

The Research on the Arrival of the Southern Barbarians Screen- European Sources of Japan's Modernization

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Abstract. Most mainstream studies of the so-called Age of Exploration have been dominated by Europe, while the dominance of Africa, the Americas, and especially Asia has often been neglected. In East Asia, the early activities of the colonizers did not resort to direct violent plunder, but rather proceeded gradually in terms of trade, religion and culture. These activities are reflected in many of the East Asian artefacts of the colonial era. Using Kanou Naizen's *The Arrival of the Southern Barbarian Screen* as the object of study, this study attempts to uncover the European colonial elements reflected in it, and also focuses on Japan's proactive diplomatic behavior, highlighting East Asia's equal status with Europe in the early colonial era. As a result, we have been able to change our perceptions of pre-nineteenth-century East Asia as "uncivilized" and "closed", and become aware of the one-sidedness of Eurocentric narratives. Furthermore, it illustrates the long-term impact of the arrival of European colonizers on Japan and even East Asia.

Keywords: Japanese art; colonial era; nanban culture.

1. Introduction

In today's world, every civilization is linked through trade, technology and culture. People have become accustomed to an interconnected society and see it as the norm. However, as the practice of decolonization becomes more accepted, there is a greater contemporary awareness of the clash of civilizations, resistance and even violence behind globalization. At the same time, works of art, as one of the most intuitive historical materials, provide us with suitable research objects for understanding and reflecting on colonial history. During the colonial era, so-called the Age of Exploration, Europeans covered almost the entire globe. It is now increasingly recognized that Asia, the Americas and Africa were not "explored" by Europeans, and that the definition of Age of Exploration is entirely Eurocentric. However, decolonization is about much more. The contradictions created by the colonizers were reflected not only in the slave trade, massacres or cultural genocide, but also in their own impact as outsiders, suddenly intervening in the societies of other civilizations with a series of repercussions. East Asia, one of the major destinations for European colonial voyages, has always had a relatively well-developed internal order and international outlook. Under the influence of Chinese culture, the Hua-Yi distinction was generally accepted by Sinosphere countries such as Japan, Korea and Vietnam. When Europeans arrived on the west coast of the Pacific, the people here regarded them as barbarians. That is different from, or the exact opposite of, Europeans seeing themselves as civilized people.

The *Arrival of the Southern Barbarians Screen* was painted by Japanese artist Kanou Naizen (1570-1616) during the Momoyama Period (1582-1603). In the Japanese mindset, Southern Barbarians, or Nanban, refer to uncivilized people from Southeast Asia. This reflects the fact of European colonization in Southeast Asia on the one hand, and on the other hand shows the attitude of the Japanese when they were forced to come into contact with European civilization. This screen shows how European's trade, live and do missionary work in Nagasaki. This work can be seen as a historical record of the earliest direct European interaction with Japan, and the details of it can provide a reference for the study of the motives and activities of the European colonizers. Much of the current research on European-Japanese relations focuses on the persecution of Christians, the Haikin policy, and the trade with the Dutch. However, the beginning of this history, the arrival of the Europeans, has not been given enough attention. There was confrontation and learning between Japan and the so-

called southern barbarians. The southern barbarian culture provided a shortcut for Japan to learn modern science, but it also exacerbated Japan's internal and external conflicts [1].

This article will use this screen as the object of study, using Content Analysis and Comparative Analysis to uncover the content behind the details of the picture. It will study the impact that Europeans had on the region when they first arrived in Japan in terms of religion, commerce, and culture. Furthermore, try to explain the external roots of the problems of modern history in East Asia.

2. European Arrival in the 16th Century Japan

This section looks at three main aspects of Europeans before and after their arrival in Japan in the 16th century. It ranges from medieval European imaginings and records of Japan to the changes in Japan's worldview and concept of diplomacy after the arrival of Europeans. This is complemented by the geopolitical context of Japan and East Asia as a whole in the pre-colonial era.

