

Perception of the Mediterranean World in China and Japan and vice versa in the History of Geography and Cartography

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The purport of this paper, with its somewhat odd title, is firstly, to indicate the fact that it was the people of the Mediterranean world who first brought geographical and cartographical information pertaining to China and Japan to the Western world, and secondly that it was the people of the Mediterranean world who first brought geographical and cartographical information on Europe to China and Japan. We treat China and Japan together because, from the viewpoint of cultural history, Japan belongs to the sphere of Chinese culture or the world where Chinese ideograms have been commonly used; in fact, historically, Japan is indebted to China not only for its ideography, but also for a great deal of its cultural heritage. Regarding material culture, already in the ancient period, or even going as far back as prehistoric times, goods from China arrived in the Mediterranean world and goods from the Mediterranean world reached China and as far as Japan. Evidence of these early trading exchanges are to be found in present-day Japan in the shape of objects stored in the Shosoin, the seventh-century imperial treasure house in Nara. But the trading activities of the period in question were carried out by intermediary merchants; generally speaking, the producers of the goods traded were indifferent as to where the goods were ultimately sold, and the consumers of the goods were equally indifferent as to where the goods originated from. Therefore, the arrival of goods at any one place did not mean that intercourse involving an exchange of geographical information ensued.

1) Early information on the outside world in China and in Japan

In China from the ancient period, considerably detailed and precise maps of China existed¹, but regarding the world outside China, the information was limited to East Asia and

¹ Three geographical representations painted on silk were found in 1973 at Mawangdui archeological site, in Changsha (Hunan). The maps date back to B.C.168 and are considered the oldest Chinese maps based on the land survey. On the Mawangdui maps see Chang (1979), Yee (1994a) and Zedda Maccio (2003).

South Asia, the conception of the world being very Sino-centric. With the introduction of Buddhism emerged an extremely Indo-centric cosmology which led to some conflict with the Sino-centric image of the world. But from early on, the Chinese to an extent modified the Indo-centric-oriented cosmology, rendering it into one half of a bi-polar image with Sino-centricism as the other half, as can be seen in the itinerary maps of Xuanzhuang, a Chinese bonze, who travelled to India in the seventh century in quest of sutras.

Japanese knowledge of the outside world was at first obtained exclusively from either China or Korea, but with the diffusion of Buddhism in Japan after the seventh century, the Japanese came to know of the existence, besides China and Korea, of India. With Buddhism also arrived the Buddhist conception of the universe, which geographically placed the continent, or Jambudvīpa in Sanskrit, including India and surrounding territories on the southernmost of four continents. The oldest existing Japanese map that may be considered a map of the world is the *Gotenjikuzu*, literally, map of the five Indias drawn by the priest Jukai in 1364 and conserved in the temple Horyūji. The original map on which the *Gotenjikuzu* was based may have been brought into Japan via China, and this Japanese map shows a highly Indocentric representation. China is located at the very eastern edge and Japan at the northeastern margin. Some Japanese scholars considered this representation to be a reaction to the Sinocentric world view of the Chinese². The westernmost country depicted on this particular map is Persia. Many of the place names appear in the pilgrimage record of Xuanzhuang³.

After the thirteenth century, under the Yüan Dynasty, Arabic astronomy and geography arrived in China. The Arabic geography of the period incorporated the Roman Ptolemy's geography of the second century A.D, and added Arabic knowledge of areas surrounding the Indian Ocean. Thus with the introduction of Arabic geography, Chinese geographical knowledge covering Mediterranean and European countries expanded to a remarkable degree. This new geographical information regarding Mediterranean countries arrived in fifteenth century Japan via the Korean peninsula. In fact, in Japan there can be found some copies of world maps made on the basis of Buddhist cosmology in Korea in the fifteenth century on which a number of place names of the Mediterranean world are shown on the western margin of the maps. The oldest Japanese copy of this kind was made in the fourteenth century; on its western margin are depicted the relative locations of Mediterranean lands, Italy, the Iberian peninsula and France. These world maps certainly show the influence of Arabic cartography, but the inclusion of Mediterranean and European countries on world maps based on Indo-centric Buddhist cosmology imposed limitations where the

² For instance, Muroga and Unno (1957)

³ *Da Tang xiyu ji*



Fig. 1 The *Gotenjikuzū* drawn by Jukai in 1364 (Unno 1994)

cartographical representation of the western parts of the Eurasian continent was concerned (Unno 1994).

