



SINO-JAPANESE STUDIES

Volume 16 (2009), Article 5

<http://chinajapan.org/articles/16/5>

Liu Jianhui 劉建輝. “Higashi Ajia jōhō nettowaaku no tanjō” 東アジア情報ネットワークの誕生 (Birth of an East Asian Information Network). In *Mato Shanhai: Nihon chishikijin no “kindai” taiken* 魔都上海：日本知識人の「近代」体験 (Demon capital Shanghai: The “modern” experience of Japanese intellectuals), trans. Joshua A. Fogel (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2000), 47-74. *Sino-Japanese Studies* 16 (2009), article 5.

Abstract: In this chapter, Liu Jianhui traces the shifting flows of information into Japan, beginning with the Chinese translations of Western materials in the early Edo period, and rise in importance of Dutch learning texts happening, ironically, just as the Shogunate began to relax its controls information originating from Jesuit and Christian sources. Liu then discusses the important rise of a new information network centered on the East Asian “hub” of Shanghai in the aftermath of the Opium War and the chaos of the Taiping Rebellion in which works such as Wei Yuan’s *Haiguo tuzhi* and other works and translations coming from Chinese sources have an important impact in late Edo Japan.

Demon Capital Shanghai:
The “Modern” Experience of Japanese Intellectuals¹
Liu Jianhui 劉建輝

Translated by Joshua A Fogel

Chapter 2
Birth of an East Asian Information Network

Shifts in the “Informationally Advanced Nations”

Reports on the Opium War

We have thus far observed the variety of “experiences” and “investigations” of samurai in Shanghai. One thing we learn from this is the unusual interest they evinced for the Protestant missionary “presses” and “Chinese-language translations of Western works” they published. How is it that such printers existed in Shanghai at this time and that such books, the translations, were published? To answer this query, we shall momentarily interrupt the discussion of intellectuals coming to visit Shanghai and trace the historical rise and fall from the seventeenth century of Chinese-language translations of Western texts published in China, the significance of this for China and Japan, as well as the conditions surrounding their transmission to Japan in the post-Opium War era. This is an extremely important task when we consider the meaning Shanghai possessed for Japan as a “nation.”

The earliest report we have that conveyed to Japan news of the Opium War, the event which may be said to have lifted the curtain on modernity in East Asia, reads in part:² “An unconscionable act toward the British occurred in China. Soldiers were dispatched from Britain to China, and Britain certainly has troops at the ready at the Cape of Good Hope as well as in the territory it holds in India. Their plan is to take revenge on China.” Thus, because the British in China has been treated in an “unconscionable” (*muri hidō* 無理非道) way, Britain had decided to send troops to China. It of course had troops at home as well as those deployed on the American continent and in India; these would be mustered to take revenge on China.

This report was transmitted to the Japanese authorities on July 27, 1840 by a Dutch trading vessel calling at Nagasaki at its periodic time. The stunned shogunate immediately queried a Chinese ship captain similarly permitted to call at Nagasaki about this report and then had a more detailed report drawn up. Over the next three years, reports on this matter came in intermittently from the Dutch and the Chinese. While

¹ See also the Chinese translation by Gan Huijie, *Modu Shanghai: Riben zhishiren de “jindai” tiyan* 魔都上海：日本知识人的“近代”体验 (Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2003), pp. 23-36.

² Nichi-Ran gakkai hōsei Rangaku kenkyūkai 日蘭学会法政蘭学研究会, comp., *Oranda fūsetsugaki shūsei* 和蘭風説書集成 (Collection of Dutch reports) (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1979), vol. 2.

there was apt to be a sense of crisis surrounding the Japanese, they were able to keep a sharp eye on this first “East-West” confrontation developing across the sea.

Overseas News Shared at Every Level

In the end, the above report conveying news of the Opium War was only a single case. Indeed, reports of this sort were dubbed “Oranda fūsetsugaki” 和蘭風説書 (Dutch reports) and “Tō fūsetsugaki” 唐風説書 (Chinese reports), and throughout most of the Edo period, Dutch and Chinese ships that sailed to Japan were obligated to file them. In both cases the oldest of these dates back to 1641 (Kan’ei 寛永 18), and although interrupted on occasion, they continued down to the late Edo years: 1859 (Ansei 安政 6) for the Dutch reports and 1862 (Bunkyū 文久 2) for the Chinese reports. They form one of the greatest sources of information for Japan’s period of seclusion.

Initially, these *fūsetsugaki* (reports) were treated as top secret documents, and only a select group within the shogunate, such as the *rōjū* 老中 (elders), were permitted to read them. In the process of translation and submission, however, copies circulated to powerful feudal lords, among others, in many domains. On the basis of these handwritten manuscripts, individual volumes were compiled. For example, for the early period covering the years 1644 (Shōhō 正保 1) through 1717 (Kyōhō 享保 2), a collection of “Tō fūsetsugaki” entitled *Ka’i hentai* 華夷變態 (The transformation from civilized to barbarian [i.e., Ming to Manchu dynasty]) was assembled by Hayashi Gahō 林鷺峯 (1618-80) and Hayashi Hōkō 林鳳岡 (1644-1732); two other collections were concerned with reports on the Opium War, entitled *Afuyō ibun* 阿芙蓉彙聞 (Reports on opium) assembled by Shionoya Tōin 鹽谷宕陰 (1809-67) and *Ahen shimatsu* 鴉片始末 (The Opium [War] from beginning to end) assembled by Saitō Chikudō 齋藤竹堂 (1815-52). Both of the latter were distributed to a wide readership. Although not the only means of learning the news, these were the most influential routes by which the general readership became acquainted with news reports from overseas.

Just limiting ourselves to late Edo information about China, reports collected in China by basically the same route—such as *Eikoku shinpan jiryaku* 英國侵犯事略 (Brief chronicle of the British invasion, submitted in 1844 by the Chinese ship’s captain Zhou Aiting 周藹亭) and *Ihi hankyō bunkenroku* 夷匪犯境聞見錄 (A record of observations concerning the invasion of the barbarians [editor and date unknown, probably reached Japan in the Kōka 弘化 reign, 1844-48])—circulated widely in manuscript form. Together with the *fūsetsugaki*, they provided to Confucian scholars in virtually all domains detailed knowledge about the Opium War.