2.1. European Exploration of East Asia in the Early Colonial Period

European exploration of East Asia has been going on since BC. During this period, Europeans arrived in East Asia mainly through land routes, especially the Silk Road. In 1513, Jorge Álvares became the first European who arrived China by sea at Tamão in the Pearl River Delta. Later in 1542, António da Mota was thrown by a storm to the island of Tanegashima. This accident made him the first European set foot on Japan. Six years later, the Spanish missionary Francis Xavier came to Japan. Gradually, information about the Japanese islands reached Europe through various channels, and Europe's first understanding of Japan began, and since then more and more Westerners have come to Japan for missionary and trading activities [2]. These events initiated the European activities in East Asia during the colonial era. For Japan, the time from the unintended arrival of António da Mota until Tokugawa Shogunate enacted Sakoku System in the 1630s was a time of interaction with early colonial Europe.

East Asia has been a destination of European exploration for centuries. In the Middle Ages, Marco Polo described Japan as a place wealthy in gold and the Japanese ruler had a golden palace. He also mentioned that Japanese people worshiped various idols with animal heads. But Marco himself had never been there, all these information was heard from Chinese and laced with his imagination [3].

The opening of the Indian Ocean route was the basis for Europeans to reach East Asia by sea. Before reaching China and Japan, the Portuguese Afonso de Albuquerque had already conquered Goa in India in 1510 [4]. Later in 1557, Portugal acquired a permanent lease for Macau. In the centuries that followed, European activity in East Asia took these two places as important points of departure. It can be seen that during the colonial era, colonies and conquered trading ports were the main support for European exploration and colonization.

2.2. Pre-colonial Japan and East Asia

Before Europeans arrived by sea, the center of East Asia was undoubtedly China. The tribute system centered on China lasted until the end of the nineteenth century. Japan, which was included in this system, was being divided in the 15th and 16th centuries. The whole of East Asia was in a relatively stable, hierarchical order until the arrival of the Europeans. A series of historical events that have occurred in East Asia since then, including the establishment of the Qing Dynasty by the Manchu people and the unification of Japan, have been linked to the arrival of Europeans, especially the introduction of technology such as firearms. There was an interval of more than 70 years between the Upheaval of Ōnin began in 1467 and the introduction of the rifle in 1543, during which time Japan had not been able to unify. However, only 30 years passed between 1543 and 1573 when Oda Nobunaga unified Japan [5].

During the long history period before colonial era, East Asia held the world view of Tianxia, which means all under Heaven. The meaning of the term has changed over the millennia, and by the sixteenth century the Chinese Tianxia represented the world within the Sinosphere. In Japan, on the

other hand, the term refers to the entire country under the administration of the shogun, which is roughly equivalent to the Japanese archipelago. The definition of civilizations outside Tianxia as "barbarians", which originally referred to peoples outside of China, was subtly modified in Japan.

2.3. Japanese Concepts of Diplomacy Before and After the Arrival of Europeans

As mentioned above, Japan has its own set of world view and diplomatic philosophy. The diplomacy of East Asian countries was in the Hua-Yi system. Hua originally referred to China, while Yi represented the barbarians outside of China. Until the Tang Dynasty, Japan had been in the position of "Eastern Barbarians". However, from the 8th century, Japan's national sovereignty was established. In 704, in the state letter from Japan to Silla, it was written: "Tennō respectfully greets the king of Silla" [6]. The establishment of the title of Tennō indicated that Japan was beginning to place itself on an equal footing with China, with the monarchs of both countries being emperors, while the monarch of Silla was a king enthroned by China.

During the Middle Ages, Japan began to challenge the traditional Hua-Yi system. This shift came about mainly as a result of the following events: the emergence of the Shinkoku view, the Mongol invasion, and the activities of the Japanese pirates (Wokou). Medieval Japan believed that there were three great powers in the world: China, India and Japan. China and India brought Confucianism and Buddhism to Japan respectively. In order to get rid of Japan's cultural passivity, the rulers came up with the Shinkoku view that Japan could be on an equal footing with China and India by relying on the Shintoism that it had developed on its own. Two large-scale Mongol raids on Japan in the thirteenth century ended in failure. These two victories aroused Japanese national consciousness and led to the widespread acceptance of the Shinkoku concept. At the same time, Japan began to place itself in the position of Hua in the Hua-Yi order, undermining the international order that had been centered on China in East Asia.

