

Dining with the *Daimyō*: Performative Intercultural Exchange and Border Thinking through Seventeenth-Century European-Japanese Banquets

Wim De Winter¹

Sakoku and Border Thinking: Global Designs Shaping Japan's Early Modern Frontiers

Upon investigating the history of intercultural interactions in seventeenth-century Japan, one ought to consider both its political borders and its conceptual borders within a broader world historical² context of East-Asian maritime exchange. It may be fruitful to apply the “border thinking” epistemology of Walter Mignolo to this context, as a tool to conceptualize these borders as forming specific meeting points of global designs and local histories, which are adapted, adopted, integrated or ignored at local levels,³ as reflected in practices of hospitality and recontextualising exchange in seventeenth-century Japan. Certain economic and political processes can subsequently be typified as “global designs” implemented on local scales, such as the global expansion of European maritime commerce and capital leading to English merchants settling in the coastal town of Hirado 平戸 in 1613, where they became embedded in the design of Tokugawa hegemony, and in the dynamics of local social and cultural exchange. This Japanese context differs from Mignolo’s perspective in the sense that colonial domination and its resulting subalternity, which often seemed to accompany European commerce elsewhere during the “early modern” period, did not develop there as such. This makes Japan into a potentially interesting counterexample for a history of diverging modernity, or as a mode of resistance

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2 Meant here as a history of interactively created worlds of connection, interaction and exchange. Another approach of this perspective may be found in Bentley 1993.

3 Mignolo 2000, ix-x.

against certain global designs. According to Robert Hellyer, this is due to the *bakufu* 幕府 government's reaction to a nascent form of "proto-globalization", regulating the flow of interaction through a series of "domain agency" measures.⁴

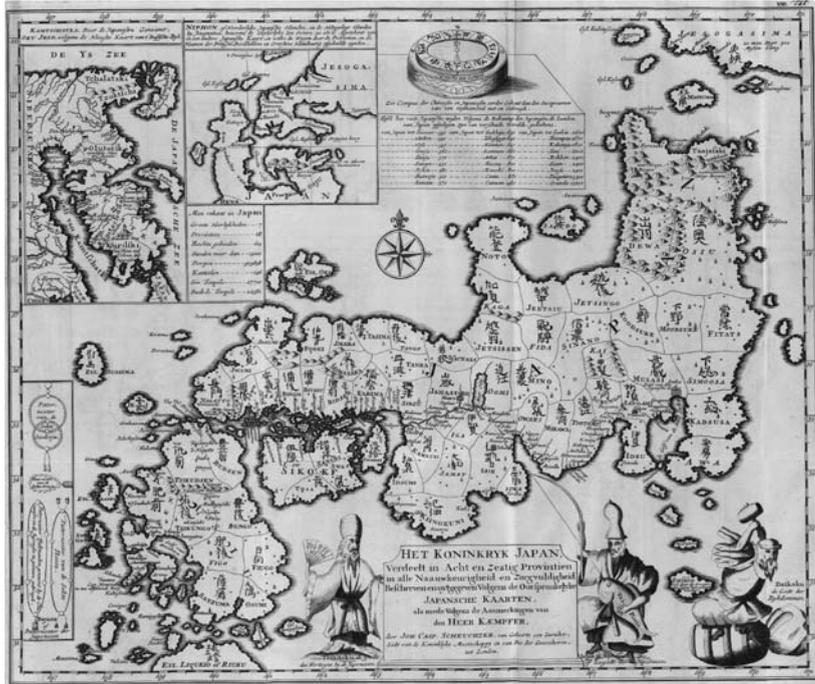


Fig. 1 Map of Japan (Kaempfer 1729, Tab. viii)

The perspective on interaction of global and local dimensions in Tokugawa 徳川 Japan (1603–1868) is determined by the emergence of a historical concept of closure called *sakoku* 鎖国, as the development of a feudal Tokugawa hegemony with global aspirations, which influenced and was influenced by local histories and foreign exchange.⁵ The historical debate on "early-modern" Japan as a "closed country" still echoes into both European and Japanese historiography.⁶ However, Sepp Linhart has mentioned how contemporary re-

4 Hellyer 2009, 12, 49-50.

5 Conceptualised as such by Toby 1984, xiii-xvii.

6 And also beyond it, into fields of research such as literary studies or sociology, in which it is both critically appropriated or uncritically accepted. Kowaleski-Wallace 2007 is an example of

search still often circumvents the issue of “perceived closure”,⁷ which nonetheless remains of great contextual importance in considering the historical possibilities of intercultural interaction in Japan. The concept of closure itself refers back to German physician Engelbert Kaempfer (1651–1716), who commented on what he perceived as a closed Japan in an essay added to his *History of Japan* published 1727.⁸ This work was later translated by Shizuki Tadao 志筑忠雄 (1760–1806) into Japanese (*Sakokuron* 鎖国論, 1802) and eventually used as an argument to legitimise Meiji 明治 modernisation against so-called “Tokugawa backwardness”, and was again picked up by Japanese scholars and European historians to explain aspects of Japanese culture.⁹ Some scholars have convincingly argued that this presents a highly Eurocentric viewpoint, and that one should instead focus on a wider range of interactions. Marius Jansen considers it western ethnocentrism to think that a country that chooses to cut itself off from Westerners has cut itself off from the world, as there was still a trade in Chinese goods, and the limited presence of Dutch or Chinese foreigners still provided information on other parts of the world.¹⁰ Linhart also reminds us of Ronald Toby’s position that the *sakoku*-concept cannot adequately describe the reality of the Tokugawa shogunate’s (Tokugawa *bakufu* 徳川幕府) foreign policy of *kaikin* 海禁, which consisted of a series of edicts that restricted, but never closed off nor repelled, foreign contact in seventeenth-century Japan in order to establish a political unity and socio-cultural hegemony under Tokugawa reign.¹¹ Kato Eiichi 加藤栄一 interprets this hegemony as an internal establishment of central feudal control over border *daimyō* 大名, which would have influenced the development of Japanese culture, but definitely not as an isolation policy refusing to adopt anything foreign.¹² The *kaikin* policies instead created a selective range of channels and direct agents relating to the outside world, resulting in greater coherence in foreign relations, and in a firmly centralized feudal Tokugawa

the former, while H. Kato 1981 is an example of the latter, stating an approach concerning “Japan’s social energy” requiring some sort of outlet.

