HISTORIOGRAFIA



Fig. 5. Head Clerk's Quarters.

of Nagasaki, many of them illustrating the interiors of homes or offices, or the families of the sitter.

The original Chinese settlement in Nagasaki, which was another artificial island (present-day Kanaimachi), can often be seen on the left in old panoramic views of Dejima. The settlement was referred to as the Tojinyashiki (Chinese settlement); completed in 1688, the Chinese residents of Nagasaki were relocated there during the following year. The Bakufu (Tokugawa government), constantly worried about illegal trade, was adamant about overseeing the trade with China; they used the Chinese herbal medicine garden as a premise to expand and enclose the area with a brick wall and a bamboo fence that was completed in 1672. Within the compound are Kannondo (Guanyin Temple), which is believed to have been constructed in 1737, devastated by a fire, and re-built in 1787. The present-day Kannondo replaced the old building in 1917, through donations from the local overseas Chinese community. The stone gate at the base is from the façade of the original temple structure. Another religious structure is the Tenkodo (Mazu Temple), built by overseas Chinese arriving in Nagasaki from Nanjing in 1736. The present-day Tenkodo was re-built in 1906 with donations from the local Chinese community. Another temple, Dojindo, was built in 1691 when Chinese sea captains requested the construction of a temple to pray for safe travel. In 1977, the municipal government of Nagasaki rebuilt the temple, and that structure remains today.

Another factor adding international flavour to the Nagasaki area was that between 1604 and 1635, the Tokugawa shogunate allowed certain interested clans in the region to engage in foreign trade, issuing them



Fig. 6. No. 1 Warehouse.

permits known as “Shuinjo” (red-seal permits); their trading vessels were called “Shuinsen” (red-seal vessels). These trading ships reached Luzon in the Philippines, Tonkin and Annam in Vietnam, Phnom Penh in Cambodia, Ayutthaya in Thailand (Siam) and Pattani in Malaysia (Malaya), as well as Macao and other ports in China.⁸ Thus, Dejima was influenced not only by Westerners and Chinese, but also by some Southeast Asian cultures and beliefs as well.

LIFE ON DEJIMA

The Dutch ships arrived in July or August every year and were led into port by smaller boats, which shot off blank rounds from their guns. From there, the ships anchored just offshore from Dejima, and the goods were brought in on small boats. The ships then left Dejima in October or November.

According to *Dejima*, a booklet published by the Nagasaki City Board of Education, there were quite a few Japanese who worked on Dejima:

“While there were always ten to twenty Dutch East India company employees on Dejima, many more Japanese worked on the island. Highest in rank were the Dejima *ottona* [elders of Dejima] who were appointed by the Nagasaki magistrate’s office to oversee all business activities. They were the ones who decided who could enter or leave the island. Other Japanese working on Dejima included interpreters, day labourers, foremen, secretaries, errand boys, firemen, watchmen, purchasing clerks, cooks, maintenance crew and gardeners. The interpreters, Japanese who could speak Dutch, had the closest relations with Dutch

HISTORIOGRAPHY

employees. Top-level interpreters were ranked by experience as either senior or junior. Usually there were four senior interpreters who rotated annually the duties of translating shipping records and official documents or accompanying the Dutch on their yearly trips to Edo.”⁹

Engelbert Kaempfer was not very enthusiastic about the language level of the interpreters at Nagasaki. On this issue, a well-known Japanese scholar, Nagazumi Yoko, writes, “although conversation exams were conducted when the *ottona* (translators) were selected, the Dutch never had access to the results. It seems as though selection depended on [an individual’s] family background, such as whether or not the family was in debt. Thus the magistrate made the final decision.”¹⁰ Ironically, it was through these contacts between Western scholars and translators that most of the significant works in medicine and other fields were produced.

The aforementioned purchasing clerks, called *compradors*, took on the quotidian tasks of providing supplies such as bread and meat from farms outside the city. The term *comprador* had been used since the Portuguese days at Dejima. The above quote from

Dejima suggests that life on Dejima was isolated and confining. The guardsmen, cooks and couriers on Dejima all had the additional responsibility of making sure no goods were smuggled off the island. The intention was to crack down on piracy and illegal trade. Those entering or leaving the Dutch settlement had to show passes known as ‘Dejima passes.’¹¹

According to the *Chinese Repository*,

“The bridge is closed by a gate and guard-house, constantly occupied by a body of police and soldiers, who alike prevent the Dutch from quitting their island without permission, and debar the access of Japanese visitors, save and except the appointed individuals, and those at the appointed hours.”¹²

Kaempfer discusses the controlled trade system at Dejima, the legislative system, and the treatment of Dutch residents and visitors. His analysis is that the Bakufu selected two officials to deal with Dejima, who were under the direct supervision of the magistrate. But as Nagasaki gained importance as a port city, it became necessary to maintain or even improve security,

Fig. 7. First Ship Captain's Quarters.