Moreover, there were also works which arranged manuscripts such as the aforementioned and, “using high-sounding phrases taken from such military chronicles as the [*Genpei*] *seisui ki* [源平]盛衰記 (Account of the rise and fall of the Minamoto and Taira clans) and the *Taihei ki* 太平記 (Chronicle of great peace) which have been handed

down since antiquity in Japan [*kōkoku* 皇國],”³ put together a kind of enjoyable piece of reading matter. Fitting into this genre would be such works as *Kaigai shinwa* 海外新話 (New stories from overseas [by Mineta Fūkō 嶺田楓江, publ. 1849]), *Kaigai shinwa shūi* 海外新話拾遺 (Gleaning from the new stories from overseas [by Master Shusai 種菜翁, 1949]), *Shin-Ei kinsei dan* 清口+英近世談 (Recent tales of Chinese and England [by Hayano Kei 早野恵, 1850]), and *Unnan shinwa* 雲南新話 (New stories from Yunnan [by master of the Bunkōdō 文好堂主人, 1854]) which used the Taiping Rebellion as its subject matter.

All of these novelizations employed the written form of a military chronicle that were easy to read, aided by plentiful use of illustrations and frontispiece artwork to attract as readers the general populace, or what was dubbed “ignorant and uneducated men” (*dōmō no shi* 童蒙の士).⁴ In these cases, exaggeration or misreading of the facts or, for that matter, compilations arranged with a distinct purpose in mind render the descriptions in these works dubious at every point; for example, there is the transformation of the wife of the British captain of an armed transport vessel, who had been taken captive by the Chinese, into a “female warrior” capable of “countless miraculous makeovers,” and in the end Great Britain is defeated by the Chinese. The *fūsetsugaki*, initially meant to be the shogunate’s classified information, ultimately went through a number of changes and spread far and wide among the populace as overseas reports of a sort.

From our contemporary sensibility, this distinctive method of spreading such information in the late Edo period may certainly have been unreliable and irregular in the extreme. Nonetheless, despite a profusion of misperceptions, we should not make light of the fact that in an important sense the various social strata, including a section of commoners, shared the same “overseas information.”

Over 10,000 Dutch Texts

Now, news from overseas brought to Japan by merchant vessels from the Netherlands and China was never contained solely in the *fūsetsugaki*. Books as merchandise in trade were themselves exceptional sources of information. In fact, from the perspective of timeliness, they were probably superior to *fūsetsugaki*, making the imported books even more important in the sense that they brought from abroad more basic “information.” There were, however, a huge number of such works, such that I cannot possibly treat them in full here. I would like to focus on those works amid the imported volumes written in literary Chinese that conveyed data on the West, and investigate the issue further on that basis.

First, though, for comparative purposes, let us take a brief look at the circumstances surrounding the importation to Japan of Dutch works in the Edo period. Although, depending on time period, there might be a large difference in the quantity, Dutch works were continuously imported as trading merchandise over the course of the 260-plus years of the Edo period. While we might not be able to get a firm grasp of their

³ Mineta Fūkō 嶺田楓江, “*Kaigai shinwa reigen*” 海外新話例言 (Introductory remarks to *Kaigai shinwa*), in *Kaigai shinwa* 海外新話 (New stories from overseas) (Edo: n.p., 1849).

⁴ Ibid.

exact numbers today, one thesis has it that such imported volumes exceed 10,000 in number.

Either as items presented to the shogun or, by contrast, as volumes ordered by the shogunate, these works were brought to Japan via a host of different means of importation. Among them, in contrast with the trade items for which the Dutch East India Company engaged in transactions known as *motokata nimotsu* 本方荷物 (regular cargo), the greatest number of works imported were items known as *waki nimotsu* 脇荷物 (side cargo), privately traded by the head of the Dutch Factory at Nagasaki and individual Dutchmen who worked there. The latter occupied well over half of the entire quantity of Dutch books imported to Japan.

As for books presented to the shogun, it is fairly well known, for example, that the then head of the Dutch Factory, Hendrik Indyk, presented to Tokugawa Ietsuna 家綱 (1641-80), the fourth shogun, a work on animals by John Johnston (Joannes Jonstonus, 1603-75) popularly known as *Yonsutonsu dōbutsusho* ヨンストンス動物書 (A volume about animals by Jonstonus) when he visited the shogunate in Edo in 1663. Later, though, the eighth shogun, Tokugawa Yoshimune 吉宗 (1684-1751), noted this work and it became one cause behind his urging further study of things Dutch.

The Boasts of Sugita Genpaku

Among items ordered by the Japanese in the early Edo years, particularly worthy of note was the active importation of works of anatomy, surgery, and medicinal herbs by such men as Inoue Masashige 井上政重 (1583-1662), senior censor (*ōmetsuki* 大目付) under the third shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu 家光 (1604-51), and Inaba Masanori 稲葉正則 (1623-96), member of the council of elders under shogun Ietsuna. As time passed, we find on the “Tsumini mokuroku” 積荷目録 (Listing of freight) for 1825 that the eleventh shogun Tokugawa Ienari 家齊 (1773-1841) acquired three dictionaries, including a German-Dutch one.⁵

The most extraordinary items ordered, to say the least, were both imported in Tenpō 天保 15 (1844) and may have been influenced by the recent Opium War. One was *Shūchin yasen hikkei* 袖珍野戦必携 (Pocketbook manual of field warfare) in six stringbound volumes ordered by the twelfth shogun, Tokugawa Ieyoshi 家慶 (1793-1853), and another was a military text, *Kindai sen ni okeru ho ki hō sanpei no yōhei* 近代戦における歩・騎・砲三兵の用兵 (Three uses of troops in modern warfare: infantry, cavalry, artillery), in four stringbound volumes ordered by shogunal council elder Mizuno Tadakuni 水野忠邦 (1794-1851).