2) *Early image of Japan in the Mediterranean world*

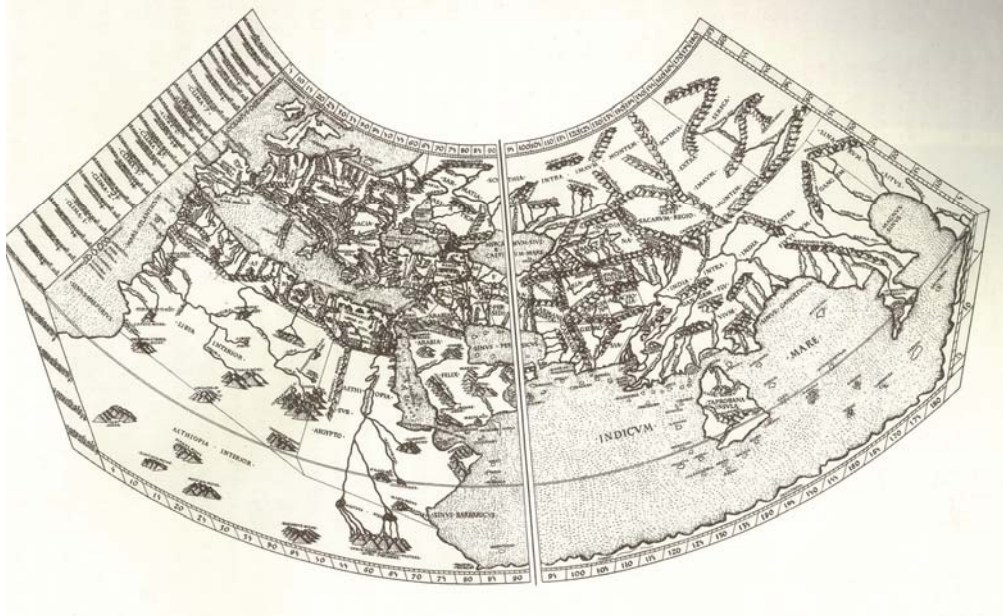
Ptolemy's geography represents the maximum extent of geographical information in the Roman empire in the second century. On the easternmost margin of his world map was Serica to the north of the mountain range corresponding to the Himalayas, and to the south was Sinae, the location of which corresponded to Malay and Indochina, but the name of which corresponded to China. In the ninth century, the Arabian geographer Ibn Khurdadhbih, in his book *Kitab al-masalik wa-l-mamalik*, wrote that beyond the Yangtze River there was a country called Silla, that is, Korea, and an island country called Wak-wak, rich in gold. Some scholars believe that the Wak-wak of Arabic geography corresponds to Japan, identifying the term as the Cantonese version of the name Wakoku used by the Japanese themselves for their country. But there is still some controversy regarding this matter; in fact, in the world map of Al Idris of the twelfth century presented to the Sicilian Norman king Roger II, accompanying the geographical description of the world, *Kitab al Rujari*, Wak wak is located far to the east of the African continent. If Wak wak corresponds to Japan, Al Idris' map constitutes the first information on Japan conveyed to the Mediterranean world⁴.

Venetian merchants of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, who arrived in China, then under the Yüan or Mongolian Dynasty, brought with them information on China based on their own experiences in the country. The most representative figure was Marco Polo (1254-1324) who at one point after his travels was detained in prison by the Genovese navy. He passed the time away dictating the story of his eventful career to a fellow-prisoner, one Rustichello, who wrote up the story under the title of *Il Milione*. There is a controversy as to whether the geographical information Polo provided was based on his own experience. (One reason for the controversy is the fact that there is no record of Polo in contemporary China, and we do not know what name, if any, he went by in China, in the way that, for instance, Li Matou was the Chinese name for Matteo Ricci and Lang Shining was the Chinese name for Giuseppe Castiglione, an eighteenth-century painter). At any rate, Rustichello's *Il Milione* contributed greatly to the diffusion of geographical information on the Far East in the Mediterranean world. One hundred and eighty copies of the original manuscript are still extant, including one read by Christopher Columbus and inscribed with his notes. There are a number of things missing in Polo's narration that one would expect to find in a work on China, such as the existence of the Great Wall or the Chinese habit of drinking tea; but generally, the geographical information, including that on Zaiton (Quanzhou) where many merchants from the Mediterranean world congregated, is fairly correct, as may be seen from referring to contemporary Chinese documents. Though Polo never actually visited Japan, he is famous for making known the name of Zipangu or Chipangu in the Mediterranean world,

⁴ On the controversy regarding Wak-wak, see Matoba (1999) and Oda (1998: 67-69)

along with false information about the abundance of gold in that country, which prompted Columbus to set off on his own journeys of “discovery”. Zipangu or Chipangu certainly derived from Ji-pen-kuo, the official name used by the Japanese imperial court when they wrote letters to the Chinese rulers.