HISTORIOGRAFIA

and to strengthen control over the foreigners. For this reason, in 1688, a third official was assigned. The three officials worked together and pooled their wits to please the Shogun, managing to maintain the imbalance of foreign trade in such a way that it was prosperous for Japan and not so for the foreigners, while at the same time keeping the foreigners in Dejima by granting them knighthoods (*camí*).¹³

*Dejima became the Japanese
home for the Dutch
from 1641 until the arrival
of the American fleet led
by Commodore
Matthew Perry in 1853*

The trade at Dejima was at its height when Kaempfer arrived. At the time (in the 1690s), the city of Nagasaki had developed and matured enough to employ 1,700 government officials, who oversaw eighty townships with a total population of approximately 65,000 people.¹⁴ During Kaempfer's tenure at the Dutch factory, it had around ten permanent employees. Echoing Thunberg's description of Dejima, Kaempfer mentions that life there was no different from being in prison.

Another historical source, the *Chinese Repository*, refers to Dejima and Nagasaki in a rather harsh manner:

"Like everything in Japan, it is original, being an artificial, or rather, perhaps a factitious island, built in the bay, after the manner of a pier or breakwater. The very object of the construction was to serve as a place of confinement, although not for the Dutch."¹⁵

Furthermore, the *Chinese Repository* mentions that "when the Japanese government began to entertain jealousy and dislike of foreigners, the first measure taken at the instigation of those feelings, was to so situate them that they could conveniently be watched. For this purpose, the Europeans and their commerce were restricted to the two ports of Nagasaki and Firado [Hirado],

at which last place the Dutch factory was then established. The next step was to confine the Portuguese more closely still; with this view was their abode projected, and the island of Dezima [Dejima] directed to be built from the bottom of the sea."¹⁶

It was in these secluded, monotonous circumstances and this restricted living environment that Western scholars and Dutch factory employees first began their efforts to gather information about Japan.

WESTERN CONTACTS AT DEJIMA

The Japanese were interested in Westerners; similarly, Westerners wanted to know more about Japan, and used Dejima as an information-gathering centre. One of the oldest records dealing with Japan was published in 1645 in Amsterdam by Hendrick Hagenauer, who revised the account of Francois Caron's days at the Dutch factory at Hirado from 1639 through 1641. Hagenauer himself had been attached to the Dutch factory at Hirado twice between the years of 1631 and 1636. Caron later published his own account in 1661.¹⁷ But these accounts date from pre-Dejima days. One of the best-known Western arrivals at Dejima, as mentioned above, was German physician Engelbert Kaempfer (1651-1716), who spent two years in Japan, not only at Dejima but also travelling throughout the country; in 1712, he published his well-known work *Amoenitatum Exoticarum Politico-Physico-Medicarum* (*Rare Delights*). Three decades later, Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778) considered this to be the definitive book on Japanese plants.

Kaempfer's second work, entitled *Japan Today*, is still one of the most respected materials on East-West cultural relations. Japanese scholars consider Kaempfer's publication to be the oldest objective, detailed and comprehensive account of Japan. Kaempfer arrived in Dejima in 1690 as a physician to the Dutch Kapitan, and February of the following year went to Edo for the Sanpu (the annual Court Journey to Edo, also called the "court trip" or the "state ritual"). *Japan Today* includes descriptions of approximately 200 Japanese plants, and twenty-eight illustrations, including one of the camellia. Fifteen years later, Kaempfer published his *History of Japan* (in two volumes, 1727), which introduces an overall picture of Japan past and present,

HISTORIOGRAPHY

including descriptions of government, temples, palaces, castles, buildings, natural resources, flora and fauna, the succession of emperors, religion, customs, native manufacturing, and commerce and foreign trade with the only partners at the time, the Dutch and the Chinese. The history covers the period from the late 1640s, when the Jesuits were expelled from Japan, through the end of 17th century. The popularity and significance of this book can be seen from the fact that it was translated into both Dutch and French in 1729.

Later, Carl Peter Thunberg (1743-1828), a Swede, spent eighteen months at Dejima; after returning to Europe he published the *Flora Japonica*. In one of his publications, Thunberg mentions that life at Dejima was so secluded that “it was like being buried alive;” furthermore, he complains, “life at Dejima is so isolated from the rest of the world that it is absolutely morally vacant, making it possible to live like a plant.”¹⁸ Thunberg published the *Voyage to Japan* from 1788 through 1793 and, like Kaempfer’s publication, it was translated into several languages, the first being the French edition published in 1796. Perhaps Thunberg’s book influenced Phillip Franz von Siebold, the best-known Western scholar at Dejima, who devoted special attention to Japan and its people, culminating in his famous publication entitled *Nippon*.