Because the great majority of Dutch books imported, the so-called *waki nimotsu*, were so numerous, it is difficult to determine precisely when many of them arrived in Japan, and we thus cannot easily reach conclusions about them in this regard. Nonetheless, the Dutch translation of *Die anatomische Tabellen* (1732; known in

⁵ Katagiri Kazuo 片桐一男, *Hirakareta sakoku: Nagasaki Dejima no hito, mono, jōhō* 開かれた鎖国：長崎出島の人・物・情報 (Open seclusion: People, things, information in Dejima, Nagasaki) (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1997).

Japanese translation as *Kaibō zufu* 解剖圖譜) by Johann Adam Kulmus (1689-1745), a German anatomist, which was the basis upon which the famous *Kaitai shinsho* 解體新書 (New work on post-mortems, 1774) was prepared, seems to have reached Japan by this route. Furthermore, by revising and expanding Arai Hakuseki's 新井白石 (1657-1725) *Sairan igen* 采覽異言 (Varying words observed, 1713), Yamamura Saisuke 山村才助 (1770-1807) wrote the *Teisei zōyaku Sairan igen* 訂正増譯采覽異言 (Varying words observed, revised and explained), the only world geography text available in Edo-period Japan. In the process of writing this work, Yamamura was said to have made use of Johann Hübner's (1668-1731) *Bankoku denshin kiji* 萬國傳信紀事 (Reports from around the world) which appears to have reached Japanese shores by the same route.

In this connection, according to the *Rangaku kotohajime* 蘭學事始 (Primer on Dutch learning, 1815), its author Sugita Genpaku 杉田玄白 (1733-1817) proudly introduced the fact that from his late years he had been searching for and buying up Dutch works that came to Japan as "side cargo," and over the course of a number of years, he was able to amass an impressive collection. Perhaps his boasts convey a picture of one aspect of the transmission of Dutch books at that time.



Sugita Genpaku

The Situation in the World as Conveyed by Chinese-Language Texts

Setting aside for the moment things brought by émigrés, the history of the importation of Chinese-language texts goes all the way back to the time of Shōtoku Taishi 聖德太子 (573-621), who is said to have sent emissaries to China in part to purchase books. Temporally and quantitatively speaking, that earlier period could not compare in the least with the imported Dutch books. However, as concerns in particular the transmission of Chinese-language works conveying conditions in the West in the form of reports importation, the Edo period was remarkably curtailed and the numbers of volumes rather limited.

For a long period of time beginning in the early Edo years, we find a series of works written in Chinese by Jesuit missionaries resident in China that continued to offer knowledge to Japan about the West. Representative among such works which introduced the geography, produce, and customs of many nations in the world were Matteo Ricci's (Li Madou 利瑪竇, 1552-1610) *Kunyu wanguo quantu* 坤輿萬國全圖 (Atlas of the nations of the world, 1602), Giulio Aleni's (Ai Rulie 艾儒略, 1582-1649) *Zhifang waiji* 職方外紀 (Chronicles of foreign lands, 1623), and Ferdinand Verbiest's (Nan Huiren 南懷仁, 1623-88) *Kunyu tushuo* 坤輿圖說 (Illustrated diagram of the world, 1674), among others. Not only did works of this sort convey a wide variety of information about conditions in the world to a Japan that still lacked a systematic text on world geography, but they built part of the foundation for Dutch learning which was developing gradually.



Matteo Ricci



Ferdinand Verbiest



Giulio Aleni

For example, when he was composing what has been called a pioneer introductory work on conditions in the outside world, the *Ka'i tsūshō kō* 華夷通商考 (Examination of commercial relations with China and the barbarians, 1695), Nishkawa Joken 西川女見 (1648-1724) expanded and revised his work by reference to Aleni's *Zhifang waiji*. Similarly, when Arai Hakuseki wrote the aforementioned *Sairan igen*, considered the symbol of the formation of Dutch learning in Japan, he is thought to have made use of Matteo Ricci's *Kunyu wanguo quantu* and Verbiest's *Kunyu tushuo* as reference works. In this connection, although the then current theory of a spherical Earth had already been transmitted to Japan, the concept giving expression to this knowledge was as yet not firmly or fully established. Indeed, the coinage of the term *diqu* 地球 (J., *chikyū*, globe) was to be found in Ricci's *Kunyu wanguo quantu*.

Reversal of Positions

Although we can provide no definitive proof, on the whole many of the Chinese-language works by the Jesuits, while the numbers of such works may not have been that immense, appear to have already entered Japan before the formation of the system of

seclusion was in place. The inspectorate of books (*shomotsu aratameyaku* 書物改役) was created by the shogunate to crack down on the importation of banned Christian books in 1630 (Kan'ei 寛永7). Despite the fact that the *Zhifang waiji* and as many as thirty-one other works by Matteo Ricci and others were clearly registered on the list of proscribed books, as noted earlier, we can easily surmise that Arai Hakuseki, among others, used them as references in his own subsequent writings.

After roughly a century of severe interdiction on imports, Shogun Yoshimune in 1720 inaugurated a relaxation on the importation of general scientific writings unconnected directly to Christianity, and thereafter gradually a number of such works were transported to Japan legally and continuously. Yet, as touched on above, ironically at that time Dutch learning in Japan was increasingly rising to prominence. While Chinese translations of Western works were highly valued by men of importance, for some reasons they began to lose their distinctiveness. The knowledge and informational reports conveyed in them as well were completely overwhelmed by the wave of Dutch learning which was approaching its apex with each passing day. What brought about the decline of these Chinese-language works prepared by the Jesuits, we need to point out as a far more basic reason, had less to do with the rise of Dutch learning and much more to do with the actually conditions within China that was exporting these books.

As can be seen from the activities of Verbiest and the other Jesuits, during the first century that the seclusion structure was in place in Japan, in China the Jesuits were allowed freedom of movement, twists and turns notwithstanding, with a policy of an “open country” effectively enacted. Yet, in 1724, almost exactly when Yoshimune relaxed the constraints on the importation to Japan of Chinese-language translations of Western works, the fifth emperor of the Qing dynasty, Yongzheng 雍正 (1723-35), having just acceded to the throne, suddenly abrogated this generous policy vis-à-vis the Jesuits set in place by his predecessor, Kangxi 康熙 (1662-1722), a move precisely the opposite to that taken in Japan. With this religious prohibition, nearly 300 missionaries aside from a group of members of the Directorate of Astronomy (Qintianjian 欽天監) who oversaw astronomy and the making of the calendar were banished to Canton and Macao. Thus, the writing activities of the Jesuits effectively came to a stop.

