

Iaponiae, and the Way Thither:

A Second Phase in the Western Cartography of Japan

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Abstract

Cartography has played a crucial role in helping Westerners imagine Japan. With only the most meager amount of information, early maps began to be produced in Europe that depicted Japan in a variety of fanciful ways. This paper, the second in a series, will consider a set of maps that can be seen as representative of a second phase in the progression of the Western cartography of Japan. This phase was characterized by a reliance on information from a diverse group of authorities including missionaries, merchants and explorers, all of whom had firsthand knowledge of the country. Together they helped to bring the Japan of the European imagination closer to reality.

Introduction

In 1866, Henry Yule, linguist, philologist, translator, historian, geographer and indefatigable Orientalist, published *Cathay and the Way Thither*, a compendium of medieval accounts of travel to China. Most of the accounts predated that most famous of early European travelers to the East, Marco Polo. Yule's "way thither," then, pointed not only to an exotic place on the distant horizon; it pointed to a new awareness, an epiphany. It pointed to the realization which Marco Polo would indelibly introduce to the European imagination, that the world was more vast and filled with wonders than most people had previously suspected, and that indeed, maps would have to be redrawn.

What followed in Yule's oeuvre is perhaps unsurprising. In 1871, he published his magnum opus, a two-volume, exhaustively annotated edition of Marco Polo's travels, which he titled *The Book of Ser Marco Polo*. (Polo) Yule's research was without parallel. While Marco's text ran approximately 100,000 words, Yule's footnotes

were over 750,000. Yule had no problem writing with authority about Marco Polo's travels, and yet he himself had never been to most of the places Marco spoke of. He relied on his numerous, far-flung network of connections throughout the British Empire for help corroborating Marco's observations, answering questions about the text, confirming details and supplying new information. He didn't need to rely on his imagination; he had sources across the globe who could provide authoritative, firsthand insight.

This paper is the second part in a series dealing with the Western cartography of Japan. The first part (Rohe 2018) focused on the earliest maps of Japan made in Europe. They were indebted to Marco Polo's account of an island filled with gold for their inspiration, but suffered from his lack of detail. (He gave cartographers little to work with: Zipangri, as he called it, was an island off the coast of Asia, with enormous amounts of gold and filled with idolaters who had fended off the Mongols, twice.) These maps were characterized by an imaginative creativity which compensated for a nearly complete lack of practical informa-

tion about Japan. Abraham Ortelius' *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, published in Antwerp in 1570, for example, was groundbreaking in a number of ways, but of the four instances where Japan could be found on world or regional maps, three of them were completely different shapes.

This paper will deal with a second phase in the Western cartography of Japan, one that was more Yule-like in its approach. The maps touched on here began to incorporate firsthand, authoritative accounts of Japan in order to create a more realistic representation of the country and its surroundings. Using the observations of Catholic missionaries, Iberian and Dutch merchant-traders, and finally professional explorers, cartographers began to piece together a depiction of Japan that aspired to geographical accuracy. In this second phase, Japan, its coastal contours, internal geography, and place in relation to the wider context of northeast Asia, began to resemble reality.

As with the first part of this series, much of the research found in this paper is dealt with in the groundbreaking and exhaustive monographs on the subject: Cortazzi (1983), Walter (1994), and Hubbard (2012). Nebenzahl (2004) has also been an invaluable source of information and

insight. Moreover, as was provided earlier, online resources that feature the maps discussed here will be pointed out. (See Notes.)

Abraham Ortelius, *Iaponiae Insulae Descriptio* (1595)¹

The second half of the sixteenth century saw an unprecedented influx in the number of foreign faces in Japan. Many of these foreigners came from distant, unheard of places on the other side of the world. After initial contact in 1543, European missionaries and merchants streamed into Japan, the Portuguese and Spanish in the lead. The Dutch followed, then the English at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Considering the degree of European interest in Japan, both spiritual and mercantile, the variety of sizes and contours that Ortelius employed to represent it in the first editions of his *Theatrum* must have caused some amount of consternation. Perhaps to address the confusion, in his 1595 edition of the *Theatrum*, Ortelius included *Iaponiae Insulae Descriptio* (Fig. 1), the first widely-disseminated European map exclusively featuring Japan. (Ortelius 1595)