Kaempfer gave medical lectures to two interpreters: Narabayashi Chinzan and Motoki Ryoi. Narabayashi later published *Koi Geka Soden (The Origins of European Surgery)*, compiled from European texts as well as notes from Kaempfer. Motoki followed this up with a pictorial encyclopaedia of anatomy, also based on European sources. As for Thunberg, he taught Nakagawa Junnan, Katsuragawa Hoshu as well as many others, but these two interpreters are famous for their translation work for the monumental *Kaitai Shinsho (The New Book of Anatomy)* that was the result of Thunberg’s instruction when he visited the Nagasaki residence in Edo.¹⁹ The interpreters in Edo must have been much better trained and more experienced than those at Dejima if they were able to translate such works.

KAEMPFER’S UNIQUE THOUGHTS ON JAPAN

Prior to arriving in Batavia (present-day Jakarta, Indonesia), Kaempfer probably knew very little about Japan, or at best had grasped some general information

about the country. Perhaps this lack of knowledge acted as an impetus for him to gather materials as soon as he set foot on Japanese soil. In other words, Kaempfer neither possessed nor was influenced by preconceptions about Japan, which enabled him to analyse Japanese history and culture from a neutral stance—a difficult task for anyone at any time.

Kaempfer employed various methods to gather his information. As a physician he treated Japanese patients, which provided him the opportunity to learn more about Japan. Kaempfer’s young Japanese assistant, Imamura Saemon, was another valuable informant, who provided publications, maps, and handwritten texts. Kaempfer wrote his account based on materials such as these, which might be one of the reasons for his success in contributing to the dissemination of information about Japan in later decades.

Kaempfer’s research work enabled him to write *The History of Japan*, which was based on previous records and illustrated Japan’s geographical location, its climate, fauna and flora, and the origins of the Japanese people. Most significant about this publication was not simply that it was the first detailed description of Japan, but that it provided the first glimpse of the religion and ideological trends in Japan at the time.

During Kaempfer’s time in Europe, medical studies were closely related to botany, which motivated him in his studies in Japan. Kaempfer studied Japanese gardens in great detail, which was related to his main interest in botany. He made field notes in Latin with illustrations of plants. In his book, Kaempfer used woodblocks to print Chinese characters for all the scientific terms.

The Japanese also understood the importance of his work, as his assistant and other attendants attached to the Dutch entourage during the Edo Sanpu gathered plant samples. Kaempfer collected 420 different types of plants for his research.²⁰ His major contribution to botany was his taxonomic explanations and his artistic skill in drawing plants. Over the centuries, Kaempfer gained academic prominence due to his objective perceptions of Japan as well as to his research methods.

Another of Kaempfer’s significant contributions was the creation of maps of Japan. During his stay on Dejima, he collected Japanese maps and rare travel guides detailing the Tokaido (from Tokyo to Kobe) and Sanyo (from Kobe to Kyushu) routes. He secretly reconfirmed

HISTORIOGRAFIA

the information provided in the travel guides while en route to Edo, utilizing a compass. Therefore, the maps in his *History of Japan* are based on empirical observation and constitute perhaps one of the most reliable source materials of the era. The places mentioned in the *History of Japan* had been thoroughly researched or observed during his trip to Edo, and his maps were inserted in the publication, which gave it added credibility. Throughout the 18th century, as travel accounts based on objective or empirical observation gained in popularity, Kaempfer's work became known as among the earliest to have been based on empirical observation.²¹ There was little opportunity to compile accurate maps during the period of Japan's national seclusion, but over the years noticeable improvements were made, especially in regards to the orientation of Japan in relation to mainland China and Korea.²² Furthermore, in 1727, Johann Scheuchzer, a Swiss scholar, published a series of interesting maps of Japan using names in Japanese characters as well as their Westernised forms, and including a plan of Nagasaki; this was said to have been based on the work of Kaempfer.²³ Thus Kaempfer's mapmaking clearly contributed to furthering Western knowledge of Japan.

The Japanese were interested in Westerners; similarly, Westerners wanted to know more about Japan, and used Dejima as an information-gathering centre.

According to an article by Josef Kreiner, Kaempfer agreed with the Shogunate's decision to implement the national seclusion act. At the time, motivated possibly by pure empathy, Kaempfer believed seclusion was a positive, efficient political decision, since Japan was a geographically isolated island nation that needed a way to protect itself from incursions by foreign countries and Catholic missionaries, who were believed to be a threat to Japanese morals. In his book, Kaempfer concludes that "foreign nations should respect and recognize the seclusion policy implemented by the Tokugawa

shogunate."²⁴ Interestingly, on numerous occasions, 18th-century European travellers to China returned with similar notions.

Kaempfer's account, which examines Japan from a Japanese perspective and focuses on maintaining its distinctive cultural essence rather than moulding to a western outlook, displays an ideology ahead of its time. This innovative perspective may be what has helped Kaempfer's *History of Japan* appeal to a wide range of readers over the centuries.