As a result of this sudden change of course, China's position as the advanced nation in “information” which had continued for over a century rapidly went into retreat, while Japan by contrast, having just launched a policy endorsing Dutch learning, began steadily to store up Western knowledge through its window at Nagasaki. The positions of Japan and China in terms of information and knowledge about conditions in the West underwent a stunning reversal at this juncture, and thereafter Japan assumed the superior position for about a century as well.

Toward an East Asian “Hub”

The Flood of Missionaries

The Opium War from 1840-1842 served as the impetus for China to recapture from Japan its position as the “informationally” advanced nation. China's wretched defeat in the war, the first of many direct confrontations between Eastern and Western

civilizations, not only led to the opening of the five ports of Guangzhou (Canton), Fuzhou, Xiamen, Ningbo, and Shanghai to commercial trade, but by virtue of the Wangxia 望廈 Treaty (July 1844) between China and the United States and the Huangpu 黃埔 Treaty between China and France (October 1844), the long-term ban on Christian missionaries was lifted, even while the condition of limiting their activity to the port areas remained in place.

As a result, Catholic missionaries, such as the Jesuits in earlier centuries, of course, as well as Protestant missionaries, such as the London Missionary Society with its bases of operations from before the war in Malacca and Singapore and vigilantly waiting to jump at the chance to proselytize in China, all together flooded into the five newly opened ports. There they actively commenced missionary activities with the repeated eruption of troubles. Their ultimate objective was proselytizing, and like their forebears two centuries earlier, they pointedly stressed the propagation of various kinds of knowledge related to the West. They also poured considerable energy into the establishment of medical clinics and educational institutions.

We will introduce this topic in greater detail later, but because the Protestant missionaries in particular took as an article of faith the importance of the “spread of books” and “scientific missionary work,” they inherited the positive missionizing work of the Jesuits from earlier times more than the Catholics who were their proper descendents and proceeded to produce great numbers of “Western texts in Chinese translation.” The central role in the recovery by China of the position of the “advanced nation” concerning information about the West was thus played by none other than the Protestant missionaries who now came to China to proselytize anew.

The *Haiguo tuzhi* Outdoes Japanese Dutch Learning

The “results” of missionary activity in pre-Opium War Malacca and Singapore and subsequently in the five opened ports of China were immediately apparent in the *Haiguo tuzhi* 海國圖志 (Illustrated gazetteer of the maritime countries, 1842) of Wei Yuan 魏源 (1794-1857). As Wei himself professed at the time he compiled this work, which subsequently had an unparalleled influence on Chinese and Japanese knowledge of the West, “I use the Westerners to discuss the West.”⁶ Aside from a few arguments of his own and some Chinese historical writings on foreign lands, over seventy percent of the content of this work was comprised of direct quotations from books and journals written by earlier Jesuits or more recently arrived Protestant missionaries.

⁶ “*Haiguo tuzhi yuanxu*” 『海國圖志』原敘 (Preface to original edition of *Haiguo tuzhi*), in *Haiguo tuzhi* (Changsha: Yuelu shusha, 1998).



Wei Yuan

For example, the *Sizhou zhi* 四洲志 (Chronicle of four continents), the original text upon which *Haiguo tuzhi* was based, was *An Encyclopaedia of Geography* (C. *Shijie dili quanshu* 世界地理全書, 1834) by the Englishman Hugh Murray (1779-1846), from which Lin Zexu 林則徐 (1785-1850) had his interpreter Liang Jinde 梁進德 (1820-62) excerpt and translate. In addition, he made use of several dozen other works, such as *Waiguo shilüe* 外國史略 (Brief history of foreign lands) by Robert Morrison (Ma Lisun 馬禮遜, 1782-1834), a pioneer Protestant missionary in China, *Wanguo dili quanshu* 萬國地理全書 (Universal geography, 1838), *Maoyi tongzhi* 貿易通志 (General account of trade, 1840), and *Dongxiyang kao meiyue tongji zhuan* 東西洋考每月統紀傳 (East-West examiner and monthly recorder, 1833-38), by Karl Friedrich August Gützlaff (郭實臘, 1803-51), active in missionary work a bit later than Morrison, and *Meilige heshengguo zhilüe* 美理哥合省國志略 (Brief account of the United States of America, 1838), its second edition entitled *Yameilijia hezhongguo zhilüe* 亞美理駕合眾國志略 (Brief account of the United States of America, 1861), and its third edition entitled *Lianbang zhilüe* 聯邦志略 (Brief account of the United States, 1862) by Elijah Coleman Bridgman (Bi Zhiwen 裨治文, 1801-61).



Robert Morrison



Karl F. A. Gützlaff



Elijah Bridgman

The above applies in the main to works cited in the first edition of the *Haiguo tuzhi* in fifty fascicles, although Wei Yuan later broadly expanded his work twice: to sixty fascicles in 1847, and to one hundred fascicles in 1852. He thus made energetic use of new written works by missionaries active at Chinese sites following the opening of ports—such as the *Dili beikao* 地理備考 (Study of geography, 1847) by José Martinho Marques (Ma Jishi 瑪吉士, 1810-67), the *Diqiu tushuo* 地球圖說 (Illustrated discussion of the globe, 1848) by Richard Quarteman Way (Yi Lizhe 禔理哲, 1819-95), and the *Ping'an tongshu* 平安通書 (Peace almanac, 1850-53) by Divie Bethune McCartee (Mai Jiadi 麥嘉締, 1820-1900). The *Haiguo tuzhi* gradually became not only the best sourcebook available in China at the time on conditions in the West, but even exceeded in certain realms the level of knowledge of Dutch learning in Japan.