The Mongol invasion gave Japanese pirates a great opportunity to grow. The Shogunate recognized their legitimacy and saw piracy as a great contribution to the resistance against the Mongols and China, and as a symbol of the strength of the Japanese nation [7]. However, before the arrival of the Europeans, Japan's challenge to the Hua-Yi order was also limited to cultural and unofficial piracy.

Europeans brought firearms, exotic goods and a new world view in the 16th century. An unknown Western world began to deepen Japan's concept of diplomacy. After unified Japan, Toyotomi Hideyoshi began to prepare for the conquest of Korea, the Ming China, and even India by military force. Such ambitions were based on new types of weapons imported by Europeans. The culmination of Japan's challenge to the old order in East Asia after the arrival of the Europeans, or the largest Japanese foreign military campaign before the Sino-Japanese War, was the Imjin War of 1592 to 1598. Although Japan was defeated in this war, it represented Japan's violent revolt against the China-centered East Asian order. The role of the Europeans in this event was indispensable. On the one hand they brought a broader view of the world and made the Japanese realize that they had a larger world to explore. On the other hand, they strengthened Japan's military power through the introduction of weapons, which contributed to Japan's unification and its belief that it could conquer all of East Asia and the world.

3. Nanban Culture Illustrated in the Screen

In this section, the author uses the details in the screens as objects of study to illustrate the influence of European culture in Japan as reflected in them, most notably the spread of religion and the commercial activities of Europeans. In addition, the fate of Nanban culture in the Sakoku era and its long-term impact on Japan are also discussed.

3.1. Christian Elements Shown on the Screen—Churches and Missionaries

A Mission was one of the key motivations for European foreign exploration during the colonial era. Christianity was first introduced to East Asia during the Tang Dynasty in China, but its influence was extremely limited. It was the arrival of Catholicism in the 16th century that had a truly profound impact. On 15 August 1549, Francis Xavier, a Jesuit missionary, landed in Kagoshima and began the spread of Catholicism in Japan [8]. Missionary work went well in 16th century Japan due to the Jesuits' adoption of a series of missionary strategies adapted to Japanese society, such as reaching out to the upper classes, preaching in Japanese, and introducing natural sciences [9]. Many Japanese feudal lords were baptized as Christians during this period, laying the political foundations for an atmosphere of tolerance towards Christianity in Japanese society. This period, also known as the Kirishitan era, was the stage when the southern barbarian culture was introduced to Japan and initially accepted.

There are many obvious Christian elements in this Arrival of Southern Babarian Screen by Kanou Naizen. The most dominant elements are the church and the missionaries. There are two religious' buildings in the upper left and right corners of the picture, and by looking at the idols in them one can see that this is supposed to be a depiction of a church, but it looks very different from a real church with Christian mythological figures.



Fig. 1 Church painted on the top left of the screen

(https://www.kobecitymuseum.jp/collection/large_image?heritage=365028&apiHeritage=399808&digital=1)



Fig. 2 Church painted on the top right of the screen

(https://www.kobecitymuseum.jp/collection/large_image?heritage=365028&apiHeritage=399808&digital=2)

Both buildings illustrate in Fig.1 and Fig.2 are uniformly known as Nanbanji, the temple of the Southern Barbarians. At the top of these two buildings is a symbol resembling a cross, and this symbol is known as the Kuruko, which is a phonetic translation of the Portuguese word for cross.



Fig. 3 Family crests in the shape of Kururo [10]

As mentioned earlier, Christianity received a welcome from the upper classes when it was introduced to Japan. Many daimyo were baptized as Christians, changing not only their beliefs but even the family crests. This fast change could be visually understood from the examples in Fig.3. In addition to the efforts of the missionaries themselves, Oda Nobunaga also contributed to the spread of Christianity in Japan for the purpose of suppressing Buddhist power [10]. Another noteworthy detail is the depiction of religious figures in the picture. Based on the characteristics of the icons in these two churches, the iconography here actually combines images of the Virgin, Jesus, and Confucian saints.