Josef Kreiner's perspective on Kaempfer's thoughts on national seclusion suggests, on the one hand, that this policy enabled peace and economic development for the Japanese people, allowing them to live freely and spiritually; and on the other hand, that such priorities seemed important to Kaempfer because the burgeoning Enlightenment movement in Europe had led him to admit that Japan was more advanced than Europe in the field of religion. Perhaps Kaempfer meant "liberal" rather than advanced or backward. Kaempfer believed that the influence of the Enlightenment was bringing out mystical religions, which he criticized. When such issues were recorded, Kaempfer compared them with European trends and concluded that Japan at the time was much more advanced than Europe. He appreciated the fifth Shogun, Tokugawa Tsunayoshi, who accepted Confucianism, especially the study of and doctrines of Chi-tzu, which to Kaempfer seemed to resemble the ideas of the Enlightenment in Europe.²⁵ This method of comparing one "exotic" strain of thought or social system to another, more familiar type was employed frequently in travel writing of the 17th through 19th centuries.

KAEMPFER AND DEJIMA

Kaempfer refers to Dejima throughout his account of the Edo Journey. This account sketches his thoughts about Japan and the relationship between the Japanese and the Dutch, and provides valuable information that seemed significant and/or exotic at the time. Such descriptions are interesting as they are recorded on the spot, although further analysis and changes later, for publication, can be expected.

Kaempfer mentions that on June 16, Japanese "cooks and other workers for the Dutch at Dejima are refusing to cooperate. They prepared a written statement and sealed the document with their blood." Although this is the only mention of workers at Dejima in the

HISTORIOGRAPHY

Edo Sanpu Ryoko ki (Journey to the Court in Edo), such alarm, displeasure and even hostility toward foreigners may be expected to arise from misunderstandings caused by the language barrier.

As mentioned in various passages of this article, the Bakufu had been apprehensive about piracy, which, according to Kaempfer's account, was a common occurrence. Kaempfer refers to a case of piracy in his entries from late September through late October of 1691. "A few smugglers and burglars were dragged to the execution ground. On October 1st, four apprehended smugglers were brought here in the boats of whalers [from Goto Island]. Also previously, on September 25th, four persons who had been caught out at sea committing the same crime had arrived here as prisoners." Kaempfer is probably referring to the earlier incident.

"On October 2nd, the boat of the smugglers was brought here with four other men, of whom two had cut their stomachs; their bodies were preserved with salt. Last night one man committed suicide, because he was involved in smuggling with the Chinese. Others escaped and fled into the nearby hills, even though the gates had been shut and the night watch was very strict.

"On October 4th, another man escaped, and he too committed suicide. He was a Chinese translator who had loaned the smugglers money. The ringleader of the group was captured and, in order not to betray his accomplices, bit off his own tongue. Later, he was tied to his cell wall under constant guard. But he still managed to use his *obi* (belt) to strangle himself. A book was found in the possession of one of the smugglers, which included the names of those associated with the ring, those who had invested in it, and the lists of merchandise purchased and sold. With this, the trade was exposed, implicating many citizens of the town and prompting the authorities to investigate thoroughly, day and night. Beginning just prior to the departure of the Chinese junks, watchmen were placed throughout the town and all local [Japanese] residents were inspected three times a night. As a result, in Nagasaki, three men were arrested and taken off to be tortured. The Chinese spend a long time cruising the sea below the ramparts, waiting to bring residents to

their hideouts to discuss [illegal] trade. Therefore the night watches take place after the gates have been closed, to determine who has gone out to the Chinese.

"On October 6th, another person escaped, prompting the authorities to evacuate all the Japanese from Dejima and sent them home. The official in charge of prosecuting the smugglers was dismissed and put under house arrest. Anytime such an incident occurs, more than a hundred local [Japanese] residents are recruited for a manhunt in the nearby hills.

"On October 7th, one of the smugglers in police custody tipped off the authorities to two or three local residents who were affiliated [to the smugglers]; the latter were taken in for questioning.

"October 10th, in addition to the friends and relatives of the smugglers, and foreigners, several hundred residents were questioned as to whether they were involved in selling or buying smuggled goods. The authorities have been involved in this case for over two weeks now and unless it is an emergency no one can meet the magistrate. This situation is also affecting us, as the official trade talks have been delayed; they were scheduled to begin ten days ago but have been postponed to a later date."

The next entry concerning Dejima comes on November 5th, Kaempfer mentions that

"on behalf of the Bugyo (magistrate), several officials came to Dejima, whereby all Dutch residents [at the settlement] had to greet the entourage without exception, from highest to lowest in rank. First, they gave a long and stern speech reminding the Kapitan [Dutch Chief] of the importance of following Japanese laws. Then the topic of conversation changed to illegal trade; if such trade involved Japanese residents, they would be severely punished, so we [Dutch] ought not to take these laws so lightly. We were again told of the case in which two Japanese had secretly purchased camphor (2 catties, approximately 2.65 lbs); they were to be hanged. We were then sternly reminded not to create similar opportunities for illegal trade; otherwise, in future the Dutch residents would be punished in a similar manner."

HISTORIOGRAFIA

On December 11th, Kaempfer again refers to this incident involving the illegal trade in camphor. He clearly does not approve of the judicial process used by the Japanese magistrates in deciding the penalties for this crime; from this description, it becomes clear that the illegal trade in camphor was a major issue for the authorities.