The first world chart incorporating the geographical information contained in *Il Milione* was made in 1335 by Abraham Cresques, a Jewish cartographer working in Majorca. In this chart Katai and Manji (South China) are depicted, but not Zipangu. Zipangu appeared for the first time in a planispheric world map having a diameter of two metres, made by Fra Mauro, Abbot of Murano. In this map, in the sea to the east of Zaiton, were two islands, Giava Major and Ixola de Cimpangu. After Fra Mauro’s map, Japan appeared on a world map of Henricus Martellus Germanus in 1490, and on the 1492 terrestrial globe of Martin Behaim, a German trader living in Lisbon. Perhaps Zipangu was also drawn on Paulo Toscanelli’s world map which he gave to Christopher Columbus, but we cannot confirm this as the map no longer exists. But on the basis of this map, Columbus might have identified Española (Haiti) as Japan. Thus in the second half of the fifteenth century Japan began to appear on the maps of the Mediterranean world, but always in imagined forms based on Marco Polo’s indirect information



3) First direct information on Japan: from 'Zipangu' to 'Japon'

The Portuguese monopolized East Asian trade in the sixteenth century. In 1511, they occupied Malacca to make this city the base of trade with East and Southeast Asian countries. Here came merchants from China, the Ryukyu Kingdom, and even from Japan, though in the case of the latter country, they came clandestinely and were more often pirates rather than legitimate traders. Thus Macao came to be considered the centre of information on East Asia. In 1517, Tomé Pires was sent on a mission from Malacca to China and in his subsequent report on the trip, *Suma Oriental* (1520)⁵, he wrote that 'Iapon is greater than Ilha dos Lequios (Isles of Ryukyu). The merchants of Ilha dos Lequios come to China to buy commodities from Malacca and sell them in Iapon in exchange for gold and copper'. Consistently derived from Ji-pen-kuo, the Malaysian pronunciation Japon or Japao now came to be used in Europe. In 1543, via a Chinese ship, three Portuguese sailors arrived at Tanegashima island south of Kyushu, and there drifted ashore; they were carrying a small number of guns which were promptly copied by the Japanese, and manufactured and rapidly diffused in Japan to be put to use in civil warfare. After that, one or two Portuguese ships continued to arrive yearly while the activities, both clandestine and licensed, of Japanese merchants in East and Southeast Asia increasingly flourished. Geographical information on Japan was transmitted to Europe from Macao. In 1549, the Jesuit Francis

Fig. 2 Ptolemy's world map, Rome edition, 1490 (A.E. Nordenskiöld, *Facsimile Atlas*, Stockholm 1889)
⁵ Here I refer to the Japanese translation by S. Ikuta *et al* of Pires' book *Toho shokokuki*, published in 1966 by Iwanami Shoten, Tokyo, in the series of documents of the so-called age of geographical discovery (Volume 5 of *Daikokajidai soshō*)

Xavier arrived in Kagoshima with his Japanese disciple Yajiro, whom he met in Macao, to start missionary activities. Thus geographical information on Japan began to be sent to Rome by Jesuit missionaries. In 1554, the Portuguese cartographer Homen drew a map of Japan consisting of numerous small islands on which many Japanese place names of western Japan were given, such as Mimonoxeque (Shimonoseki) and Xequinot (Saganoseki). Jesuit activities were limited to Kyushu, or at the most the western part of Japan, but on the maps of Japan made by Bartolomeu Velho in 1561 and Antonio Millo in 1568, we can observe rather accurate configurations of the eastern part of Japan. In Japan, a long tradition of maps of the country had existed since the medieval period, initiated by the legendary mid-sixth to mid-seventh-century bonze Gyoki, and many copies of the Gyoki maps from the thirteenth century still exist. Through Jesuit missionaries, Portuguese cartographers might have obtained some of these copies, by means of which they were able to depict the eastern part of Japan as accurately as they did.

The first printed map of Japan was made by the Portuguese cartographer Luis Teixeira in 1586, and contained numerous Japanese place names obtained from Jesuit sources. The Dutch cartographer Abraham Ortelius, in the early editions of his *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, was unable to avail himself of exact cartographic information on Japan, and in fact on these