The Jesuit Louis Teixeira, official cartographer to the Hapsburg courts of Spain and Portugal, sent Ortelius a map in 1592 that he said had been copied from a new map of Japan. There have been theories as to the source of the copy that Teixeira sent Ortelius, but we can assume that it was made by someone with a detailed knowledge of Japan, one that had developed through direct contact with the country and familiarity with its native cartographic traditions. (Kish 40–2; Schutte) Considering Teixeira's connection with the church and the growing Jesuit network throughout

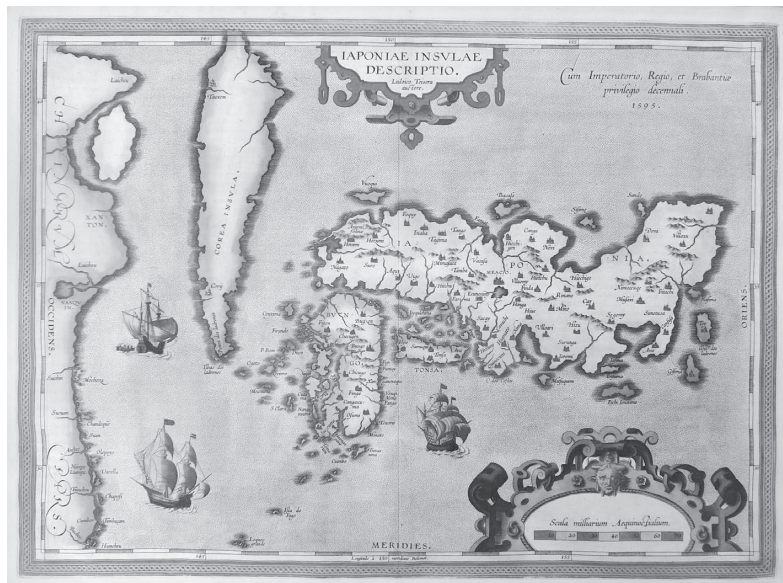


Figure 1: Ortelius, *Iaponiae* (Courtesy of Aichi Gakuin University Library)

the world, we can assume that the person was closely associated with the Catholic missions in Japan. Whoever this person was, it was not Teixeira, who as far as we know had never been outside of Europe. Nonetheless, in the central cartouche, Ortelius credits “Ludoico Teisera, auctore.” (Cortazzi 24–5; Hubbard 139–42; Nebenzahl 124; Walter 19–20)

Regardless of the source, *Iaponiae Insulae Descriptio* represents a significant departure from earlier depictions of Japan found in *Theatrum*. While much of it is inaccurate, the advance it made in geographical accuracy is significant, and it would serve as a model for numerous maps of Japan by different, sometimes rival, cartographers in the coming half-century. The three main islands are clearly recognizable as today’s Honshu, Kyushu and Shikoku. These main islands are surrounded by a number of smaller islands, many of which (like *Sando* [Sado] Island) are labelled and placed more or less correctly, although they may be wanting in size and shape. Throughout the main islands, as well as many of the smaller ones, there are regions and cities labelled, and in many cases, marked with turreted structures of varying sizes.

The smallest of the main islands, the one that we can reasonably assume to be Shikoku, is labelled *Tonsa*, presumably for the ruling Tosa domain which dominated much of the island. The other provinces of the island are also labeled and marked with structures, *Hyo* (Iyo), *Ava* (Awa) and *Samiqui* (Sanuki).

The second largest island of Kyushu is labelled *Bungo*, in reality only a province in the south-eastern part of the island (roughly Oita Prefecture today), but one with which westerners had had early and extensive contact. This familiarity accounts for the detail and number of place names in Ortelius’ depiction of Kyushu, as opposed to, for example, northern Honshu, which Europeans



Figure 2: Ortelius, *Iaponiae* (detail)

had yet to visit.