7 Linhart 2008, 312.

8 Kaempfer and Scheuchzer 1729.

9 Walker 2002, 62.

10 Jansen 2000, 85-87.

11 Linhart 2008, 311-312.; Meanwhile these edicts have been studied in detail as an evolving series of policies in Laver 2011.

12 E. Kato 1981, 209.

state expressing national power.¹³ Both Ronald Toby and Yasunori Arano 荒野泰典 have indicated a relative openness towards foreign encounters during the early Edo period (Edo jidai 江戸時代, 1603–1868), within the confines of *kaikin*, whereas scholars such as Satoru Fujita 藤田覚 (in his 2005 book named *Kinsei kōki seijishi to taigai kankei* 近世後期政治史と対外関係) tend to differ in noticing tendencies of closure within the Tokugawa or Edo-period, especially claiming that the period from the late eighteenth-century to the Bakumatsu 幕末 (1853–1868) period formed a kind of Shogunate seclusion policy as a process called *sakoku-soho-kan* 鎖国祖法観. This would imply a gradual move from openness towards more rigidly restrictive policies and inflexible practices during the Edo-period, not only by Shogunate officials but also by a general higher-class population during the Bakumatsu period.¹⁴

Within the process of feudal state formation as described by Ronald Toby, a diplomatic protocol had to be developed as a symbolic language expressing relationships among exchange-parties, forming the rules enabling exchange.¹⁵ Both Toby and Walker have argued that a specific way of dealing with “foreignness” was crucial in this development, and consisted of the “creation” of foreigners to fit in a version of diplomatic exchange, as the cornerstone of an identity politics following a logic of difference.¹⁶ Walker thus notices the magnification or creation of the exotic character of peripheral societies such as the Ainu or European foreigners, and of elaborately staged dramatizations of difference via tribute embassies and rituals.¹⁷ Such a foreign policy of selective exclusion required a proactive engagement with the outside world, which demanded the understanding of foreign culture and exchange.¹⁸ To create and understand “the foreign” then presupposes the transfer of cultural

13 Toby 1991, xiv-xv. This position is also shared in Japanese scholarship by Yasunori Arano in his 1988 book, replacing the *sakoku* view with a perspective of international relations structured through four specific locations known as “four mouths”, a common “sea ban” or “maritime prohibition” policy (*sakoku seikasu* 海禁政策) on foreign relations occurring throughout East Asia. See also Yasunori 2005.

14 The author is grateful to Mariko Fukuoka for providing this information, which clarifies this subject from the point of view of Japanese scholarship, and for providing the references to Arano and Fujita.

15 Toby 1991, 183.

16 Walker 2002, 51; Toby also mentions this as a new ideological conception of the Self and the Other, rather than as an absolute system, in Toby 1991, xviii-xx.

17 Walker 2002, 51-54.

18 Walker 2002, 4.

knowledge, which could occur through performative interaction, as an attempt at understanding, mediating or even creating foreignness as an essential aspect of Tokugawa identity politics. This implies the incorporation of difference on a local level while keeping the foreign at an exotic distance, in order to create a distinction while maintaining a hegemonious worldview, which incorporates the foreign exterior as an aspect of itself. Such a perspective would have enabled specific conditions and possibilities of exchange between foreigners and Japanese. The creation of this “design with global ambitions” then converged with the “global design” of maritime cultural exchange, both from within the expansion of European commerce and as an aggregate of pre-existing maritime practices occurring throughout maritime East Asia.

Sugata Bose suggests another interesting global historical perspective on this “design”, in which he disengages from traditional thinking about boundaries and instead looks towards the ocean as a space characterised by specialized flows of capital and labour, skills, ideas and cultures.¹⁹ This space is tied together by webs of economic and cultural relationships, with port cities as specific points of exchange and interaction.²⁰ Such tendencies are well-documented for the *Shuinsen* 朱印船 (Red Seal trade) period,²¹ which partly corresponds with the period of European stay in Hirado, when Japanese maritime trade was organized and stimulated by shogunal permissions. This trade had a specific cross-cultural character, as Japanese ships often employed European navigators or mixed crews.²² Peter Shapinsky argues for exploring cultural exchange in this maritime context as a non-linear series of translations where eclectic cosmopolitan sea-based identities were developed. He takes 16th and 17th century Portolan-maps, as palimpsestic maritime itineraries, to be exemplary products of such cultural translations.²³ Together with the development of hybrid ship craft integrating Chinese, European and Japanese influences, this demonstrates how Japanese-European interaction could result in what Shapinsky calls a hybrid, poly-vocal maritime culture.²⁴

19 Bose 2006, 3.

20 Bose 2006, 6.

21 Approximately dating from 1604 to 1635.

22 Mulder (1985, 155-156) mentions Dutch merchant Jan Joosten independently controlling his own Japanese junk, in order to participate in silk trade.