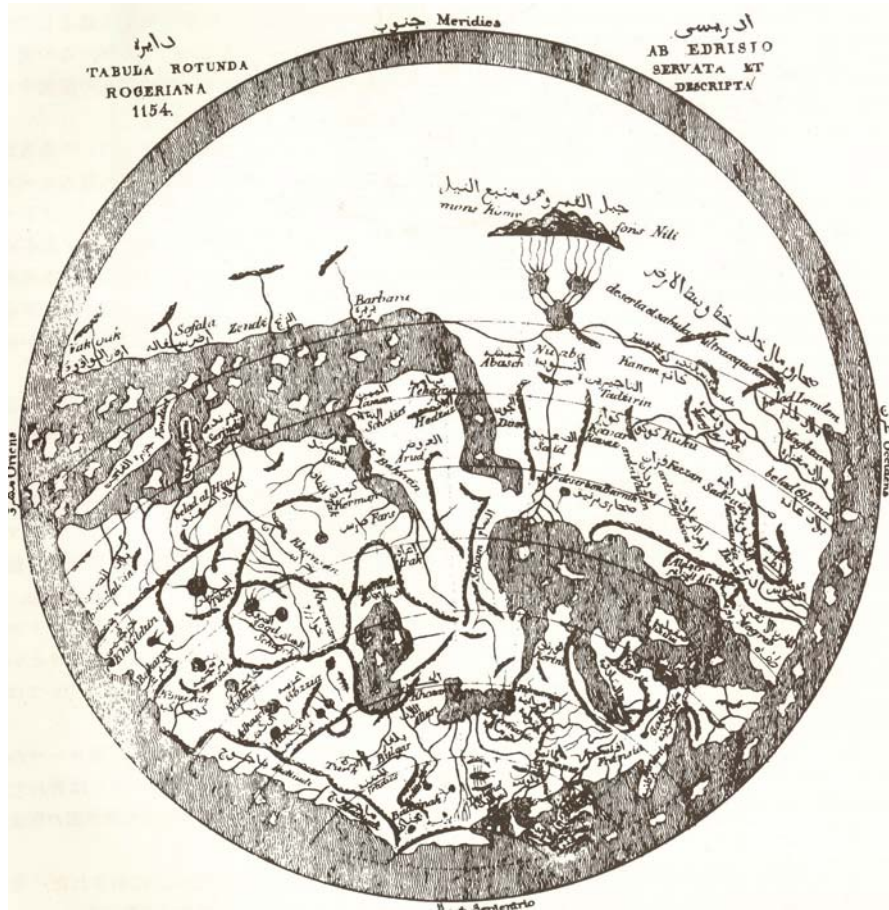


Fig. 3 The Al Idris's world map in 1154, accompanying *Kitab al Rujari* (drawn by J. Lelewel on the basis of Bodleian Library, Oxford, Uri Ms. 887)

maps, the configuration of Japan was incomplete, mainly consisting of Kyushu. But in 1592, Ortelius obtained a much improved version of a map of Japan from Teixeira; this was included in the 1595 edition of the *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* under the title of *Japoniae Insulae Descriptio, Ludoico Teisera autore*. The Teixeira map was clearly based on a Gyoki map. It is not clear how he obtained the cartographical information on Japan in the first place, but what is certain is that he had close relationships with the Jesuits who were well informed on the subject⁶. A hand-drawn map found in the Medici papers of the National Archives of

⁶ The changing configuration of Japan in the European maps in the 16th and 17th centuries and the typology and the genealogy of her representation in these maps are discussed in detail in Oda (1981 and 1998) and Unno (2003).

Florence with place names in alphabetical letters is clearly a copy of the Gyoki map⁷. The provenance of this map is not certain; some scholars suggest it was brought to Rome by the Japanese youth mission dispatched by three Christian *daimyo* (feudal lords) and arriving in Rome in 1585⁸. At any rate, some copies of the Gyoki map eventually arrived in Europe and Teixeira must have referred to one of them. The coastlines of Japan on his map of 1595 were much more precise than those on the Gyoki map, indicating that he also received a good part of his information from Portuguese navigators. Some scholars point out the similarity of Teixeira's map to Chinese maps of Japan⁹. The Chinese maps of Japan of the second half of the sixteenth century were much more precise than their European counterparts, owing to the fact that the map-makers concerned were able to have reference to the Gyoki maps.

In 1590, the Japanese youth mission arrived back in Japan with Alessandro Valignani, Visitor of the Company of Jesus and Ignacio Moreira, Jesuit and surveyor. By this time Toyotomi Hideyoshi's oppression of the Christians was escalating. Valignani soon left, while Moreira stayed on to conduct his work of surveying; but he was unable to remain longer than two years, due to the growing difficulties faced by the Jesuits because of Hideyoshi's anti-Christian measures. Moreira only visited the Western part of Japan but his *Japonicae Explicatio*, highly appreciated by the Jesuit headquarters in Rome, contained information on eastern Japan and Yezo (Hokkaido). How he was able to obtain all this information is an issue to be further explored, but certainly he obtained some of it directly from the Japanese and also from provincial maps of Japan depicted on screens (Oda 1998: 142-153).