A “Fine Book”

In 1851 (Kaei 嘉永 4) the sixty-fascicle second edition of the *Haiguo tuzhi* was transported to Japan by a Chinese trading vessel, and shortly thereafter the arrival of Commodore Perry and his ships surely exerted a huge impact, but the fact that in the intervening few years there were over twenty reprintings and translations of the text produced in Japan was certainly no coincidence. The “reports” recorded in this work include both statements about coastal defense represented by the phrase “using the technical strengths of the barbarians as a model to control the barbarians”⁷ and assuredly exerted a kind of “shock” to Japanese at the time. At the same time, it greatly quenched their intellectual “thirst” which had grown dissatisfied with Dutch learning alone. Recognizing all of these circumstances together, while reading the *Haiguo tuzhi* for the first time in 1854 (Ansei 安政 1), Yoshida Shōin 吉田松陰 (1830-59) repeatedly referred instinctively to it as a “fine book.”⁸

Needless to say, Shōin would later write that “as a way to prepare against the enemy lands of the barbarians, they need attack the barbarians.”⁹ That is, he meant a foreign policy that would exploit the contradiction among the Western powers as a means of controlling the enemy countries, and he seemed to write critically of Wei Yuan’s naïve argument ignorant as it was of basic principles: it “sees the advantages” of the powers “but not their principles.”¹⁰ On the whole, though, he offered a genuinely positive evaluation of the *Haiguo tuzhi*, and he actually “reread” it several times while in prison.¹¹

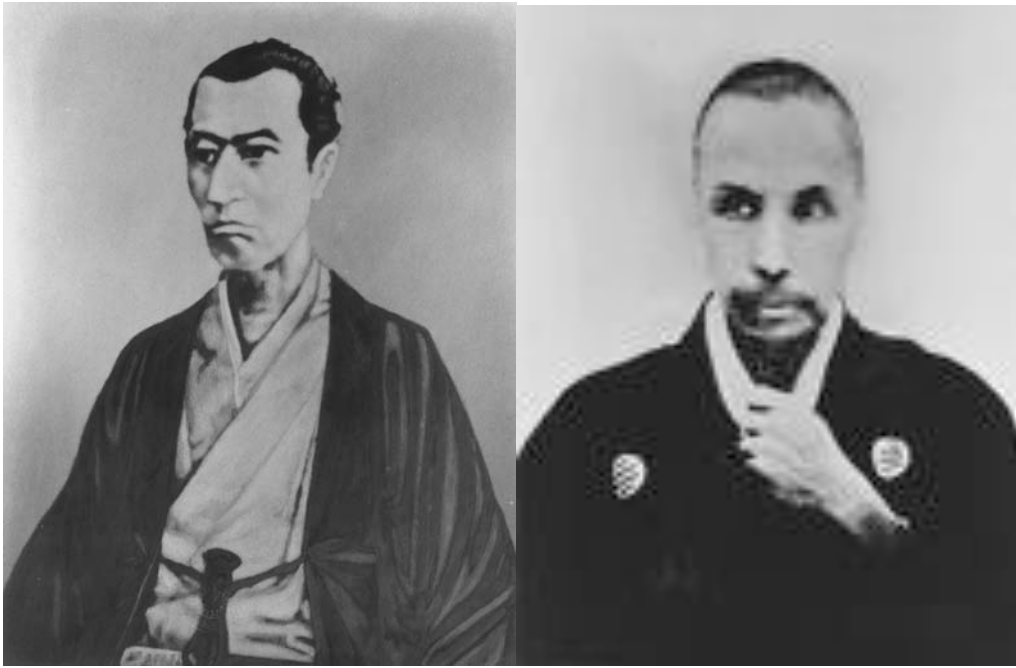
⁷ “Chouhai pian, yishou shang” 籌海篇・議守上 (On coastal defense, discussion of protection, part 1), in *Haiguo tuzhi*.

⁸ In a letter to his elder brother Sugi Umetarō 杉梅太郎 (1829-1910), dated 1854/11/22, in *Noyama goku bunkō* 野山獄文稿 (Manuscripts from Noyama Prison), in *Yoshida Shōin zenshū* 吉田松陰全集 (Collected writings of Yoshida Shōin) (Tokyo: Daiwa shobō, 1976), vol. 2.

⁹ See footnote 7.

¹⁰ Yoshida Shōin, “Kōin Rondon hyōban ki o yomu” 讀甲寅嚨頓評判記 (Reading an account of the evaluation of London in the kōin year [1854]), in *Noyama goku bunkō*, in *Yoshida Shōin zenshū*, vol. 2.

¹¹ “Noyama goku dokusho ki” 野山獄讀書記 (Notes on books read in Noyama Prison), in *Yoshida Shōin zenshū*, vol. 7.



Yoshida Shōin

Sakuma Zōzan

“Comrade Overseas”

Following on Shōin’s evaluation of the *Haiguo tuzhi*, let us take a look at the thoughts his teacher, Sakuma Zōzan 佐久間象山 (1811-64). Although the actual date is not specified, Zōzan appears to have been deeply impressed by his reading of the *Haiguo tuzhi* at roughly the same time as Shōin. Putting aside its introduction to conditions in the West, though, he could not agree, it would appear, with Wei’s defense strategy of “zhuan shou nei he” 專守內河: namely, “it would be better to defend the mouth of inland waterways than the seas beyond [borders], and it would be better to protect inland waterways than the mouth of those waterways.”¹² Rather, he advocated active coastal defense which would enable them “to inflict a death sentence on the raiders while remaining on the open seas.”¹³

Concerning Wei’s “Essay on Guns” introduced in the *Haiguo tuzhi*, Zōzan rejected it as “careless and unfounded” (*sorō mukei* 粗漏無稽).¹⁴ He deeply sympathized with Wei who, he adjudged, had not personally engaged in any practical engagement in the “study of gunnery.” While offering an assortment of stark opinions of this sort, Zōzan never completely repudiated the work of Wei Yuan. He read Wei’s *Shengwu ji* 聖武記 (Military history of the Qing dynasty, 1842), and the views described therein not only “coincided” (*angō* 闇合) with his own previously held positions, but he was inspired

¹² See footnote 7.