On May 21st, 1692, Kaempfer returned to Nagasaki from his second trip to Edo and noticed immediately that “shops selling poultry and meats had been closed temporarily due to an order from Edo ten days ago, banning all meats other than fish. Street vendors were prohibited from selling meat to the Dutch or the Chinese, but such business was still conducted discreetly.” After this passage, Kaempfer once again refers to the illegal trade, but in a different case. He writes, “a few days after our return, three Japanese were arrested and tortured and they confessed to having purchased ginseng, aloes-wood, and musk through courtesans and other people connected with the Chinese. The courtesans and others involved were put under house arrest.”²⁶ Kaempfer portrays a rather bleak image of Japan, especially of the illegal trade and the treatment of foreigners.

SEARCHING FOR INFORMATION
AT DEJIMA

More importantly than cultural exchange, strategic information changed hands at Dejima as well. This information, supplemented by visual records, frequently led to changes in the balance of power, especially in the case of Asia and Europe. There is an interesting study on this issue, which refers to a fact-finding mission to Asia but that may apply to any unknown territory. According to sociologist Bruno Latour, new information is often interpreted as “knowledge,” and is therefore empowering; he refers to the creation of this new power and knowledge as “cycles of accumulation.” Latour describes how people “bring things back to a place for someone to see it for the first time so that others might be sent again to bring other things back.” In other words, this is a method for understanding “how to become familiar with things, people, and events, which are *distant*.” Writes Beth Fowkes Tobin, “An important part of gaining global dominance is the ability to visualize, without actually seeing, a place, its people, its plants, and its other resources; this kind of visualization relies

on accumulating traces—sketches, descriptive notes, specimens, measurements—from those places.”²⁷ The cycle of accumulation, which included all visual records and whatever people or scholars returned with from Dejima, contributed immensely to the understanding of Japan from the 17th through the 19th centuries, and even to this day.

Through Dejima, techniques and styles of Western painting were brought into Japan. One of the earliest texts on Western art imported into Japan was the *Groote Schilderboek* of 1707, written by Gerarde de Lairesse, who had once been a student of Rembrandt. This was an introductory manual to painting that was fantastically popular in Europe at the time. Once imported to Japan, this manual was studied in detail by local artists; even Shiba Kokan, a commoner, obtained a copy,²⁸ which proves the popularity of things that are new and different.

Plants indigenous to Japan were systematically catalogued and made known to the West for the first time by Siebold, who visited Japan much later than Kaempfer. Therefore many of the samples Kaempfer made became the oldest existing samples of particular species, some of which are extinct today. Needless to say, these illustrations of Japanese plants were well studied in Europe beginning in the 17th century. Many of Siebold's botanical drawings can be seen at the National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden.

The most popular views or landscapes of Dejima fall into several categories. The most common are the so-called bird's-eye views of Dejima Island. One such image, entitled “Dezima,” can be found in Siebold's *Nippon*, which depicts the island in 1828, after a major fire swept the area in 1798. Kawahara Keiga's paintings of Dejima were produced between 1814 and 1833. Other early bird's-eye views of Dejima illustrate the pages of several well-known publications: *Japan*, by Arnoldus Montanus (1625-1683); *Flora Japonica* and *Fauna Japonica* by Carl Peter Thunberg (1743-1828); and the works by Robert Fortune (1812-1880), who visited Dejima in 1860, immediately after Japan re-opened its doors to foreign trade in 1859. The second category of paintings shows Dejima Island, either in its entirety or just the western portion, with foreign ships anchored behind it in Nagasaki Bay. The third category depicts areas near Dejima Island, meaning in the old city of Nagasaki. A fourth category may be cross-cultural in context: these paintings depict the daily activities or social scenes of life

HISTORIOGRAPHY

in Dejima. These tend to interpret the scenes in a more or less Japanese frame of mind. The drawings are neither anti-government nor anti-foreign in nature, and might even be considered humorous. There are sketches of the camels and elephants brought by the Dutch as gifts for the Tokugawa Shogunate. Since such animals were not indigenous to Japan, such paintings would surely have attracted the attention of anyone who had never seen anything like them.

Perhaps it wasn't until the publication of Siebold's *Nippon* that the Western world learned of the drawings of the Japanese artist Kawahara Keiga. In this sense, Kawahara contributed a great deal to the dissemination of information and views about Japan.

THE NAGASAKI SCHOOL

Visual records (also known as historical pictures) rendered by Japanese artists in the Western style can

be dated back to the mid-Edo period (the Edo period lasted from 1603 to 1868). Specifically, they can be traced back to the Nagasaki School and the Akita Western School (known as Akita Ranga); both of these flourished from the early Edo period through the twentieth year of Meiji period (that is, through the 1880s). Oddly, many Japanese scholars categorize such paintings done in the Western style as both non-western and non-Japanese paintings. They are considered a genre unto themselves: a hybrid style blending both Eastern and Western features.