With the establishment of the Tokugawa Shogunate in 1603, the oppression of Christians became more and more severe, and in 1612 Christianity was formally banned. In the following year, 1613, Christian priests were banished from Japan. In 1635, Japanese ships were forbidden to sail abroad and the Japanese people already abroad were not allowed to be repatriated. In 1639, Portuguese ships were forbidden to enter Japanese waters. After this year, the information on Japan came to be conveyed to Europe first through the Dutch and English; later, the latter were excluded. In either case the shogunate monopolized commercial and cultural relations with these countries because they did not show any signs of wanting to propagate Christianity. In 1641, the Dutch were restricted to residence in Nagasaki with the shogunate continuing its monopoly of exchange relationships with the Netherlands. The Jesuits remained in China, and from China, therefore, some indirect information on Japan reached the Mediterranean world.

⁷ Akioka (1955) examines this map in detail on the basis of photograph published in the paper of Sebastian Crinò in *Rivista Marittima* Anno X, dicembre 1931. Also Kish (1949) and Unno (1994) consider on this map.

⁸ For instance Akioka (1955: 186-191) attributes with much possibility the provenance of this map to the Tensho youth mission (1582-1590) because in this map is shown the castle of Azuchi of Oda Nobunaga, which existed only between 1576 and 1582. On the Tensho four youth mission see the recent detailed study by Wakakuwa (2003).

⁹ For example, Oda (1981: 234-235)



Fig. 4 Gyoki style map of eastern Japan owned by Ninna Temple, Kyoto. This manuscript dates from 1306.(Unno 1994)

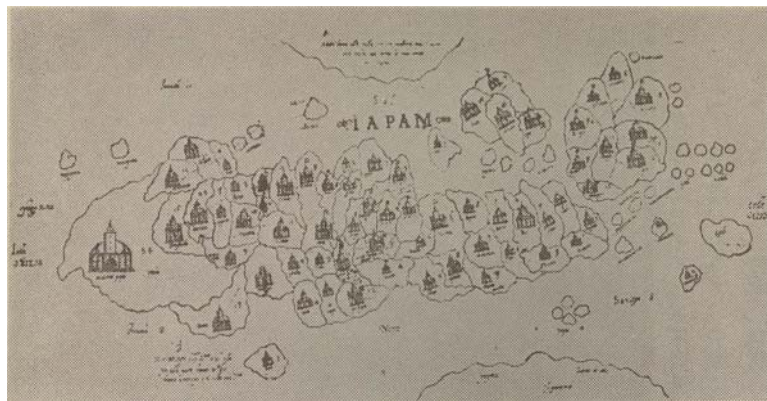


Fig. 5 Map of Japan in Medici papers, Archivio Nazionale di Firenze.

The Netherlands had a ‘Dutch Factory’ in Dejima, Nagasaki, managed by the Dutch East India Company in Batavia, but they were exclusively interested in commercial activities and, officially at least, did not convey information on Japanese culture and the Japanese people to their headquarters as did the Jesuits to theirs. An exception was made in the case of some medical officials, who were incidentally all German, in the Dutch Factory who were personally interested in the culture, people and natural history of Japan. After returning to Europe they published books on Japan which came to constitute important sources of information on Japan in Europe. One of the medical officials was Engelbert Kämpfer, who stayed in Japan from 1690-92, and who twice accompanied the director of the Dutch Factory on his courtesy visits to the shogunate at Edo. His *Geschichte und Beschreibung von Japan* was first published in English in 1727 and the German original was published in 1777¹⁰. The American Commodore Perry, who in 1853 came to Japan with his East Indian fleet to

¹⁰ I refer not to the English and German editions but to the Japanese translation Imai Tadashi, *Nihonshi: Nihon no rekishi to kiko* 2 volumes, published Kasumigaseki Shuppan, Tokyo, in 1973.

Fig. 6 Although signed by Jodocus Hondius, this map is dated 1613, two years after his death. It was the publisher, Hondius's son Henricus, who credited his father as author. But as in many contemporary maps, other hands are evident: notably Luiz Teixeira, of Japan, whose map of Japan appeared in the 1595 edition of Ortelius' *Theatrum*, and Luiz Jorge de Barbuda, source of Ortelius' 1548 China map. (R. V. Tooley and Charles Bricker, *Landmarks of mapmaking. An illustrated survey of maps and mapmakers.* Amsterdam and Brussels 1968)



enforce the opening up of Japan to outside trade, very often cited descriptions from Kämpfer's book. Another medical official was Philipp Franz von Sieboldt who stayed in Japan between 1823-29. In that period, the shogunate were eager to study Western sciences and the international situation by means of the Dutch language, hence Sieboldt had special permission to teach the Dutch language and medicine to Japanese students. In this way he was able to collect a large amount of information, including top-secret cartographic information, some of which he later managed to secrete and carry out of Japan. His book *Nippon. Archiv zur Beschreibung von Japan und dessen Neben- und Schutzländern: Jezo mit den südlichen Kurilen, Karafto, Koorai und den Liukiu-Inseln, nach japanischen und europäischen Schriften und eigenen Beobachtungen bearbeitet*, published in a number of volumes between 1832-51, remained for several decades the most authoritative source of geographical and cartographical information on Japan in Europe, including the Mediterranean countries (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens 1966)¹¹.