¹³ *Seiken roku* 省愆錄 (Reflections on my errors), in *Zōzan zenshū* 象山全集 (Collected writings of [Sakuma] Zōzan) (Nagano: Shinano mainichi shinbun kaibushiki gaisha, 1934), vol. 1.

¹⁴ Ibid.

to raise these issues in precisely the same year as Wei and thus recognized in Wei a true “comrade from overseas.”¹⁵

The *Shengwu ji* is a work that brings together a history of the wars fought, domestic and foreign, by the Qing dynasty. Although transported to Japan initially in 1844 (Kōka 弘化 1), Zōzan found especially interesting within it fascicles 11-14 on “Notes on Military Affairs” which discussed political affairs at the time. Taking up Wei’s argument that by translating “barbarian books and barbarian histories” and “mastering barbarian affairs,” we can “restrain the foreign barbarians”;¹⁶ this too he proudly emphasized marked a convergence of the two men’s viewpoints: “His views tallied with mine.”¹⁷

Thus, Shōin’s and, above all, Zōzan’s evaluations of Wei Yuan were in the end a two-edged sword. Zōzan’s dual assessments seem to shed some light on the level of Dutch learning at that time and on the value of the *Haiguo tuzhi* as “information.” That is to say, the “reports” conveyed by works such as the *Haiguo tuzhi*, aside from a portion concerning the Opium War, were in fact almost all from early Protestant missionaries; and, a number of exceptions notwithstanding, the fact that these works enormously enhanced knowledge gained by Dutch learning is undeniable. Given these facts, as Shōin put it, “Wei Yuan’s book has made a big impact in our country.”¹⁸

By the same token, though, the “information” was put together over a short period of time from a variety of places, and was a not so systematically organized jumble. The knowledge still incompletely digested by the author and especially the discussion elicited by this recognition was seen, in the eyes of men such as Sakuma Zōzan who were long armed with Dutch learning, as “careless” and “erroneous” (*byūmō* 謬妄).¹⁹ Perhaps this was inevitable. The *Haiguo tuzhi* with this sort of “flaws” gradually began to lose its appeal later with the rise of “Western works Chinese-language translation.” In the 1860s its historical mission came to a close, though we shall return to this issue again later.

An Odd Link

We have thus far looked primarily at works by Wei Yuan, but writings by Chinese intellectuals concerned with conditions in the West that were composed after the Opium War were also transported on a number of occasions to Japan and spread widely there. As the more important ones among such works, we might look at the following: Chen Lunjong 陳倫炯 (fl. 1730), *Haiguo wenjian lu* 海國聞見錄 (Record of things seen and heard among the maritime countries; first published in 1730, reprinted 1823); Chen Fengheng 陳逢衡 (1778-1848), *Yingjili jilie* 英咭喇記略²⁰ (Brief notes on Great Britain,

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ “Wushi yuji, zhanggu kaozheng” 武事餘記・掌故考證 (Notes on military affairs, investigation of historical tales), in *Shengwu ji*, fascicle 12.

¹⁷ *Seiken roku*, see note 13.

¹⁸ See footnote 10.

¹⁹ *Seiken roku*, see note 13.

²⁰ Translator’s note: The first Chinese character of this title is properly written with an extremely rare graph combining the “mouth” classifier 口 with the usual graph *ying* 英 used for England. The same is true for this character in the next title cited. –JAF

1841); Wang Wentai 汪文泰, *Hongmaofan Yingjili kaolüe* 紅毛蕃英咭喇考略 (A study of Britain of the red-haired barbarians, 1842); and Xu Jiyou 徐繼畲 (1795-1873), *Yinghuan zhi lüe* 瀛環志略 (Brief survey of the maritime circuit, 1848), among others.

The first of these works, Chen Lunjiong's *Haiguo wenjian lu*, was a travel narrative written initially by the author in the first half of the eighteenth century, and thus as "information" *per se* it was, to be sure, already old. Because of the impact of the Opium War, however, it was brought to Japan in the same year as was the aforementioned *Shengwu ji*, 1844, and was subsequently read closely by Yoshida Shōin, among others.

Chen Fengheng's *Yingjili jilüe* *Yingjili jilüe* was composed on the basis of Wei Yuan's own *Yingjili xiaoji* 英吉利小記 (Short account of Great Britain, 1840) and other works which itself became a sourcebook for his *Haiguo tuzhi*. It was reprinted with Japanese reading punctuation in Japan in 1853, the very year of Perry's initial arrival and shortly before the *Haiguo tuzhi* was reprinted. Although we do not know details of the process by which the third work, *Hongmaofan Yingjili kaolüe*, was composed, it was excerpted in *Tazan no ishi* 他山之石 (Food for thought), believed to have been compiled in the Kaei reign period (1848-54), and thus it was probably transported to Japan and reprinted there about the same time as Chen Fengheng's work.

Compared to the relatively early period in which these three works were conveyed to Japan, for some reason the final one, Xu Jiyou's *Yinghuan zhi lüe*, came to Japan only in 1859 (Ansei 6). From the perspective of its content, soon after its publication we find that the 100-fascicle edition of the *Haiguo tuzhi* cited it in over thirty places. There is thus the possibility that it came to Japan after having already been extensively used by the *Haiguo tuzhi*. When compiling his work, Xu Jiyou not only made extensive use of Bridgman's *Lianbang zhilüe*, but he is also said to have sought the assistance of Rutherford Alcock (1809-97), then serving as British consul in Fuzhou, and James Hepburn (1815-1911), then working in Xiamen (Amoy) as a doctor.

For these reasons, the *Yinghuan zhi lüe* was an extraordinary document for its day, a guide to overseas information with numerous live news sources. By the same token, the two men with whom he had contact would themselves, oddly enough, have a connection to Japan. The Japanese-punctuated edition of his work was reprinted in the year after the original arrived in Japan, and it circulated widely in the late Edo years. Even into the Meiji years, a translated edition of the text [by Hirai Tadashi 平井正] was published under the title *Zokkai eiri eikan shiryaku* 俗解繪入瀛環史略 (Brief history of the maritime circuit, explained and illustrated, [Tokyo: Yamanaka Ichibei 山中市兵], 1874), and its influence remained on a par with the *Haiguo tuzhi*.