The main island of Honshu is labelled *Iaponia* (Fig. 2), and it is meticulously dotted with place names. A large body of water (Lake Biwa) is centrally located and *Meaco* (Miyako, today’s Kyoto), with the largest turreted structure, indicating an urban area of primary importance, is located on its shores, although farther north than it is in reality. In the northwestern reaches of the island we can see the influence of Japanese sources on the original map that Father Teixeira had copied. While Europeans had actually been to Miyako, only a Japanese source would be able to explain about the significance of regions they were yet to encounter. *Deva* (Dewa), for example, whose three sacred peaks had been a pilgrimage destination since ancient times, would have been familiar to Japanese, but we have no recorded evidence of Europeans travelling there until much later. *Deva*, in northwestern Honshu, is correctly located.

The provinces of central Honshu are nearly all present, although the orthography can be daunting: *Mino*, *Hiechigen* (Echizen), *Finda* (Hida), *Hixe* (Ise), *Vlluomy* (Omi), *Vlluari* (Owari), and *Rinano* (Shinano). Only Mikawa, which would appear in later maps, is absent. The bay is easily recognizable, albeit without the two peninsulas

that distinguish it.

Further afield, a carrot-like Korea makes its debut as an island (a mistake that would persist for over a century), but Hokkaido is nowhere to be found.

Johannes Janssonius, *Nova et Accurata Iaponiae Terre Esonis ac Isularum Adjacentium ex Novissima detectione descriptio* (1658)²

Johannes Janssonius' 1658 map of Japan (Fig. 3), drew heavily from the Ortelius/Teixeira map that predates it. Indeed it retained the Latinized name, Iaponiae, favored by Ortelius and the intellectual community of Europe at the time. Nonetheless, Janssonius' map is a departure in that it incorporates many developments in cartography and the exploration of the coastal regions of Japan.

On the cartographic front, the map employs the

principles of Gerardus Mercator's projection, developed almost a century earlier. (The lineage was important: The copperplates of Mercator's atlas were eventually sold to the Amsterdam publisher and cartographer Jodocus Hondius, Janssonius' father-in-law.) Janssonius' map resembles earlier portolan navigational charts with their extensive, intersecting rhumb lines (or loxodromes) emanating from decorated or undecorated compass roses (also known as a windroses). These give the map its distinctive fishnet aspect. Here the lines run from seven compass roses, two decorated ones at the center of the map, with two undecorated ones in the upper half and three below. (Other compass roses, predominantly on the left side of the map, remain hidden by landmasses.) The lines, though unusual for atlas maps at this time, served not only a decorative function, but a descriptive one as well, connecting the concept of cartographic navigation to the central cartouche