4) Information on the Mediterranean world in Japan and in China

As I explained, direct contact with the Mediterranean world took place earlier in China; it was only in the middle of the sixteenth century that Japan came into contact with Mediterranean countries, especially Portugal, through merchants and missionaries. The Japanese language contains a considerable number of words derived from Portuguese that came into use starting in the sixteenth century, though the common people who used these words were not aware that they were of Portuguese origin. Moreover, in other cultural spheres, European influences in the sixteenth century, in the shape of, for instance, Western-style painting, known as *nanban* (literally, southern barbarian) painting, began to be noticeable. The Jesuits introduced various aspects of European culture, including not only astronomy, but surveying techniques, and also compiled a Japanese-Portuguese dictionary; but because of the shogunate's later ban on Christianity, on the Japanese side all related documents were deliberately erased. We are able to know what the Jesuits did in Japan only from European sources. For instance, the above-mentioned youth mission dispatched to Rome in 1582 by three Christian feudal lords of Kyushu brought a number of objects back with them from Europe, such as a printing machine, numerous musical instruments and Ortelius' 1579 edition of the *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*. Portraits of the four youths were painted and may still be seen in Europe. In 1587, while they were stopping off in Macao in the course of their return trip, they dictated in Latin the story of their travels to the Jesuit priest De Sande. These dictated records were published in Macao in 1590 under the title *Demissione legatorvm iaponen fium ad Romanam curiam , rebufq; in Europa, actoto itinere*

¹¹ von Sieboldt's *Nippon* is translated into Japanese as *Nuhon*, six volumes of text and three volumes of figures, maps and tables, published by Yushodo, Tokyo, in 1977-1979.

*animaduerfis*¹². World maps and other materials they had brought back were presented to Hideyoshi when they were received by him in audience in 1591, but nothing of these now remain in Japan. The fate of the four young men ultimately proved tragic: one died rather young; another was converted away from Christianity to become an inquisitor on behalf of the anti-Christian shogunate and against Christians; one died in Macao while engaging in printing materials in Japanese for the use of Christian missionaries; and one was executed in 1633 by hanging, head down, for his clandestine missionary activities. So the knowledge they directly obtained from Europe was lost to posterity in Japan (Wakakuwa 2003).

During their stay in Macao they must have had contact with Matteo Ricci, who was responsible for Jesuit activities in China. It is not certain whether Matteo Ricci obtained Ortelius' world map of the 1579 edition from the Japanese mission at that time. At any rate, Matteo Ricci, or Li Matou to use his Chinese name, published in Chinese the *Kunyu-wanguo-quantu* in 1602, on the basis of the 1579 edition of the *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, but changing the original position of China from the eastern edge on Ortelius' map to the centre, and rendering the configurations of China and Japan more accurately, with the help of the information he obtained in China¹³.

Some copies of the third edition of Ricci's *Kunyu-wanguo-quantu* published in 1602 were imported into Japan, such as one now preserved in Kyoto University. From the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century, world maps were hand-painted on several screens in Japan, and together with world maps arrived directly from Europe, Ricci's map constituted a model for the screen paintings. We can easily distinguish screen world maps modelled on Ricci's map from those modelled on European maps because the ones modelled on the former were Sino-centric, China being located in the middle. In this sense, world maps on screens now preserved in the Miyagi Prefectural Library were clearly modelled on Ricci's map. Ricci wrote all the place names in Chinese ideograms. A number of the European place names were written according to the Chinese pronunciation of the ideograms involved, but in some cases they were etymological translations. Now the Japanese write foreign place names in their proper phonetic letters, except for some etymological translations such as for the Mediterranean Sea, Pacific Ocean and so on. Many of the transcriptions had been adopted by the Japanese and were in common use at least by the end of the Meiji period at the beginning of the twentieth century, such as in the case of the place name Rome. Incidentally, regarding the Mediterranean Sea, Ricci translated this term as Sea in the Midst of Land in the two-hemisphere map of 1601, but in the *Kunyu-wanguo-quantu* he translated the term into 'Mar Interior'. On the world maps on the

¹² Here I refer to the Japanese translation by Izui Hisanosuke, *Tensho ken-o sisetsu-ki* published by Yushodo, Tokyo, in 1969.