Monopoly Policy for Trade with Japan

The importation of Chinese-language reports conveying information on overseas conditions, including the "Tō fūsetsugaki," was entirely the result of Chinese trading vessels traveling to Japan each year. This was the informational transmission route established on the basis of the traditional trading system, and the Chinese and Dutch trading vessels served as a kind of "lifeline" invisibly supporting Japan during the era of the so-called exclusion system.

Now that we have examined the “shock” brought by works such as the *Haiguo tuzhi*, we need to take a look at the ships that conveyed such reports to Japan. This is an extremely important task, not only to confirm the traditional transmission route, but in considering as well the new informational network that developed thereafter. The coming of Chinese vessels (Tōsen 唐船) to Japan during the Edo period considerably waxed and waned depending on time period. These fluctuations were the result primarily of changes in domestic Chinese conditions and Japanese trading policies. Looking at the entire Edo period as a whole, during the first half, roughly the seventeenth century, the Qing dynasty severely restricted foreign trade to inflict a blow on, for example, the Zheng 鄭 family which opposed it and thus enacted the “move the border edict” (*qianjie ling* 遷界令) in 1661 which forced residents along the Chinese coast to resettle inland. After the Zheng surrendered, the court issued the “expand to the sea edict” (*zhanhai ling* 展海令) in 1684 and encouraged people to advance overseas. These changing circumstances caused sharp dislocations in the number of vessels come to port, but on average there were always several dozen Chinese ships traveling to Japan annually.

In the latter half of the Edo period, roughly from the start of the eighteenth century, the Japanese issued a number of trade restriction edicts known as the New Shōtoku Laws 正徳新令 to stop the outflow of gold, silver, copper, and other precious metals. With the issuance of the new laws in 1715, the number of Chinese vessels allowed to port was limited to thirty annually, and in 1742 it was further reduced to ten per year. The Japanese trade restrictions were particularly concerned with trade in copper, and not only did they reduce the number of Chinese ships coming to port but this actually had an influence on the ports of departure as well.

This all derived from the fact that, as is well known, Sino-Japanese trade during the Edo period was fundamentally trade in copper, with the Qing needing Japanese copper above all else for use in minting coins. However, when the Japanese added the restrictions on trade in copper by virtue of the New Shōtoku Laws, the Chinese at the time had no choice but to adopt a new countermeasure. In concrete terms, this was a policy of discontinuing the method of copper regulation by privately contracted merchants by which Japanese copper could be imported reliably, and monopoly on all trade with Japan was assigned to one official merchant family and twelve licensed merchant families (*eshang* 額商). As it turned out, the mercantile bases for these official and licensed merchants—their *huiguan* 會館 or *Landsmannschaften*—were set up in the port city of Zhapu. Thus, the ports of disembarkation for vessels involved in trade with Japan heretofore—Guangzhou, Xiamen, Shanghai, and elsewhere—were gradually whittled down to the single port of Zhapu.

Zhapu was a port located in the present-day city of Pinghu, Zhejiang Province. It was the base port for Zhe Customs in the Qing dynasty’s system of four customs sites (established in 1685, these included Ao Customs 澳海關 in Guangzhou, Min Customs 閩海關 in Xiamen, Zhe Customs 浙海關 in Ningbo, and Jiang Customs 江海關 in Shanghai). Thereafter, trading ships coming to port at Zhapu were known in Japan as “Ningbo vessels,” and together with the “Nanjing vessels” coming from Shanghai and the region around the mouth of the Yangzi River were together dubbed *kuchibune* 口船 (meaning ships arriving from coastal Chinese cities). The appellation *kuchibune* differentiated these ships from the *nakaokubune* 中奥船, most of which vessels came

originally from Guangdong and Fujian, and *okubune* 奥船, vessels from Vietnam, Siam, and elsewhere in Southeast Asia. Given conditions in the copper trade, though, in the latter half of the eighteenth century, the *kuchibune* came to dominate the great majority of trade with Japan, and ships departing from the port of Zhapu ultimately monopolized it completely.



Nanjing vessel



Ningbo vessel

Thus, the *kuchibune* coming to port from Zhapu were the traditional means for the transmission of information between China and Japan, the issue we have been addressing, and the most important route of conveyance for bringing foreign news to Japan throughout the Edo period. According to two magisterial works by the late Professor Ōba Osamu 大庭脩 (1927-2002), *Edo jidai Tōsen mochiwatarisho no kenkyū* 江戸時代唐船持渡書の研究 (A study of books transported [to Japan] aboard Chinese vessels in the Edo period)²¹ and *Kanseki yunyū no bunka shi* 漢籍輸入の文化史 (A cultural history of the importation of Chinese texts [to Japan]),²² the ships that brought “Chinese texts” (*Kanseki* 漢籍) to Japan were only the Nanjing vessels and the Ningbo vessels, insofar as we can determine this from the extant historical materials known as the *Tōban kamotsu chō* 唐蠻貨物帳 (Registers of Chinese and barbarian cargo).

There are many conceivable reasons for this, but as Professor Ōba takes pains to point out, the two provinces—Jiangsu and Zhejiang—from which these vessels set sail were from the early Qing dynasty the core of publishing in China. He also notes that just when the need for Chinese texts in Japan was on the rise, the *kuchibune* trading system took firm shape. Supported by an importation route with such positive conditions, a long string of Chinese texts conveying information from overseas, first and foremost being the *Haiguo tuzhi*, were continuously transported by ship to Japan throughout the Edo era.

²¹ (Suita: Kansai daigaku shuppanbu, 1967).

²² (Tokyo: Kenbun shuppan, 1997). Concerning the coming of Chinese vessels to Japan and the importation of Chinese texts, I have learned a great deal from these and other writings by Professor Ōba.