Such paintings from the 19th century have been used in the recent reconstruction of the old buildings at Dejima. Some of them depict images of forgotten traditions and manners of Japan—once considered a strength and viewed as a positive cultural aspect, which today are becoming rare. Such visual records have great potential and should be considered for a much more comprehensive study.

Panorama of Nagasaki Harbour in our days.



HISTORIOGRAFIA



Figs. 8, 9, 10. Western furniture and daily necessities.



Fig. 9.

Dejima became a unique area in southern Japan, where a distinctive genre of painting developed. The Nagasaki School has been interpreted as an inevitable location where the Western style would naturally seep in, gradually settle and later flourish. The first Portuguese ship entered Nagasaki harbour in 1571, seventy years before the Tokugawa Shogunate closed off Japan to all foreign contact in 1639. Prior to this era of national seclusion, the Jesuits spread Catholicism, which provided the foundation for the *nanban* style of painting (literally, the “Barbarian” style). Nanban painting is understood as a genre that developed as Westerners gradually influenced Japanese artists and styles; it was adopted through this early contact in the 16th century. They included oil paintings of religious practices brought to or imported by the Jesuits in Japan, and eventually expanded to include landscapes in the Japanese style.

Regardless of the reason for importing paintings from overseas, this era was the first opportunity for Japanese people to come in contact with perspective and other elements of Western style. Furthermore, like the Chinese artists who produced paintings for Western traders on the South China coast, Japanese artists produced works in the Western style, first for the Jesuits and later for traders as well. A Jesuit report from 1593 mentions that

“...twenty-one students at Hachirao Seminário (a theological seminary) are being taught methods to produce oil paintings, watercolours and copper engravings. They copied images of the paintings either brought over or imported by the Jesuits. They are so skilled with colours and shades that it is extremely difficult to distinguish

between the imported paintings from Rome and those rendered by the [Japanese] students.’ Unfortunately, the expulsion of Jesuits in the years to come, after 1613, negatively affected this new trend towards studying Western painting and reproduction skills; moreover, all religious paintings were confiscated and burned. From this moment on, paintings rendered in the Western style that can be identified by date disappeared until the late 18th or early 19th century. Thus, Dejima became not only a place of trade but also an important contact point for the transfer of ideas and styles.”²⁹

Prior to the era of national seclusion, then, the essence of painting derived from copying reality. Also, the motif or model needed to be viewed objectively, in order to limit the Asian perspective as much as possible. Upon this social foundation, from the 17th century on in Nagasaki, a new trend to produce objective and realistic landscapes developed.

A study by Timon Screech suggests that “Glass paintings were common throughout Europe, and, for the purposes of export to Japan, had the advantage of being more durable than oil-on-canvas works which were prone to be spoiled by the salty air. Paintings on glass were displayed on the walls of several of the principal rooms in the Dutch East India Company’s office on Dejima.’ The glass and mirror images later penetrated outside the Nagasaki area and by the 1820s had spread to Edo.”³⁰

Clearly, the glass and mirror paintings produced in Canton could easily be brought to Japan, where

HISTORIOGRAPHY

they were quite possibly viewed by any number of Japanese.

Another import to Japan were copperplate reproductions of what in the west would have been regarded as bona fide art, and which were as rare in Japan as European paintings in oil. The majority of these imports were single-sheet townscape views in the genre known as veduta prints.³¹

KAWAHARA KEIGA'S CONTRIBUTIONS

Perhaps the artist working at Dejima who is best known in the West for producing paintings in the Western style was Kawahara Keiga (1786-1860?). As mentioned earlier, Siebold's studies of Japan were immensely popular in Europe; as Kawahara's art works illustrated Siebold's later publications, Kawahara contributed a great deal to the "Japonisme" craze.³² Kawahara produced images of elderly men, street

entertainers, Japanese boats (river and sea), the court journey to Edo, and artisans, vocations and technologies of the Edo period, such as construction scenes, a carpenter's tools, an umbrella maker and his tools, a tatami maker and his tools, a tobacco cutter's tools, a painter's atelier, and a private elementary school, as well as common foodstuffs—fish, rice, tofu, sweets, liquors—and their associated industries, such as fan shops, tea-pickers, a fishing ground, a fish processing plant, and so forth.

His work can be categorized into three broad groups. First are the social and natural scenes of Japan: the occupations, customs, handicraftsmen, shops, and annual events; the animals, insects, birds, and fish; and the plants, flowers and fruits. In addition, he made engravings of tools commonly used in agriculture, carpentry, and bricklaying. Second are religious images, including shrines and temples as well as the costumes worn by monks. Lastly, the topographical

Fig. 10.



HISTORIOGRAFIA

and ethnographic images, including depictions of the manners and costumes of Koreans and the Ainu people of the Hokkaido (the northernmost island of Japan), panoramic landscapes, and portraits. Most of his original drawings measure 25 cm x 40 cm, but scrolls and sets of drawings may also be found among his works.