23 Shapinsky 2006, 4-5.

24 Shapinsky 2006, 22-24.

Sakoku and Liminal Praxis: Shaping Local Identities on the Intercultural Frontiers of Hirado and Deshima

The convergence of these tendencies of maritime cultural exchange with the aforementioned development of a Tokugawa hegemony incorporating foreign influences then suggests a border at which specific practices of exchange formed as adaptations or answers to both “designs”: the design of “maritime culture”, which implies foreign exchange as a common aspect of maritime practices, and the design of “Tokugawa hegemony”, which implies the foreign as a created Other in establishing difference. This convergence would shape and influence the practical lives and exchanges of people in the port of Hirado from 1613 to 1641, and Deshima from 1641 onwards, creating specific social identities and exchanges as its resulting adaptations, to be considered as forms of “border thinking” or “liminal praxis”. Contemporary cultural anthropology employs the concept of “liminal praxis” in order to designate those practices where cultural interaction and exchange cross boundaries, creating shared experiences and ways of thinking which can shape and create identities.²⁵ Anthropologists Donnan and Wilson also call this phenomenon the “frontier effect”, thereby denoting a specific set of practices and negotiated contacts occurring in a specific zone, where dynamic human relations form a mixed transborder society.²⁶ This concept seems to apply very well to interaction between Europeans, Chinese and Japanese in Hirado, where a local border praxis of exchange created identities from within shared social relations, as reflected in performative exchange of gifts and hospitality.²⁷ In his 2016 book chapter on Early Modern East Asia, Michael Laver has also recognised Hirado and Nagasaki as liminal spaces, yet he designates these as a neutral space for trade, or a “space between”.²⁸ Yet, this would not have been a neutral space at all, but rather a space in which certain “global designs” and power relations were active, and where the above border practices took place as processes of learning to which those already instructed had a clear advantage. The concrete aspects of such border practices can be analysed in their connection, adaptation, incorporation or resistance to the converging global designs of maritime cultures of exchange and Tokugawa feudal hegemony.

25 Pinxten and De Munter 2006, 146-147.

26 Donnan and Wilson 2010, 7-11.

27 De Winter 2013, 572-579.

28 Laver 2011, 31-33.

Hirado held an important legacy of foreign trade and seafaring, as a place where merchants gathered from throughout Japan in order to interact and to trade with Europeans,²⁹ and where local ship crews were ethnically and culturally mixed.³⁰ Frequent accommodation and reception of people from different areas made Hirado into a kind of intercultural crossroad which was generally considered as a hospitable place, or as Mulder describes it: “One of the main attractions was the pleasant stay at Kochi and Hirado, where food was cheap and plentiful, there was sake galore and the population was friendly”.³¹ Daily exchanges took place in Hirado, involving the Matsura *daimyō*, aristocratic ambassadors from Satsuma and elsewhere, English, Dutch and Chinese merchants, local villagers and craftsmen. These exchanges occurred beyond the diplomacy of commerce, on the scale of daily life, shaping Hirado into a diverse cultural landscape.³² Donnan and Wilson view such cultural landscapes as defined by the social interactions which construct them:³³ they study border cultures as ways of life and forms of meaning which are shared at a specific location, where certain symbols and rituals occur and cultural production takes place. Such border cultures are discernible to both residents and travellers, whose participation in them depends on their knowledge of the “cultural codes on display”.³⁴ The learning process of acquiring “cultural codes” implies intercultural interaction, such as took place in Hirado, to have been a cumulative learning experience. As other foreign travellers preceded those newly arrived, the Dutch residents already knew and shared certain codes of behaviour and involvement towards local aristocracy, whereas the English still had to learn them in 1613. Supposing the convergence of aforementioned “global designs” influenced this learning process, and therefore also the practical exchanges and foreign relations during the processual development of Tokugawa hegemony, specific symbols and performative changes in the cultural incorporation of the

29 Just as Mulder (1985, 2-3) portrayed Hirado as a place of intercultural interaction from the Dutch perspective, Derek Massarella (1990) has done so from the perspective of the English East India Company. Yet both have not considered it from the historical-anthropological or global historical outlook proposed in the present article, which aims to interpret and explain the moments of interaction as presented through banquets or shared meals.

30 Mulder (1985, 46-48) reports of Red Seal ships under the reign of the Hirado *daimyō*, carrying crews comprising Chinese and Japanese crewmen, usually with Dutch navigators.

31 Mulder 1985, 36-37.

32 De Winter 2013; De Winter 2014.

33 Donnan and Wilson 1999, 12.

34 Donnan and Wilson 1999, 64.

foreign could be traced in their significance for this process of acquiring “cultural codes”. These “cultural codes” can be discerned in practices of performative exchange and hospitality, for instance when meals were shared and gifts given, and reveal how the cultural landscape of Hirado was symbolically constructed through liminal praxis which defined the place of the foreign as incorporated by daily practices of English or Dutch merchants in Japan.

Dining with the *Daimyō* as Performative Intercultural Exchange

Learning the Cultural Codes on Display at Banquets and Dinner Parties

Gift-exchange and forms of hospitality appear as central topics throughout most European letters and journals from seventeenth-century Hirado, not merely as commercial leverage, but as daily recurring practices forming social relations.³⁵ As mentioned, these practices also reflect a process of learning to acquire “cultural codes” concerning behaviour of hospitality and giving, which was explicitly acknowledged in different instances: either in attending an artistic performance or a banquet, or in the direct advice European merchants were given by Japanese aristocrats on when to visit and what gifts to bring, such as English chief factor and cape merchant Richard Cocks (1566–1624) mentioned in his diary:

And after dyner Torazemon Dono sent me word that Cpt. Speck ment to vize the kyng to wish hym a good new year, and gave me counsell to doe the lyke, this day being held a happie day, and taken in kynd parte by them which were vized. So i went and carid a jar of conservs, not to goe emptie handed.³⁶

Dining with the *daimyō* provided a near-daily occasion at which to learn the country’s customs. Of course one also had to learn the cultural codes or performative notions on how to dine, as demonstrated by Cocks mention of being invited by the Hirado *daimyō* to have dinner at the Dutch house, where the English merchants learned how to go about performing the Japanese way of serving food to guests. Here it is remarkable how the Dutch captain exhibits the performative gestures according to which food ought to be served, incorporating the country’s customs in his body language:

³⁵ De Winter 2013.