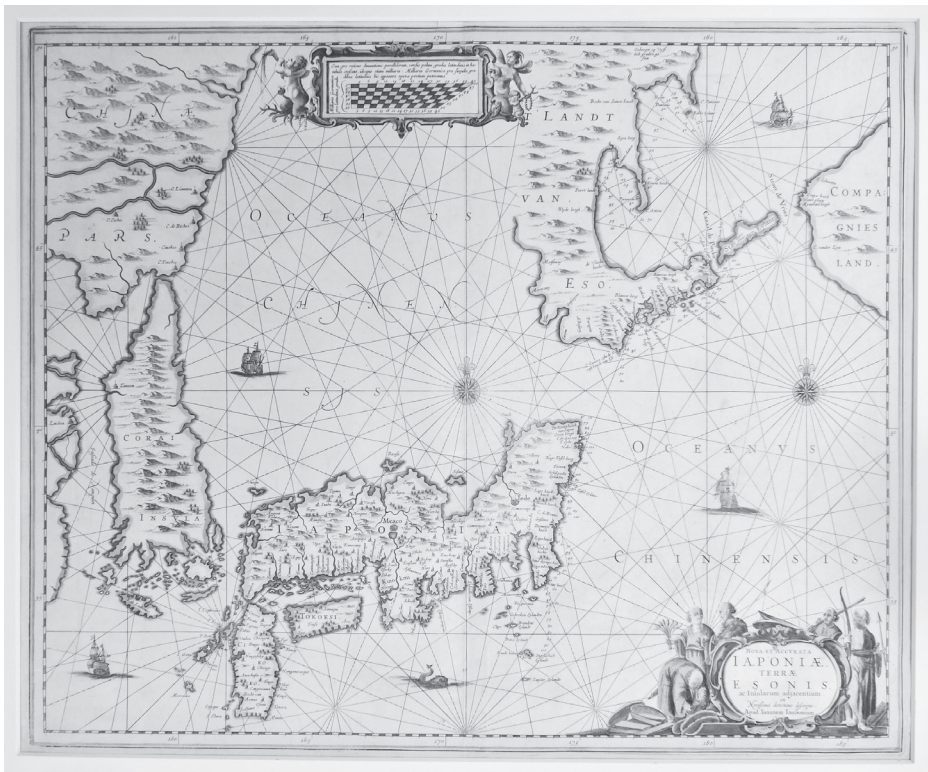


Figure 3: Janssonius, *Iaponiae* (Courtesy of Aichi Gakuin University Library)

at the top. The internal description and illustration explain visual problems that arise from flattening a three-dimensional orb and presenting it in a two-dimensional format, and how the Mercator Projection resolves those problems. (Cortazzi 25; Hubbard 139–42; Nebenzahl 126; Walter 193)

By the early 1640s, Holland had become Japan's sole European trading partner. The Dutch were limited to the narrow confines of Dejima Island in Nagasaki harbor, but the Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC, or the Dutch East India Company in English) had wider ambitions. In 1643, it dispatched explorer Maerten Gerritsz Vries to chart the eastern coast of Japan and parts farther north. It is largely due to the findings of his expedition that Janssonius was able to refine the geography of Honshu on his map, distinguishing the Boso Peninsula, for example, adding place names and clarifying the northern reaches of the island. Janssonius' map attempts to visualize some of the findings of Vries' expedition to the northern Pacific, particularly the little understood area of present-day Hokkaido. (Janssonius calls it *Landt van Eso*, Ezo being the Japanese name used for the island until the Meiji Period.) While the inclusion of Hokkaido and the northern reaches of the Pacific was significant, it dominates this map of Japan, crowding the

titular star into the southwest corner of the frame. Moreover, Janssonius' depiction of some of the data from the Vries Expedition would confound subsequent seafarers to the area for decades to come. The landmass that Vries claimed for the VOC and that Janssonius labelled "Compagnies Land," for example, would fall into this category. (Cortazzi 46)

Janssonius, like many cartographers of his time, seemed uncomfortable with blank spaces in his map, instead filling them with elaborately decorative ships, sea creatures and compass roses. The cartouches in particular were an opportunity for Baroque excess. They were also an opportunity for cartographers, through posed figures and dramatic tableau, to depict native peoples, reminding us that maps of the period were often a window into how those people were regarded. The cartouche in the lower righthand corner of Janssonius' map, which displays the map's Latin title, also depicts five figures, presumably meant to be Japanese. (Fig. 4) Three of them are brandishing weapons, two of those traditional (a bow and arrow, and a lance), and the other a foreign import: the matchlock rifle. Another figure on the left is bending down and seems to be actively constructing the cartouche itself. He might also be busying himself with something



Figure 4: Janssonius, *Iaponiae* (detail)

that was certain to attract attention: gold bars and the paraphernalia of the gold mining process (e.g. the flat, woven basket). These at once harkened back to Marco Polo's description of Zipangri, and highlighted an active Japanese industry during the Edo Period. (Kobata)

Engelbert Kaempfer, *Imperium Japonicum* (1727)

Matthaus Seutter, *Regni Japoniae* (1740)