Kawahara produced two types of paintings. One type was similar to the export paintings made for Western merchants; the other was for domestic consumption. Past studies tell us that Kawahara worked for three different foreign visitors at Dejima: Jan Cock Blomhoff (1779-1853), Johannes Gerhard Frederik van Overmeer Fisscher (1800-1848), and Phillip Franz von Siebold (1798-1866). Blomhoff arrived in Dejima in 1804 as superintendent of storage for the Dutch factory, and returned in 1817 as the superintendent of the Dutch factory, which position he kept until 1823. During his second mission, Blomhoff brought his wife, nanny and servants. The famous Blomhoff family portrait which Kawahara rendered during this period is now in the collection of Kobe Municipal Museum. Fisscher stayed in Japan from 1810 through 1829, while Siebold resided at Dejima from 1823 through 1829. Kawahara worked a total of twelve years for the three Westerners, since the dates of their stay overlapped.

Although Kawahara had been influenced by the Western perspective through his encounters with foreigners at Dejima, he had practiced as a local artisan and was trained by his father Kozan, who himself was trained in the Western style and was never restricted like many other Japanese artists during his era. Thus Kawahara had already been influenced by the Western perspective through his father. Kawahara is known for his contribution to Siebold's *Nippon*, as he was responsible for nearly three-fourths of the illustrations. Kawahara improved his technique in Western-style painting through his contact with Siebold and possibly through other foreigners visiting Dejima in the mid-1820s. Kawahara left a large opus that includes both semi-Western paintings and oil paintings. Some of his best-known works are "Panorama of Nagasaki," the aforementioned "Portrait of the Blomhoff Family," "Panorama of Dejima," a painting of the "Chinese-Dutch Quarters," and in oil, a depiction of the Dutch, entitled "Portrait of Siebold."³³ His works can be seen at Museums in Nagasaki and Kobe, Japan, as well as Leiden, Netherlands.

Kawahara also produced numerous views of "Edo Sanpu." These were produced for the Dutch Chief (Kapitan) as his entourage travelled to Edo for an audience with the Shogun, to express their gratitude for the privilege of trade. After 1633, a total of 116 annual visits were made. The party usually numbered between 50 and 60 people, including the Chief, the doctor, the secretary, and their entourage, accompanied by Japanese interpreters. While they were in Edo and wherever they stayed en route to Edo, the Dutch party received continuous visits from scholars of Rangaku (Western science, also known as Dutch Studies), whom the Dutch regarded as annoying guests on various occasions. Needless to say, such exchanges led to the sudden rise in the level of medicine and the sciences in Japan.

KAWAHARA BRAND PAINTINGS

Dejima landscape paintings have three distinctive characteristics. First, the panoramas of the Dutch factory are usually depicted with the Dutch flag clearly hoisted. The Dutch hoisted their flag on several occasions, namely on New Year's Day, the King's birthday, May 30th (to commemorate the taking of Batavia), and, after 1816, on June 18, to commemorate the Battle of Waterloo, though none of the available sources makes any reference to flag-raising on Christmas. That these paintings always show the Dutch flag hoisted suggests that Dutch merchants wanted to take back to the Netherlands landscapes, possibly rendered by Kawahara, that would allow the viewer to immediately recognize the Dutch settlement and the typical Nagasaki landscape in the background. Also, in such panoramas there are often varying sizes of Dutch vessels off Dejima. Some of the ships are in proportion, but others are exaggeratedly large, sometimes equal to the size of Dejima island itself.

Second, in reference to Kawahara, he obtained special permission from the Bakufu (government) to work for foreigners arriving at Dejima, thus gaining the sole monopoly over the production of paintings. As trading vessels arrived, Kawahara and his apprentices mass-produced paintings for the entire foreign community. During the 1830s, these paintings were known as "Kawahara brand," similar to the Canton School of China trade paintings. The mass-produced paintings obviously included works by his apprentices; they were usually signed, but not necessarily with Kawahara's authentic signature. This may be another

HISTORIOGRAPHY

feature similar to China Trade paintings produced in Canton. The Kawahara brand included paintings that used a range of different pigments, which directly affected the cost; the cost in turn depended on the demand, and on how much potential buyers were willing to pay. The difference in cost might have depended on whether they were produced for the foreign market or for domestic consumption.

Third, Kawahara relied on imported prints, from which he produced portraits—sometimes with exaggerated expressions of the Dutch—or even panoramas of Dejima. The panoramas were not necessarily imported from the West, but were sometimes close-ups or partial views of his own earlier work.

Recently, paintings deemed authentic to the period have been used to guide the reconstruction of Dejima's Dutch factory. In such cases we must understand the artist's background, and who commissioned the painting and for what reason. In other words, the viewer

must understand the artist's motives or the purpose of those who commissioned the work. This is the major difference between a photograph and a painting. Paintings do not just depict one moment in time; they gather, cut and splice various moments together like a mosaic. These images were created on demand, by request, or through artistic license. In other words, they were concocted views.