³⁶ Thompson 1883, vol. 2, 7.

[T]he old King sent for me to come to dinner to the Dutch House, and Master Eaton with mee, and to bring a Bottle of Wine. Master Eaton had taken Physicke and could not goe, but I went: wee had a very good Dinner at the Dutch House, the meate being well drest both after the Japan and Dutch fashion, and served upon Tables, but no great drinking. [...] Captaine Brower did not sit at all, but carved at Table, all his owne people attending and serving on their knees, and in the end, he gave drinke to every one of his ghests, with his owne hands, and upon his knees, which seemed strange to me, and when they had dined, all the Nobles went away, and Captaine Brower would needs accompany me to the English House. I asked him why he served these people upon his knees, they sitting at Table: he answered me it was the fashion of the Country; and if the King himselfe made a Feast, hee did the like for the more honour of his ghests. And before night the old king Foyne came to the English House, and visited all parts, and made colation, staying an houre talking of one thing and other.³⁷

Most Hirado banquets or dinners served as occasions for giving presents and for social bonding while sharing food and wine, which European merchants explicitly labelled as “Japanese customs”. These forms of hospitality often incorporated specific forms of entertainment such as *kabuki* 歌舞伎 theatre and musical performances. Michel Maucuer refers to such banquets as an essential element of Edo-period social life, where the household gathered to dine while accompanied by music or dance spectacles, calling it a quasi-ritual occasion for different social classes to meet and interact in public. These occasions also submitted guests to certain aesthetics, “inscribing the criteria of distinction into the principle of conviviality”.³⁸ Such events took place at sea as on land, and were often reciprocated. John Saris (ca. 1580–1643), the English captain who established the East India Company in Hirado in 1613, mentioned a highly entertaining visit from the *daimyō* and his courtesans who visited his ship “The Clove” on arrival:

The King requested that none might stay in the Cabbin, save my selfe and my Linguist, who was borne in Japan, and was brought from Bantam, in our ship tither, being well skild in the Malayan tongue, wherein he delivered to mee what the King spoke unto him in Japan language. The Kings women seemde to be somewhat bashfull, but he willed them to bee frolicke. They sung divers songs, and played upon certain Instruments (wherof one did much resemble our Lute) being bellyed like it, but longer in the necke, and fretted like ours, but had only foure gut-strings. Their fingering with the left hand like ours, very nimbly: but the

37 Purchas 1905b, 535-536.

38 Maucuer 2011, 709-713.

right hand striketh with an Ivory bone, as we use to play upon a Citterne with a quill. They delighted themselves much with their musicke, keeping time with their hands, and playing and singing by booke, prickt on line and space, resembling much ours heere. I feasted them, and presented them with divers English commodities: and after some two houres stay they returned.³⁹

A similar encounter took place nine days later, this time featuring Geishas⁴⁰ as actresses instead of musicians. This fragment also reveals Saris' understanding of their social role in aristocratic circles:

[T]he old King came aboard againe, and brought with him divers women to be frolicke. These women were Actors of Comedies, which passe there from Iland to Iland to play, as our Players doe here from Towne to Towne, having severall shifts of apparrell for the better grace of the matter acted; which for the most part are of Warre, Love, and such like. These Women are as the slaves of one man, who putteth a price what every man shall pay that hath to doe with any of them; more then which he is not to take upon paine of death, in case the partie injured shall complaine. It is left to his owne discretion to prize her at the first, but rise he cannot afterwards, fall he may. Neither doth the partie bargain with the Wench, but with her Master, whose command she is to obey. The greatest of their Nobilitie travelling, hold it no disgrace to send for these Panders to their Inne, & do compound with them for the Wenches, either to fill their drinke at the Table (for all men of any ranke have their drinke filled to them by Women) or otherwise have the use of them.⁴¹

Musical entertainment, in the context of a dinner party, could also be provided by blind musicians,⁴² which Cocks mentioned in a context of Japanese customs and gift-giving:

[T]he kyng and rest of noble men ut supra came to dyner and, as they said, were entertayned to their owne content, and had the dansing beares to fill their wyne, *nifon catange* (or Japon fation), with a blind fidler to singe, ditto. And in respect the king is going up to Edo, yt was agreed to geve hym a present.⁴³

39 Purchas 1905a, 445-464.

40 Purchas (1905a, 447) annotates this as "Woman Actors of Comedies in Japan, being also common women".

41 Purchas 1905a, 447.

42 Probably blind performers reciting the epic *Tale of Heike* while playing the *biwa* lute, in a genre known as *heikyoku*, which, as mentioned in Groemer 2001, 349-350, was performed by patronaged blind wanderers or guild-members.