¹³ Mateo Ricci's first world map with place names and textual supplementation in Chinese ideograms, *Yudi shanbai quantu* was printed in 1584 but no examples of this edition are extant. A rendition of it survives in the *Tushu bian*, compiled by Zhang Huang who met Ricci in 1595. (Yee 1994b:171-172).

screens in the Miyagi Prefectural Library, the name Mediterranean Sea is written as 'interior sea' or 'chukai'. Perhaps up to the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Mediterranean Sea or 'chichukai' was not a term commonly in use among the Japanese, nor is it to be found in the travel accounts of the youth mission mentioned above. They sailed from Alicante to Leghorn, stopping over at Majorca, and used the terms Mare Tuscum and Adriaticum Mare, but never Mare Mediterraneum, which had been used in Europe since the medieval era.

After Ricci, there continued to be Jesuits in China who introduced geographic and

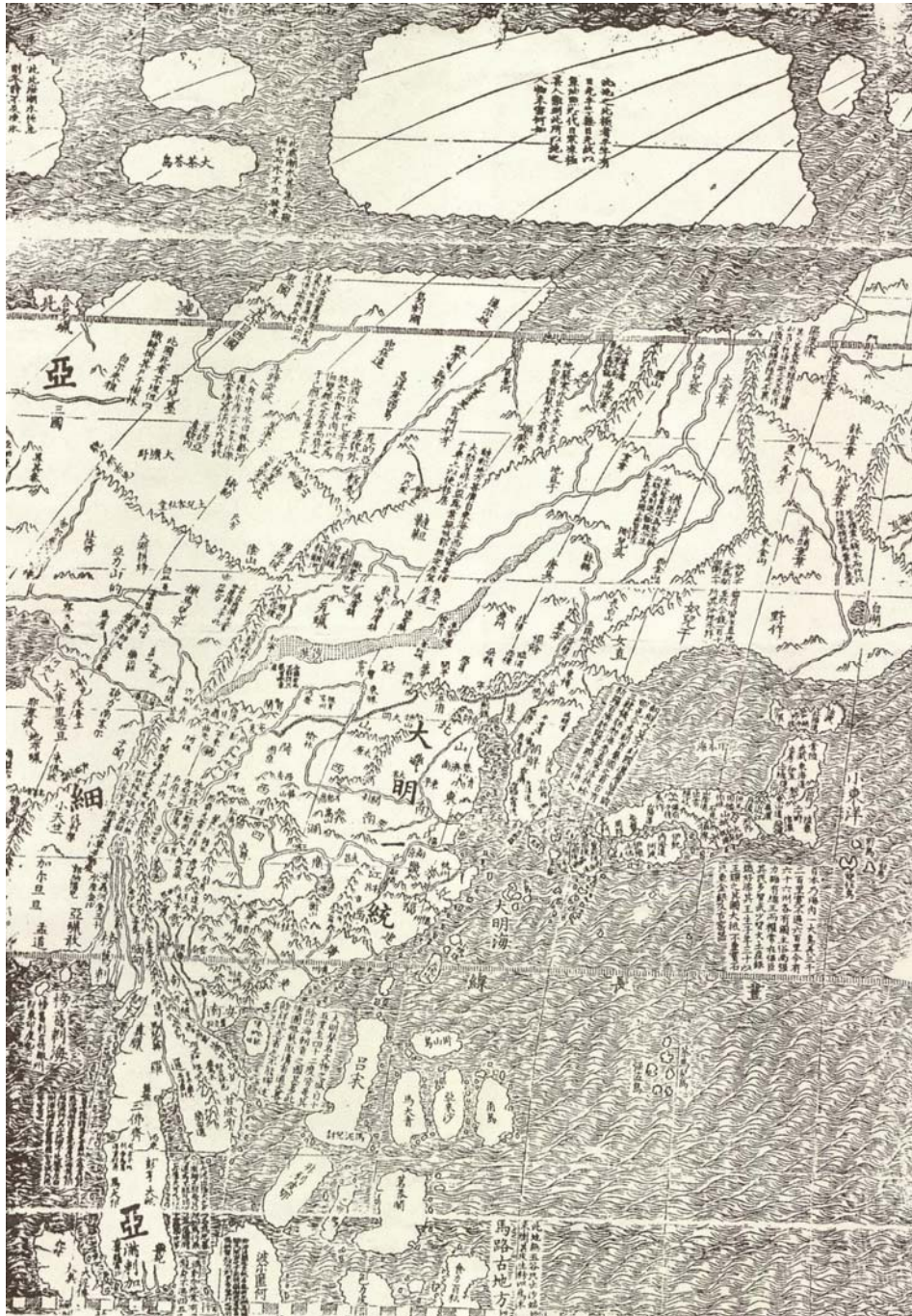


Fig. 7 A part of the Matteo Ricci's *Kunyu-wanguo-quantu* published in China in 1602 owned by the Kyoto University.