It would be difficult to overstate Engelbert Kaempfer's influence on the study of Japan in the West from the eighteenth century onward. During his short stay in Japan, from 1690 to 1692, he assiduously collected an extraordinary amount of information about the country and its people. Though German, Kaempfer was employed as a physician by the VOC and as such spent almost the entirety of his sojourn in Japan on the small manmade island of Dejima. The stay was enlivened by excursions to Edo as part of the official delegation to the shogun. At Shogun Tokugawa Tsunayoshi's court, Kaempfer gamely endured what he regarded to be "impertinent" requests by the curious Japanese for the Europeans to "pay compliments to each other, then dance, jump, pretend to be drunk, speak Japanese, read Dutch, draw, sing, put on our coats, then take them off again." (Kaempfer [1906] 336) Suffering the impertinence was a small price to pay, however. His excursions to and from Edo, much of it done along the Tokaido, gave Kaempfer a valuable chance to collect data, a great deal of it geographical, and most of it collected furtively so as not to arouse the suspicions of Bakufu officials. (Bodart-Bailey [1995] 40) The *sakoku* policies of exclusion not only carefully guarded the number of foreigners who entered Japan; it also guarded against any information about Japan being disseminated abroad.

Kaempfer's book, *History of Japan*, had a rather complicated publishing history. When Kaempfer returned to Europe in 1695, he began the long task of compiling his notes on Japan

into a book. He died, however, in 1716, before it could be published. His archives were bought by an English collector, Hans Sloane, who had his German secretary, Johann Caspar Scheuchzer, assemble Kaempfer's notes for publication. Engelbert Kaempfer's *History of Japan* was first published in English in 1727. (Massarella [1995]) It was a truly international effort: A book about Japan, written by a German doctor working for a Dutch company, and published in English. In Europe, it was also the primary source of information about Japan for over 100 years, being discussed and cited by intellectuals such as Montesquieu, Voltaire and Kant. (Massarella [2003])

The large fold-out map accompanying Kaempfer's *History, Imperium Japonicum* (Fig. 5) was not made by him but by Scheuchzer, who worked closely with Kaempfer's manuscripts.³ (Cortazzi 48–9; Hubbard 301–3; Walter 196) One is struck by the sheer amount of information packed into the frame. There are examples of Japanese "rosary" beads, distances from Japan to various cities around the world, and three of the Seven Lucky Gods popular in Japan. (Only Fukurokuju is mislabeled, and his enormous cranium is, inexplicably, wrapped in a turban.) The kanji characters accompanying each province seem obviously to have been painstakingly copied by someone not entirely adept at the task. The kanji for Iga and Mikawa, for example, are labored but legible; those for Ise and Owari, barely recognizable.

Matthaus Seutter's 1740 map of Japan, *Regni Japoniae*⁴, was for the most part a copy of Kaempfer's. It jettisoned some of the ephemera, but added more. (Hubbard 332–3; Walter 197) Gone are the ungainly kanji characters, but other items have appeared, like Japanese family crests and examples of Japanese currency. What really stands out, however, is the ornate cartouche in the upper left which has Kaempfer in a dramatic tableau, offering his map of "Nipon" to an allegorical empress, enthroned under the Tokugawa imperial crest, who happily holds it out for all to see. (Fig. 6)

Japoniae, and the way thither (Rohe)



Figure 5: Kaempfer, *Imperium Japonicum* (Private Collection)



Figure 6: Seutter, *Regni Japoniae* (Courtesy of Aichi Gakuin University Library)

Arnoldus Montanus, *Gedenkwaerdige Gesantschappen...* (1669)

John Ogilby, *Atlas Japannensis* (1670)

One of the first major accounts to deal exclusively with Japan from the Dutch perspective was Arnoldus Montanus' *Gedenkwaerdige Gesantschappen der Oost-Indische Maetschappij in't Vereenigde Nederland, aen de Kaisaren van Japan. Getrokken uit de Geschriften en Reiseaentekeninge der zelver Gesanten* (1669). Montanus had never been to Japan—indeed (like Teixeira), there is no evidence that he ever left Europe—but his account drew heavily on firsthand information: interviews, journals and diplomatic reports, etc. of people who had. The book was ostensibly an account of a rather haphazardly organized diplomatic mission by the Dutch from Nagasaki to Edo and back again. (Hesselink 99–101) The diplomatic mission often took a backseat, however, to Montanus' kaleidoscopic discussion of Japan and the Japanese. The book proved to be enormously popular, quickly being “English'd” by John Ogilby in 1670. Ogilby's English title hints at the diplomacy, but highlights the diversions:

Atlas Japannensis: Being Remarkable Addresses by way of Embassy from the East-India Company of the United Provinces, to the Emperor of Japan. Containing a Description of their several Territories, Cities, Temples, and Fortresses; Their Religions, Laws, and Customs; Their Prodigious Wealth, and Gorgeous Habits; The Nature of their Soil, Plants, Beasts, Hills, Rivers, and Fountains. With The Character of the Ancient and Modern Japanners.