43 Thompson 1883, vol. 2, 26-27.

However, such events were not exclusively limited to aristocratic interaction between Europeans and Japanese, and also occurred among Dutch and Chinese merchants, all of whom occasionally hosted performances of *kabuki* theatre. Cocks repeatedly reported European merchants hosting these either among themselves: “The Hollanders had the *cabo-ques* this day, and sent for me and Mr. Osterwick, and soe had a play”,⁴⁴ or in the presence of Japanese aristocratic company:

Capt. Camps and the Duch dyned with us this day, and envited the English to dyner to morow, and, after, to see a play or *caboque* [...] Capt. Camps envited us to dyner this day, and, after, to a Japon play or commody, all plaied by men and boyes, and noe woamen; at which was Torazemon Dono, with Jentero Donos secretary and Stroyemon Dono, our *bongew*; and divers others brought bankettes, as Capt. Camps host, Jno. Jossens sonne in lawe, and others.⁴⁵

Gastronomical Exoticism and Exchange

Besides providing occasions for social bonding and entertainment, meals also presented possibilities for getting acquainted with gastronomical habits and acquiring taste, sometimes tied to a mutual interest in exoticism. Banquets allowed participants to savour both European and Japanese food at the same occasion, at which the guests “dyned after the Japan manner, and supped after the English”.⁴⁶ This could also develop into a genuine preference for foreign food, as when Saris remarked the Hirado *daimyō*'s appetite for European food, who either just liked it, or perhaps ordered it as an exotic specialty carrying a certain social prestige:

I met the old king Foyne at his house, who desired to have two peeces English poudred Beefe, and two of Porke sod with Turnips, Raddish and Onions by our Cooke, and sent unto him, which I caused to be done.⁴⁷

44 Thompson 1883, vol. 2, 147.

45 Thompson 1883, vol. 2, 244.

46 Thompson 1883, vol. 1, 65.

47 Purchas 1905a, 474.

Cocks also mentions a similar occasion at which the *daimyō* was accompanied by his kinsmen:

The eleventh, I sent Migell our Jurebasso to the old King, with the Beefe and Porke accomodated as aforesaid, with a bottle of Wine, and six Loaves of white Bread: he accepted of it in very kind part, having in his company at eating thereof, the young king his Grandchilde, and Nabisone his Brother, with Semidone his Kinsman.⁴⁸

This kind of gastronomical appropriation occurred in both directions, as McOmie mentions VOC-chief Johannes Camphuijs (1634–1695), who served as Dutch chief factor on Deshima from 1671 to 1676, had a preference for incorporating Japanese food and clothing at his dinner parties on Bantam.⁴⁹ This reveals how both a Hirado *daimyō* and a Dutch chief merchant acquired tastes which they cultivated as a personal preference.

Wine, Tea and Tobacco as Signifiers for the Quality of Relationships

Dutch trading company delegate François Caron, the last director of the Dutch factory in Hirado (1639–1641), also reported on hospitality in Japan. His book was written as a response to an official questionnaire by European trading company directors, presuming questions on relationships and hospitality were important for their commercial designs and thus implying a certain sensitivity to aspects of cultural or social life. Under the heading “How they receive each other, and of their Hospitality”, Caron wrote:

The Japanners are very hospitable and civil to such as visit them, they treat them with Tobacco and with Tsia, and if the friend be more then ordinary, with Wine: They cause them first to sit down, and setting a Lack bowl before them, will not suffer them to depart before they have tasted of it; they sing, they pipe, and play upon such stringed instruments as they have, to rejoyce their Guests, omitting no manner of carouses and kindnesses to testifie their welcome, and the value they put upon their conversation. They never quarrel in their debauches, but he that is first drunk retires and sleeps, until the fumes of the wine be evaporated. There is no such thing as Tavern or publick drinking House in all the Countrie; they eat, drink and are merry, but all in their own houses, not refusing lodging and refreshment for the traveller and stranger.⁵⁰

48 Purchas 1905b, 534.

49 McOmie 2005, 47.

50 Caron and Schorten 1663, 73-74.

Caron thus reveals the image of a hospitable Japan where visitors were regularly received with tobacco and tea, at occasions of performative cultural exchange characterized by the combined presence of music, conversation and food or drink. A revealing aspect here is the importance of wine as signifying “more than an ordinary friendship”, in forming an important social symbol as an essential element in gift-exchanges as well as hospitality. This aspect of social connection and identity can also be traced in other sources and contexts. In another fragment of his report, Caron mentions the ritual function of wine as sealing oaths or unbreakable bonds:

For confirmation of this (an oath) they drink a bowl of Wine together, which is solemn; for no covenants thus made are to be broken. Those that binde themselves cut their own bellies, and do it as followeth: They assemble their nearest kindred, and going to Church, they celebrate the parting feast upon mats and carpets in the midst of the Plain, where having well eat and drank, they cut up their bellies, so that the guts and entrails burst out.⁵¹

Saris recorded a similar function in his journal. He mentions a feast at which multiple gifts were exchanged, and where the drinking of sake was explicitly recognised as a pledge:

The thirteenth I went ashore, attended upon by the Merchants and Principall Officers, and delivered the presents to the King, amounting to the value of one hundred and fortie pounds or thereabouts, which he received with very great kindnesse, feasting me and my whole companie with divers sorts of powdered wild fowles and fruits: and calling for a standing Cup (which was one of the Presents then delivered him) he caused it to be filled with his Countrey wine, which is distilled out of Rice, and is as strong as our Aquavitae : and albeit the cup held upwards of a pint and a halfe, notwithstanding taking the Cup in his hand, he told mee he would drinke it all off, for a health to the King of England, and so did, my selfe and his Nobles doing the like. And whereas in the roome where the King was, there was onely my selfe and the Cape Merchant, (the rest of our Companie being in an other roome) the King commanded his Secretarie to goe unto them, and see that everie one of them did pledge the health.⁵²

Besides signifying “friendship”, wine also held a symbolically important connotation as reinforcing oaths and covenants, as a rather explicit way of establishing social ties. Wine was not only a performative symbol in pledges or hospitality, it

51 Caron and Schorten 1663, 50.

52 Purchas 1905a, 446.

also seems to have been one of the most circulated gifts in aristocratic circles, and was often mentioned by Cocks as a “use of the Country”:

I sent presents to both the Kings (being informed that it was the use of the Country) of Wine and banquetting stuffe; as likewise to Nobesane the yong Kings brother, and to Semidone, the old Kings Governour, and Unagense, which were well accepted. Some Cavaleros came to visit our house, and received the best entertainment I could give.⁵³

Wine as a gift-object also represented relational identities through its material and symbolic value,⁵⁴ and would assert its status through its material circulation in an aristocratic environment, while also signifying close relationships or even oaths. Banquets were thus not only performative occasions for the symbolic creation or affirmation of relations between individuals or groups, but also involved symbolic gifts as representations or assertions of relational identities. The change of these relational identities over time, as signified by acts of hospitality or by symbolic objects such as wine, may be traced by comparing elements from the Hirado-sources on interaction with Engelbert Kaempfer’s later seventeenth-century descriptions of hospitality during the “Deshima period”. Institutionally, Leonard Blussé presents Deshima as a stricter place for the “hands-on” management of foreign presence by the Japanese government, through an apparatus typical of political structures making trade subordinate to the tributary system of the Edo hinterland.⁵⁵ We might therefore wonder whether dining customs, and their “cultural codes”, would have differed from the earlier Hirado period.

The significance of wine seems less prevalent for the Deshima period: Kaempfer mentions European travellers were nearly always served tea and tobacco while being received by guardsmen or nobility.⁵⁶ Meals differed as well, as during travels food was now mostly prepared according to European fashion by Japanese cooks.⁵⁷ As relationships represented by wine were indicated by Caron to explicitly differ from those accompanied by tea, the evolution of greeting guests with wine to primarily welcoming guests with tea can be considered as a

53 Purchas 1905b, 521.

54 A function which the anthropologists Comaroff and Comaroff (1992, 127-129) claim objects or commodities can fulfill as gifts.

55 Blussé 2009, 32-34.

56 Although *sake* was also offered, as is mentioned multiple times in Kaempfer and Scheuchzer 1729, 345, 379.

57 In Kaempfer and Scheuchzer 1729, 317, is mentioned that Japanese cooks were preparing European food, an interesting aspect of cross-cultural learning.

sign of change in Japanese relationships towards foreigners, who might have become “equal or less-than-ordinary friends”.

The rather open view on interactions during the Hirado-period may be contrasted with Kaempfer’s writings on foreign reception and hospitality in late seventeenth-century Japan, as the Deshima period appears in his writings as a more restricted and rule-bound context of interaction. Presuming foreigners to have been treated more distantly, while their main location on the island of Deshima was also keeping them at a spatial distance, corresponds with the aforementioned change from openness to restrictiveness during the evolution of Edo-period foreign relations. Nonetheless, Kaempfer reports throughout his book that meals with noblemen and civil servants still took place during tribute voyages to Edo. Some aspects of interaction and exchange remained present while exotic connotations seemingly increased, despite or perhaps because of a more regulated or restricted contact. This tendency becomes particularly clear in reported instances of the “exoticising gaze”, or what Toby calls the Japanese “viewing of the Hollanders” or “Royal Viewing” [*Jōran*], which he claims simultaneously served as a kind of entertainment and as protocol during official aristocratic encounters.⁵⁸ Jansen claims this “silly pantomime” rather served as a source of amusement than study, as the *shogun* 将軍 was also a serious student of Chinese culture, art and medicine.⁵⁹

The Exotic Gaze and the Spectacle: Perceptual Differences in Late Seventeenth-century Edo

Kaempfer reveals how meals still formed an excellent occasion for getting an exotic “glimpse” of foreigners and for the transfer of knowledge, which clearly occurred under different circumstances than during the Hirado-period. During courtly travel, most interactions took place with civil servants or aristocrats, and meals proceeded according to ceremonial etiquette, which mostly seemed to serve the Japanese in acquiring some exotic knowledge on the Dutch. Perhaps the more limited context of daily interaction made the Dutch appear more exotic than before, in both popular and aristocratic circles.

58 Toby 1991, 190-191.

59 Jansen 2000, 88.

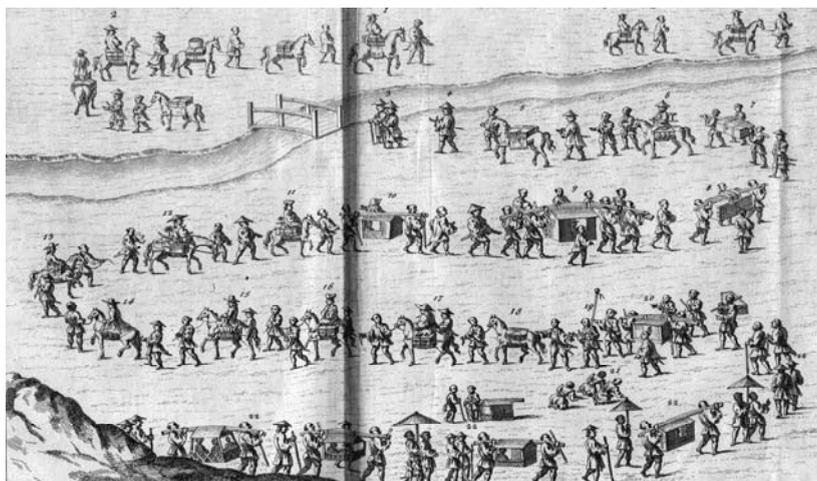


Fig. 2 Courtly Travel (Kaempfer 1729, Tab. xxii, detail)