cartographic information on Europe in Chinese, such as Giulio Alleni (1582-1649) called Ai Rhe in Chinese, who published books in Chinese on surveying for the purpose of studying the geography of the world and Ferdinand Verbiest, or Nan Huairan, (1623- 1688), famous for his authorship of *Kunyu tushuo* (Maps and descriptions of the world) (1672). All these books were written in Chinese and very widely read by Japanese intellectuals, even if some of the works were officially banned by the shogunate. The most influential figure among those intellectuals was Arai Hakuseki (1657-1725), Confucianist and high-ranking official of the shogunate. In 1708, when a Sicilian priest, Giovanni Sidotti, entered Japan he was arrested and interrogated by Arai Hakuseki in Latin through an interpreter working in Nagasaki. Arai, having read the works of Matteo Ricci and other Jesuit works in Chinese, was well-versed in the geography of the world. During his interrogation of Sidotti, Arai had beside him Willem Janszoon Blaeu's world map (it is not certain whether it was the original edition of 1639 or the revised edition of ca. 1670) and asked Sidotti to point out his itinerary on the map and to explain about the countries on the map. Consequent upon this interrogation, Hakuseki wrote the three volumes of *Seiyo kibun* (Information on the West), which later contributed enormously to the diffusion of the geography of the outside world in the Edo period, and the five volumes of *Sairan igen*, which was a more detailed geographical description of the world and also contributed to the diffusion of world geography through several manuscripts, though officially it was sealed to the public by order of the shogunate. In these books most place names were transcribed according to the systems used by Ricci and other Jesuits working in China. In this sense Hakuseki greatly contributed to the consolidation in Japan of Ricci's version of place names in Chinese ideograms¹⁴.

After the so-called closing of the country, an action which actually constituted the monopolization of cultural and economic intercourse with the Netherlands and China on the part of the shogunate government, there were always interpreters of the Dutch language to be found at Nagasaki, but until the middle of the eighteenth century, they were mainly engaged in commercial affairs and translated Dutch documents only when ordered to do so by shogunate officials. But in the middle of the eighteenth century, increased numbers of Western ships approached Japanese shores, first from Russia and then the United States, to ask for commercial trade and also supplies of food, water, charcoal and firewood. As I mentioned before, the shogunate had become conscious of the necessity of acquiring knowledge of the world situation and learning Western sciences and technology, mainly for the purpose of defence. First, the studies were carried out by means of the Dutch language and from the beginning of the nineteenth century the shogunate ordered the study of French, English and other Western languages in addition to Dutch. In the second half of the eighteenth century, the most popular geographical book among specialists in things Dutch

¹⁴ The first Japanese academician who appraised the contribution of Arai Hakuseki to the diffusion of the geographical knowledge of the world in Japan under the seclusionist policy was Fujita Motoharu in 1932 (Fujita 1942). On this topic see also Ayusawa 1942, 1943 and Takeuchi 2001.

(*rangaku*) was the Dutch translation of Johann Hübner's *Krutz Fragen aus der neuen und alten Geographie bis auf Gegenzeit* of 1693. Several revised and enlarged editions were published up till the 1760s and several editions of the Dutch translation of Hübner's book published between 1736 and 1769 still exist in Japan. The first Japanese translation was published in 1771. The most complete translation of Hübner was published in 1826 by Aochi Rinso under the title of *Yochi shiryaku* in eight volumes. In the first half of the nineteenth century other adaptations of geographical books from German, English and French were also published. There were no translations of books published in Mediterranean countries but transcriptions of place names and translations of geographical terms such as 'Mediterranean Sea', 'peninsula' and others followed the system adopted by Matteo Ricci and other Jesuits working in China in the seventeenth century.

It is worth noting that in geographical books published in Japan prior to the Meiji Restoration of 1868, there was no distinction made between civilized countries and non-civilized countries. But in the case of geographical books and school textbooks published in the Meiji period a clear distinction was made between civilized and non-civilized., sometimes barbarian (*yaban*) countries, and even among Western countries: Britain, France, Germany, Russia and the United States were considered advanced countries, while Spain, Portugal and other Mediterranean countries came to be ranked as relatively backward countries, though their glorious past histories were duly mentioned in those same textbooks. Analyses of geographical description after the Meiji period are matter for another paper¹⁵.

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¹⁵ I consider, albeit not exhaustively, geographical descriptions of the outside world in school textbooks of modern Japan in Chapters 4 and 10 of Takeuchi 2000.

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