In his dedication to King Charles II, Ogilby promises a “Book of Wonders.” (Montanus [1670], frontispiece) Certainly much of the information would have been surprising and new to most European readers. It was visually stunning, with close to 100 illustrations, over twenty of them double-page fold-out engravings. The titular promise of an “atlas,” however, would have

disappointed map enthusiasts. *Atlas Japannensis* has no full-scale map of Japan. What it does offer are two topical maps detailing the route from Nagasaki to Osaka (much of it over water), then from Osaka to Edo. The latter part of the journey (from Kyoto to Edo) traversed the famous Tokaido Road.⁵ (Cortazzi 46–7; Walter 200)

Engelbert Kaempfer would take the same route twenty years later and marvel at the number of travelers on the Tokaido. “It is scarce credible,” he wrote, “what numbers of people daily travel on the roads in this country ... Upon some days (the Tokaido is) more crowded than the publick streets in any (of) the most populous town(s) in Europe.” (Kaempfer [1906] 271).

Taking a closer look at the area around Ise Bay as it is depicted in the *Atlas Japannensis* map of the Tokaido, we can see that Ise is missing, perhaps due to the fact that it was not actually on the Tokaido route. What we do have is a detailed depiction of stops along the way. Heading toward Edo, one would cross the Kii Peninsula, then turn north at *Cammiammi* (Kameyama) and head to *Quano* (Kuwana) where one would take a ferry across the northern part of the bay to *Mia* (Atsuta Shrine), and perhaps spend the night in the castle town of *Occofacci* (Okazaki). A more lively traveler might choose to go a little farther and stay in *Accofacci* (Akasaka), well known for its entertainments. (Whether Kaempfer would disapprove of this plan, however, is unclear. He did mention that Akasaka had many “baudy houses (with a) great supply of dressed-up strumpets”. (Kaempfer [1906] 213))

John Thomson, *Corea and Japan* (1815)⁶

John Thomson's lucid, no-nonsense maps represent the best of the Edinburgh school of cartography, a product of the Enlightenment, which eschewed earlier cartographic traditions with their ornate excess. The decorative aesthetic had been favored by earlier Dutch cartographers, but Thomson developed a more scientifically rigorous approach that could incorporate the



Figure 7: Thomson, *Corea and Japan* (Private Collection)

enormous amount of empirical data becoming available from explorers and other world travelers in the early nineteenth century. He introduced his *New General Atlas* (1817) with the assurance that the maps were, “(c)onstructed from the best systematic works, and the most authentic voyages and travels.” (Thomson, frontispiece) In Thomson’s *Corea and Japan* (1815, Fig. 7), gone are the frigates, the fantastical sea creatures and the mermaids singing each to each; gone are the Baroque cartouches meant to edify and entertain; gone is the multitude of learning that packed an encyclopedia entry into a single frame. Instead, we have only (K)orea (firmly attached to the continent), Japan and the immediate vicinity. (Cortazzi 42–3; Walter 203–4)

Thomson relied on geographical surveys of the area led by Broughton in the 1790s and subsequently by Krusenstern at the beginning of the new century. From 1795–8, Commodore William Broughton of the British navy led exploratory surveys of the Kurile Islands southward to Inso (Hokkaido), Honshu, Shikoku and Kyushu, then

the Ryukyus (Okinawa) and Formosa (Taiwan). His findings were published in 1804 and quickly incorporated into existing maps of the time. (Walter 203–4)

Another source of the most up-to-date information about the region came from Admiral Adam Johann von Krusenstern, who conducted a detailed coastal survey before he embarked on a circumnavigation of the globe, the first under the Russian flag. Krusenstern cleared up many misunderstandings connected with Vrie’s findings in the Northern Atlantic (and Janssonius’ interpretations of those findings in his cartography of the region). He also clarified data about the eastern and western coasts of Honshu. (Cortazzi 42–3; Walter 203–4)

Thomson’s map, in its geographical accuracy, approaches the sort of map of Japan that we can imagine being produced today. It is clearly a map for a new age.