Kaempfer thus mentions specific instances of curiosity and “viewings of the exotic” in courtly encounters. He mentions being led into chambers containing pierced or barred windows, from behind which some women were curious to observe the exotic strangers while gifts were being exchanged. Tobacco was brought in and each participant was offered some cups of tea. Meanwhile, the hidden women examined the Dutch exotic clothing, which they were asked to show. They then proceeded to the next visit, where they were again received with tea and tobacco, and where women were again sitting behind barred windows.⁶⁰ Visiting the *shōgun*, a similar ceremony occurred at greater length, in which the Dutch were asked to lay down their clothes, perform some acts such as dancing, jumping, acting drunk, and speaking broken Japanese or singing. Elsewhere, they were again received with tea, tobacco and a banquet, in rooms where spectators were also sitting behind shutters in order to look at the peculiar European customs and behaviour.⁶¹ After the Dutch were asked to perform curious acts, probably for the exotic entertainment of spectators, a table was presented to them containing various Japanese sauces and chopsticks.⁶² Thus going from house to house, the Dutch were repeatedly offered a full banquet including tea, tobacco, sake and appliances for smoking.⁶³

60 Kaempfer and Scheuchzer 1729, 344-345.

61 Kaempfer and Scheuchzer 1729, 382-383.

62 Kaempfer and Scheuchzer 1729, 382.

63 Kaempfer and Scheuchzer 1729, 418.

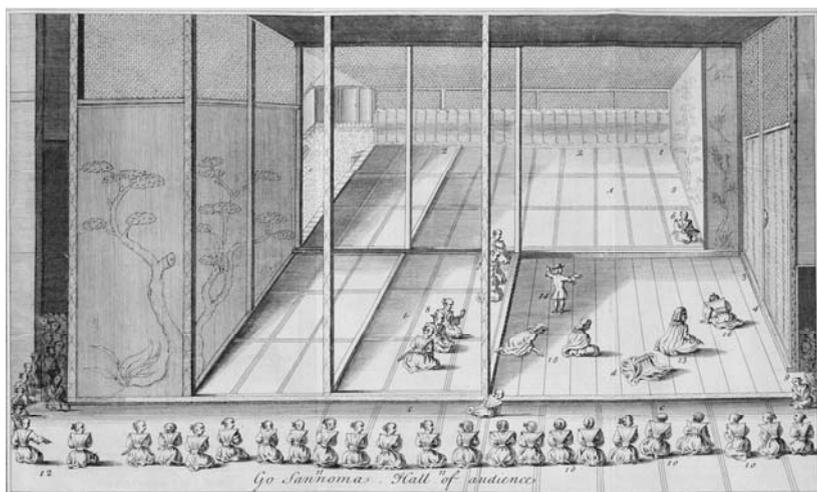


Fig. 3 Inner Audience Hall (Kaempfer and Scheuchzer 1727, Vol. 2, Tab. xxxii)

Barnabas Suzuki has mentioned pipe smoking was introduced in Japan during the early Hirado-period by Chinese and European merchants, and eventually became a fixed social custom in which the *kiseru* 煙管 pipe accompanied the tea ceremony as part of Japanese high culture and education.⁶⁴ Kaempfer's frequent references to smoking can also be a sign of its increased use or general popularity during the second half of the seventeenth century, as the use of tobacco during hospitable gatherings was less prevalent or less mentioned in the Hirado-interactions. Apart from the importance of tea over wine, the most striking element of changed interaction during the Deshima period was the exoticising gaze as a symbol of increased distance and the creation of difference, from within the strict performative codes and protocols of courtly visits and hospitality.

Conclusion and Historical-Anthropological Considerations

Aforementioned European sources have thus far allowed a view on exchange and hospitality in the form of banquets, in which specific symbolic commodities and “cultural codes” were employed. Michael Laver has described such interactions as having “an almost postmodern feel to them in that Europeans and their trading partners celebrated each other's holidays without [...] any condemnation or smugness.”⁶⁵ yet it is not quite clear what he means by “postmodern feel”.

⁶⁴ Suzuki 2004, 77-78.

⁶⁵ Laver 2011, 31.

Instead, those interactions undoubtedly require closer scrutiny, as well as an attempt at a more profound explanation, which this article has attempted to provide through a historical-anthropological approach. This allowed for a description of intercultural interaction as an interactive experience forming a process of learning to perform cultural codes and acquiring taste, involving symbolic commodities such as wine or tobacco. The comparison between the Hirado and Deshima phases of European interactions in Japan has also revealed an increased difference in perception and identity throughout the seventeenth century, which can be considered from the vantage point of European others' integration in the design of a Tokugawa hegemonic identity, which eventually restricted the maritime commercial design as it gained in importance elsewhere.

One might question if it would be useful to consider certain symbols or aspects as "typically Japanese" in their origins and concrete manifestations. It might be more accurate to consider these specific practices or "cultural codes" to have been created as a mutual interaction or specific border praxis by all involved actors, each carrying their own legacies of cultural significance regarding hospitality, resulting in a convergence which could not have occurred elsewhere in that same configuration. Some symbols involved in seventeenth-century Hirado's interactions were also noticed by Harumi Befu, who investigated the contemporary folk origins of gift-giving as an important custom in Japan.⁶⁶ He describes the ritual importance of *sake* (rice wine), as originally offered to gods and communally consumed by villagers in order to receive divine power as well as partaking in shared union with the community's members. This would then indicate a belief in "magical contagion", through the sharing of a communal meal as well as the giving of food.⁶⁷ This belief, which Befu claims originated in Shinto religious culture, became embedded in a traditional social framework where reciprocity formed a principle of interaction.⁶⁸

However, historical comparisons with medieval or early-modern Europe are equally possible, and reveal how similar practices existed there as well. For instance, Fernand Braudel (1902–1985) mentions that in Ancien Régime Europe (1400–1800), as in today's popular culture, "eating and drinking were not just necessities or social luxuries, but defined communal activities, as means of intercourse between man and society, men and the material world, and man