A New Information Network for Japan

The traditional route by which information was transmitted to Japan for over 200 years began rapidly in the mid-1850s to fall apart. One reason for this decline was the stunning spread throughout South China of the Taiping Rebellion which exploded in Guangxi Province in 1851. In particular, two years later in 1853 the Taipings occupied the city of Nanjing, and as a result the official and licensed merchant houses which monopolized the copper trade “together with their families all collapsed and were like floating duckweed.”²³

Another reason has to do with the fact that just at this point in time Shanghai, in its tenth year as an open port, was developing advantageous geographical conditions, surpassing Guangzhou and Zhapu, hitherto the ports for foreign trade, and gradually rising as the largest harbor in East Asia. The new information network for Japan centering around Shanghai was suddenly beginning to take shape. The former reason is fully evident and requires no further comment, but because the latter is an extremely important issue when we consider the subsequent development of the transmission of information, let me delve into it in a bit more detail.

Toward the Second Major Port in Asia

As we noted earlier, China’s foreign trade in the Qing period, especially the latter half, was generally speaking divided between the West (at Guangzhou, Ao Customs) and Japan (at Zhapu, Zhe Customs). Shanghai was, by contrast, the pivot of regional domestic trade, while its level of foreign trade remained quite low.

Because it was located at the mouth of the Yangzi River which flowed into the Chinese hinterland and was situated next to the Jiangnan Delta which was rich in produce from Jiangsu and Zhejiang, when the port of Shanghai was opened in 1843 by the Treaty of Nanjing, in just ten years’ time it advanced to a level of foreign trade exceeding Guangzhou. It sprang into second place, after Jakarta, as a trading port in Southeast Asia.²⁴

In addition to obvious geographic reasons, it was also the case that from the latter half of the 1840s Guangdong and Guangxi witnessed the repeated rising of armed secret societies, and the atmosphere of the Guangzhou area became increasingly dangerous. Such factors notwithstanding, the growth in the amount of imports and exports through Shanghai was truly astounding.

The Opening of Regular Shipping Lanes

It was not only a matter of trade. Indeed, it was during this period that Shanghai gradually became the pivot of “transportation” within East Asia. For example, first the

²³ Yamawaki Teijirō 山脇悌二郎, *Nagasaki no Tōjin bōeki* 長崎の唐人貿易 (Chinese trade in Nagasaki) (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1964).

²⁴ Mao Boke 茅伯科, ed., *Shanghai gang shi, gujindai bufen* 上海港史, 古近代部分 (History of the port of Shanghai, premodern and modern sections) (Beijing: Renmin jiaotong chubanshe, 1990).

British firm, Peninsular & Oriental Steam Navigation Co., opened a regular route between Shanghai and Hong Kong in 1850, and thereby extended its London-Hong Kong network to Shanghai. Next, the French firm, Services Maritimes des Messageries Impériales, established a regular lane between Saigon and Shanghai in 1861 and between Marseilles and Shanghai in 1863, thereby directly connecting Shanghai with Southeast Asia and with the European continent. A short while later, the American firm, Pacific Mail Steamship Co., opened a sea lane in 1867 between San Francisco and Hong Kong, which included Yokohama and Shanghai among its ports of call.

How was Japan tied into this? At about the same time as Japan opened its ports in 1859, the P&O commissioned first the Shanghai-Nagasaki route; then in 1864 it opened a regular lane between Shanghai and Yokohama. Services Maritimes opened a regular lane in 1865 between Shanghai and Yokohama and thus tied in with the link between Shanghai and Marseilles. When Pacific Mail opened its San Francisco-Hong Kong lane in 1867, it set up a branch line between Yokohama and Shanghai.

A Port with 3,500 Ships Coming and Going

It was not, of course, only mail ships with commissioned sea lanes that operated around Shanghai. Many warships and merchant vessels of the Western powers were also active at this time in the East Asian “hub” centered on Shanghai. In the case of battleships, Perry’s famous squadron arrived in Japan via Shanghai in 1853, and the following year the flotilla commanded by Admiral James Stirling (1791-1865), having arrived in pursuit of a Russian squadron, similarly set out from Shanghai.

As for merchant vessels, Shanghai had by the early 1850s already established itself as the second busiest trading port for Southeast Asia, and with the subsequent intrusion of foreign ships becoming ever more intense, the number of ships calling in the single year of 1857 neared 1,000. From the late 1850s, with the opening of Japan and given other domestic and foreign circumstances, the number of ships calling at port continued to rise steadily, so that in 1866 it neared a total of 3,500.²⁵

When one compares these figures to the number of foreign merchant vessels that called at Nagasaki when the port opened in 1859, there were but ninety ships that called there in the ten-month period beginning in March 1860.²⁶ That number reached a total of 295 for the entire calendar year of 1869.²⁷ Considering how soon this was after the opening of the port, these are by no means low numbers, but in fact the majority were British and American vessels exporting coal. They were transporting their merchandise

²⁵ Yamamoto Hirofumi 山本博文, *Nagasaki kikiyaku nikki: bakumatsu no jōhō sensō* 長崎開役日記：幕末の情報戦争 (Diary of a Nagasaki listening official: Information wars in the late Edo period) (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1999).

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Matsutake Hideo 松竹秀雄, *Bakumatsu no Nagasaki kō jōsei* 幕末の長崎港情勢 (Conditions at the port of Nagasaki in the late Edo period) (Tokyo: Kusano shobō, 1992).

procured cheaply in Japan to Shanghai where many of the steamships docked, and there they would sell it as fuel at a high price.²⁸

Thus, from the latter half of the 1850 through the first half of the 1860s, a transportation and communications network took shape surrounding Shanghai. This became possible for the first time by virtue of the numerous visits of merchant ships—in the main, mail ships, battleships, and steamships. Later, in the 1870s, when a submarine telegraph cable between Nagasaki and Europe was laid with a stopover point in Shanghai, its function as a transportation “hub” became that much firmer.

The news transmitted by dint of this new network far exceeded what had heretofore been brought to Japan by the *kuchibune*. Not only in quantity but in quality as well, an immense change transpired. As concerned the history of Sino-Japanese cultural interactions, the area of Zhapu which by now boasted a two-century history came to an end, and the era of Shanghai had at last arrived.

²⁸ W. J. C. Huyssen van Kattendyke, *Nagasaki kaigun denshūjo no hibi* 長崎海軍伝習所の日々 (Days at the naval training center in Nagasaki), trans. Mizuta Nobutoshi 水田信利 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1964).