Conclusion

In his *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded*, Lewis Car-

roll approaches the conundrum of cartography:

“What do you consider the largest map that would be really useful?”

“About six inches to the mile.”

“Only six inches!” exclaimed Mein Herr.

“We very soon got to six yards to the mile.

Then we tried a hundred yards to the mile.

And then came the grandest idea of all! We actually made a map of the country on the scale of a mile to the mile!”

“Have you used it much?” I enquired.

“It has never been spread out, yet,” said Mein Herr: “the farmers objected: they said it would cover the whole country and shut out the sunlight! So we now use the country itself, as its own map, and I assure you it does nearly as well.” (Carroll 334)

Does the logical conclusion of striving for geographic accuracy ultimately bring us to a map that completely conforms to reality, but blocks out the sun? Certainly none of the maps presented in this paper would worry farmers. Western cartography of Japan in this second phase, informed as it was by firsthand knowledge and in many cases careful observation, moved toward an ideal of geographical accuracy, but certainly did not reach it completely. The accounts of missionaries, merchants and explorers clarified the image of Japan, but in many ways simply inspired further exploration. The gradual transformation of the image of Japan from the ones Ortelius’ presented his customers to the one Thomson provided mirrored a growing interest in Japan and desire to see more. This desire led to a third phase in the Western cartography of Japan, one propelled by travelers, tourists and armchair adventurers. That will be the topic of the third and final installment in this series.

Notes

As with the first part of this series, the maps discussed in this paper are all viewable online in one form or another. (Rohe 88) The URL addresses provided were all verified in December of 2020.

1) Barry Lawrence Ruderman, Antique Maps Inc.

was introduced in the first part of this series. (Rohe 88) Abraham Ortelius, *Iaponiae Insulae Descriptio* (1595): <https://www.raremaps.com/gallery/detail/63903/iaponiae-insulae-descriptio-ludoico-teisera-auctore-korea-ortelius>

2) Antiquariaat Sanderus is an antiquarian map dealer that has been in operation for over 40 years in Ghent, Belgium. Johannes Janssonius, *Nova et Accurata Iaponiae Terre Esonis ac Isularum Adjacentium ex Novissima detectione descriptio* (1658): <https://www.sanderusmaps.com/our-catalogue/antique-maps/asia/japan/old-antique-map-of-japan-and-korea-by-janssonius-j-19532>

3) Christie’s is a British auction house that has been in operation since 1766. Engelbert Kaempfer, *Imperium Japonicum* (1727): [https://www.christies.com/img/LotImages/2008/CKS/2008_CKS_07576_0086_000\(034301\).jpg](https://www.christies.com/img/LotImages/2008/CKS/2008_CKS_07576_0086_000(034301).jpg)

4) Wolfgang Michel’s “History of cultural contacts Europe—East Asia” website was introduced in the first part of this series. (Rohe 88) Matthaues Seutter, *Regni Japoniae* (1740): <http://wolfgangmichel.web.fc2.com/serv/eujap/maps/seutter/index.html>

5) The International Research Center for Japanese Studies, Kyoto, Japan maintains a comprehensive database of material related to Japan. Arnoldus Montanus, *Gedenkwaerdige Gesantschappen...* (1669): https://shinku.nichibun.ac.jp/kichosho/new/books/01/pageview1/zoomify/000135541_0006_1.html

6) The David Rumsey Map Center at Stanford was introduced in the first part of this series. (Rohe 88) John Thomson, *Corea and Japan* (1815): <https://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/detail/RUMSEY~8~1~28361~1120790:Corea-and-Japan---J--&-G--Menzies-s>

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