66 Befu 1968, 445.

67 Befu 1968, 447–448.

68 Befu 1968, 449–450.

and the supernatural universe⁶⁹. The scenes involving wine as described by Cocks or Saris also resonate remarkably well with Braudel's description of drinking scenes from early modern Dutch paintings, in which "wine, tobacco, women of easy virtue and the music of violinists (...) are combined for the drinker's delight"⁷⁰. Wine and tobacco thus prove to be interesting commodities for a comparative cultural history, their specific connotations differing according to context and environment, but their use and origins showing striking similarities. This indicates that not so much the specific symbolic commodities or practices themselves were distinctive, but rather the performative context and way in which they were used. This points towards the mutual creation of a border praxis through converging meanings, forming a "symbolic community" as an explanation for the above-described forms and symbols of hospitality. Cohen notes that the kinds of social interaction creating a symbolic community mostly concern symbolic transaction of meanings, rather than rules.⁷¹ This symbolic transaction of meanings takes place through rituals as a device to heighten a communal consciousness, using symbols to make meaning and to make sense of the world, signifying specific relationships of belonging.⁷²

In this sense, both community and difference were created through the meaning of rituals in the form of banquets or "Royal viewings" and their "cultural codes". Cocks or Saris' letters and diaries reveal specific processes of acculturation as learning the cultural codes and meanings of symbolic behaviour, learning how to use symbols such as wine or serving dinner in a specific way in order to make sense in social encounters.

The frequent intercultural contact in the border-site of Hirado, where such exchanges and mutual processes of learning developed through prolonged contact between Europeans and Japanese mediated foreignness and developed strong social ties. Moreover, the kind of hospitality embodied through banquets was also considered by Marcel Mauss as an occasion for exchange, sealing the relation between people.⁷³ He theoretically discerned particular acts of politeness, such as banquets or festivals, as part of a more general enduring contract under the voluntary guise of gifts,⁷⁴ yet whose refusal of acceptance is the rejection of the bond of alliance or

69 Braudel 1973, 126-127.

70 Braudel 1973, 167.

71 Cohen 1985, 16-17.

72 Cohen 1985, 50.

73 Mauss 1954, 24-25.

74 Mauss 1954, 7.

commonality.⁷⁵ His theory also indicates, in another way, how such hospitality relates to gift-exchange as establishing a commonality.

Mutually established shared interaction created a symbolic community in seventeenth-century Hirado, in a period showing informal interaction, perhaps reflecting the design of maritime culture. The Deshima context did not include this kind of local exchange, and marked a change in symbols and behaviour. It instead revealed an augmented exoticism, as in Kaempfer's accounts on the reception and viewing of foreigners. The replacement of Hirado by Deshima enforced different customs, through which the codes of symbolic behaviour changed, cancelling the symbolic community as it existed in Hirado and replacing it by a context founded on increased "exoticism" and the creation of "otherness".

Border knowledge as a process of learning changed when Europeans, as a category of "the foreign", were embedded differently in the developing "design" of Tokugawa hegemonic identity. This change in context comparatively limited the possibilities of performative interaction, making the Hirado-period appear as relatively open and the Deshima period as more restrictive as to intercultural interaction between Japanese and Europeans, which makes certain scholars' observations on the "restricted" nature of foreign interactions in the eighteenth-century Tokugawa period or the Bakumatsu period understandable. The processual view on "foreign encounters" from the Hirado to the Deshima context, or from Saris or Caron to Kaempfer, indicates this increasing restriction and might thus reveal the beginning of the evolution noticed by Satoru Fujita for the Bakumatsu period. However, none of this can be considered in terms of "closure": in agreement with Jansen, we can consider this term as a later construct incorporating a different "global design" or even a different conception of history, legitimising a modernity, which enforces another cultural history upon Japan in a seventeenth-century global context.⁷⁶ Instead it reveals how the contrasting design of European commerce, constantly seeking to expand itself, was being shaped and regulated according to the cultural and social requirements of the developing design of Tokugawa hegemony. This occurred through specific ceremonies and symbolic behaviour, which simultaneously created a symbolic community and established relations of difference. In that sense, the transfer of cultural knowledge as present in intercultural interactions through the enactment of banquets and hospitality, undoubtedly proved

75 Mauss 1954, 17.

76 Jansen 2000, 93-94.

a vital part of early Tokugawa identity politics. Hirado can resultingly be characterized as a cultural borderland between the designs of maritime cultures and Tokugawa courtly culture, creating its own dynamic of exchange involving symbolic codes and behaviour. In this behaviour, tendencies of formalization were contrasted with more spontaneous interaction each time a banquet or ceremony was performed, both at times reading more like a performative practice involving symbols and meanings than as rule-bound exchange.

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- de Geestelyke en Wereldlyke Keyzers. Van de Oorspronkelyke Affstamming, Godsdiensten, Gewoonten en Handwerkselen der Inboorlingen, en van hunnen Koophandel met de Nederlanders en de Chineesen. Benevens eene Beschryving van het Koningryk Siam. In 't Hoogduytsch beschreven door Engelbert Kaempfer, M. D. Geneesheer van het Hollandsche Gezantschap na 't Hof van den Keyzer, Uit het oorspronkelyk Hoogduytsch Handschrift, nooit te vooren gedrukt, in het Engelsch overgezet, door J. G. Scheuchzer, Lidt van de Koninklyke Maatschappy, en vn die der Geneesheeren in London. Die daar by gevoegt heest het Leven van den Schryver, Voorzien met kunstige Kopere Platen, Onder het opzicht van den Ridder Hans Sloane uytgegeven, En uyt het Engelsch in 't Nederduytsch vertaalt.* Amsterdam: Balthasar Lakeman, 1729 [archive.org/details/debeschryvingvan00kaem].
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