Missionaries are also the main Christian element reflected in this screen. In Fig.4, those in black robes are Jesuits, and those in grey robes with waist cords and bare feet are Franciscans [11]. During the 16th century, missionaries made many efforts for the acceptance of Christianity by all classes in Japan. The missionaries adopted different missionary strategies for the underclass and the upper class. In the 16th century Japan there was political turmoil, moral degradation, and frequent social problems. For this reason, the Jesuits attached great importance to the propagation of the universal moral and ethical concepts of Christianity. At the same time, the missionaries also actively propagated basic doctrines such as the equality of all people before God, which "deeply touched the innocent souls of the Japanese [12]." In addition, the missionaries raised the status of Christianity in the hearts of the people by opening hospitals, setting up orphanages and other charitable works. As for the strategy among the daimyo, they were more tempted by the knowledge of natural science and the benefits of trade.



Fig. 4 Missionaries painted on the screen

(https://www.kobecitymuseum.jp/collection/large_image?heritage=365028&apiHeritage=399808&digital=2)

Overall, the screen shows the popularity of Christianity when it was first introduced to Japan and its tendency to integrate with the local culture. On the other hand, the fact that different groups of missionaries gathered here also suggests that Japan had become one of the areas where colonizers competed with each other.

3.2. 16th Century Japan: Part of the Global Market

Although the Japanese initially viewed the Europeans as barbarians, they were confronted with the novelty of exotic objects, technology, and the immense profitability of trade, and they were able to break away from their previously entangled Hua-Yi system and actively participate in the

international commodity markets of the 16th century. This business relationship is known as the "Southern barbarian trade."

The ability of Europeans to reach Japan by sea during the colonial era was inextricably linked to the maturity of shipbuilding technology. The Portuguese carrack was one of the largest cargo ships in Europe at the time, and the Japanese called it the "Black Ship" because of the black waterproof material that coated its exterior. As Japan's overseas trade was not well-developed at that time, the size of the harbor could not accommodate the huge carracks. As a result, large vessels are forced to anchor inshore and rely on dinghies for the transfer of personnel and cargo. Such a situation is shown in Fig.5, which is in the middle part of the screen.



Fig. 5 One carrack shown in the middle of the screen

(https://www.kobecitymuseum.jp/collection/large_image?heritage=365028&apiHeritage=399808&digital=2)

Many of the trade-related details in the screen show that Europeans had begun to dominate world trade in the 16th century. For example, the merchant crews of different colors on board ships and on land, animals from Africa, India and South East Asia, and so on. These traders were attracted to Japan not only because of the records of medieval European explorers, but also because of the large amount of silver available in Japan at that time. The rapid economic development of East Asia in the sixteenth century and the growing scale of China's textile and ceramics manufacturing industries led to the need for large quantities of silver as circulating currency in the Chinese market. Japan, on the other hand, was in the midst of the war years and had a huge demand for Chinese goods. However, the Wokou activities and the sea ban imposed by the Ming dynasty forced the disruption of trade between China and Japan, so the Europeans traded between the two countries, mainly in silk and silver, and made considerable profits [13].

3.3. The Post-Nanban Era: The Rise and Fall of European Culture in Japan

After the unification of Japan, there was a shift in official attitudes towards Christianity and Europeans. This shift was partly related to Japan's relations with different European countries and another part a consideration of the internal rule of the Japanese rulers. As European missions were inherently colonial and aggressive in nature, Toyotomi Hideyoshi realized that Catholic power brought to Japan not only material benefits and scientific culture, but also a torn society and Japanese believers who were to a certain extent exploited by the European countries. Japan came into contact with Protestant countries such as Holland and England in the late 16th century. These countries were not as closely associated with mission and trade as Portugal or Spain, and thus were less likely to threaten the Shogunate's rule. By 1583, the Jesuits had 200 churches and 200,000 disciples in Japan [14]. In addition, a number of daimyo dedicated land to the Church, most notably Nagasaki. Restrictions on missionaries and European traders were at first limited to the legal and economic level, and were followed by a series of massacres and persecutions. Eventually, in 1639, the Shogunate made it clear: "The landing of Portuguese is forbidden, and violators will have their ships destroyed

and their crews killed [15]." This event marked the break of Japan's official dealings with the Catholic countries of Europe.