Today, Dejima is a tourist attraction that appeals especially to those interested East-West cultural relations (Figs. 8, 9, 10). The modernization of Nagasaki changed the entire atmosphere of Dejima with it. Only through the museums, which have kept old images and artefacts from the Dutch-Japan trade, can we even begin to imagine life in Kaempfer's days. But it was through such exchanges that Europe learned about Japan, and Japan accumulated valuable information, materials and concepts that contributed to the country's modernization. **RC**

NOTES

- 1 Paul Doolan, "The Dutch in Japan", *History Today*, vol. 50, no. 4, April 2000, p. 36.
- 2 *The Chinese Repository*, vol. 9, May-December 1840, Maruzen reprint edition, Tokyo, 1942, p. 301. Original edition published in Canton, China, in 1840. According to Nagasaki city information on Dejima, the artificial island was only 15,000 square meters in total area; the southern end measured 233 meters in length, the northern side 190 meters, and the eastern and western sides were identical at 70 meters in length.
- 3 Paul Doolan, "The Dutch in Japan", p. 37.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 39. See also: Nagasaki City Restoration of Dejima Preparation Committee (ed.), *Life in Dejima, Nagasaki*, 2000, p. 12.
- 5 Nagasaki Municipal Museum (ed.), *The Great Dejima Exhibition in Commemoration of the 400th Anniversary of Exchange between Japan and the Netherlands-Gateways of Foreign Culture-Leiden, Nagasaki and Edo*, Nagasaki, Japan, 2000, p. 47. Also see Nagasaki City Board of Education (ed.), *Dejima, Nagasaki*, 2001, pp. 29-30.
- 6 Yoshiko Morioka, *Dejima in World History*, Nagasaki Bunkensha Publications, Nagasaki, 2002, second edition, p. 67.
- 7 Iwasaki Kiichi (ed.), *Modern Art: Nineteenth Century Western Art in Japan*, Shibundo, Tokyo, pp. 21-22.
- 8 Morioka Yoshiko, *Dejima in World History*, pp. 70-71.
- 9 Nagasaki City Board of Education (ed.), *Dejima, Nagasaki*, p. 7. After 1780, the trip to Edo was conducted just once every four years.
- 10 Josef Kreiner, *Kemperu nomita Nippon (Kaempfer's Japan)*, [text in Japanese], Nippon Hosho Kyokai Shuppansha (NHK Publishers) Tokyo, 1996, pp. 183-184.
- 11 Nagasaki City Board of Education (ed.), *Dejima, Nagasaki*, p. 7.
- 12 *The Chinese Repository*, p. 301.
- 13 Josef Kreiner, *Kemperu nomita Nippon (Kaempfer's Japan)*, p. 69.
- 14 *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.
- 15 *The Chinese Repository*, p. 301.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 301.
- 17 Kazuo Nishi, *Nagasaki Dejima Renaissance: Rebuilding the Dutch Factory*, Ebisu Kosyo Publications, Tokyo, 2004, p. 30.
- 18 Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 29.
- 19 For medical lectures refer to Nagasaki Board of Education (ed.), *Dejima, Nagasaki*, p. 20.
- 20 Josef Kreiner, *Kemperu nomita Nippon (Kaempfer's Japan)*, p. 25.
- 21 Carl Moreland and David Bannister, *Antique Maps*, Phaidon Press Limited, London, 1989, p. 269.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p. 269.
- 23 *Ibid.*, p. 270.
- 24 Josef Kreiner, *Kemperu nomita Nippon (Kaempfer's Japan)*, pp. 25-26.
- 25 *Ibid.*, pp. 42-43.
- 26 The descriptions in this section are from *Edo Sanpu Ryoko ki [An Account of the Court Journey to Edo]*, Toyo Bunko Series 303, Heibonsha, Tokyo, pp. 244-245, 248, 250, 253, 255, and 318-319. Some of these accounts are missing from the English translation.
- 27 Beth Fowkes Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power: Colonial Subjects in Eighteenth-Century British Painting*, Duke University Press, Durham and London, 1999, p. 213.
- 28 Timon Screech, "The Meaning of Western Perspective in Edo Popular Culture", *Archives of Asian Art*, XLVII, The Asia Society, 1994, p. 59.
- 29 Quoted in Iwasaki Kiichi (ed.), *Modern Art: Nineteenth Century Western Art in Japan*, pp. 20-21.
- 30 Timon Screech, "Glass paintings on glass, and vision in 18th-century Japan", *Apollo*, March 1998, pp. 30-31.
- 31 Screech 1994, p. 60.
- 32 Nagasaki Municipal Museum, *The Great Dejima Exhibition in Commemoration of the 400th Anniversary of Exchange between Japan and the Netherlands-Gateways of Foreign Culture-Leiden, Nagasaki and Edo*, p. 43.
- 33 Iwasaki Kiichi, *Modern Art: Nineteenth Century Western Art in Japan*, p. 51.