However, before Commodore Matthew Perry of the U.S. Navy led the Black Ships to Japan again in 1853 - this time it was an ironclad warship, no longer a wooden galleon, Japan has not completely closed itself off. Rangaku, or culture and knowledge from the Netherlands, was prevalent throughout the Edo period. After expelling the Catholic countries, the Tokugawa Shogunate maintained good relations with the Protestant Netherlands and reserved Dejima as a trading location for the Dutch. Through Rangaku, Japan was able to learn from the achievements of the scientific revolution in Europe at that time, and to lay the foundation of science in Japan in the early days. This also helps to explain the rapid and successful modernization of Japan since the forced American opening of the country to foreign trade in 1854 [16].

In terms of diplomatic concepts, as Japan began to have close contact with Europeans in the 16th century, the Japanese further strengthened their sense of self-identity with their own country. During the Edo period, Hokkaido and the Ryukyu Islands gradually became Japan's own territories that were considered to be inhabited by barbarians. Ambitions for the East Asian continent and even the entire Western Pacific region were also rising in this situation of half-understanding of the world and blind arrogance. It can be argued that Japan's series of expansionist behaviors, including colonial aggression, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were influenced by the European colonizers from the 16th century onwards to some extent.

4. Summary

This study reveals a range of European influences on East Asia during the colonial era through the observation and analysis of screen details. Combining the changes in Japan and its neighboring countries around the 16th century with the worldwide activities of European colonizers during the same period, one can ultimately conclude that the arrival of Europeans accelerated the change of order in East Asia. Missionaries, merchants, and explorers came to Japan with a colonizer's mentality, hoping to assimilate and colonize the place culturally. Further, as with other Asian colonies, attempts were made to plunder local resources and enrich the Europeans themselves. At the same time, the event of arriving in Japan itself was inseparable from the establishment of European colonies around the world. Whether it was the Portuguese exploring Japan with Goa and Macao as their strongholds in the beginning, or the VOC occupying Southeast Asia's good relations with Japan later on, all of them were based on the invasion and plundering of other parts of Asia. On the other hand, Japan adopted a proactive attitude of learning and utilizing European culture after coming into contact with it, further achieving national unity and using a flexible foreign policy to maximize its own interests. However, the European colonizers stimulated Japan's nationalism and made Japan more ambitious for the East Asian continent than it had been during the Toyotomi Hideyoshi era. After the Meiji Restoration, Japan modernized rapidly with the knowledge of Rangaku accumulated in the Edo period, and turned from a country threatened by colonialism into a colonial empire, completely breaking the Hua-Yi system that had existed in East Asia for thousands of years. Although the arrival of Europeans accelerated the physical modernization of East Asia, Eurocentric studies of colonial-era East Asia have not considered the potential risks of this supposed progress. This study provides some reference for reflecting on the impact of the colonizer's nonviolent behavior, especially the spread of Christianity in colonial societies and the introduction of technologies such as firearms. For the study of the decolonization of East Asian history, this paper also attempts to provide a perspective that focuses on international relations. There are still many unsupported and unsupplemented arguments in this study. In future research in this field, it is necessary to think about how to get rid of Eurocentrism while at the same time not interpreting the colonial history of East Asia from the perspective of Asiocentrism or nationalism, or else the researchers will fall into another kind of extreme thinking. Furthermore, changing the prejudice against East Asia through practice rather than

limiting it to disputes over theories is the realistic purpose of rethinking colonial history and studying East Asia.

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