

European Music in Japan in the 16th and 17th centuries

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In 1543 the first contacts between Europeans and Japanese were made. In the following decades European merchants and missionaries came to Japan and Japanese envoys travelled to Europe. The contacts between the different peoples were relatively free in the beginning, but were to become more and more restricted by the Japanese authorities. By 1641 only a handful of Dutch traders were allowed to remain in Japan, and these were confined to a closed compound, virtually cut-off from their surroundings. In this one century of cultural exchange music played a role. This article will sketch the history of the contacts and will show some of its musical traces. In its latter part it will focus in detail on the paintings with vihuelas da mano and lutes, made in Japan around 1600.

History of Europeans in Japan

Marco Polo (1254 – 1324) travelled the East in the last quarter of the 13th century. In his book *Description of the World*, which came to be known as *The Travels of Marco Polo* he described Japan: “People on the Island of Zipangu [Japan] have tremendous quantities of gold. The King’s palace is roofed with pure gold, and his floors are paved in gold two fingers thick.” Christopher Columbus (1451 – 1506) wanted to find the 'Isles of Gold' of Jipang (Japan). On his first voyage to the West he visited San Salvador in the Bahamas, which he was convinced was Japan.



Left: Detail of a *Namban Byōbu* with Portuguese merchants, priests and church (Japan, ca 1600).

In 1543 three Portuguese merchants in a Chinese junk drifted off-course and landed in Tanegashima, Kagoshima in southern Japan. Soon other Portuguese, and later Spanish, followed and a lively trade was established. The Portuguese contributed many words to the Japanese language, like *pan* for bread (Portuguese: *pão*), *tempura*

for a dish of battered and deep-fried food (from the old Portuguese word *têmporas* for spice or seasoning) and *shabon* for soap (Portuguese: *sabão*). The Portuguese also introduced fire-arms, which were to prove a decisive influence on the civil war raging in the country. In 1549 de Jesuit Franciscus Xavier (1506 – 1552)¹ arrived in Japan. He was to stay two years and invited more Jesuits to come and establish a mission to convert the Japanese to Catholicism. Among the priests were also Spanish and Italians. The Jesuits founded churches and seminaries (religious schools). The Portuguese, Spanish and Italians were collectively known as *namban-jin* (Southern barbarians) in Japanese. Their clothes, habits and food became fashionable among the upper classes of Japanese society. Art depicting these foreigners is called *namban* art and especially the *namban byōbu* (multi-panel screens that serve as folding room dividers) are famous for the many details of these intriguing foreigners.

In 1600 the Dutch ship *De Liefde* reached Japan. Of the original 110 crew members only 24 or 25 were still alive after the arduous journey. Among these survivors was the English pilot William Adams. Adams, soon known as Anjin-san (Mr Pilot), gained the trust of the *Shōgun* and rose to a high position in Japanese society, eclipsing the position of the Jesuits. The Dutch opened a trading settlement in Hirado, in the south of Japan. Soon the English followed their example.

From around 1600 onwards, the attitude of the Japanese rulers towards Christianity hardened. Churches were closed, the Jesuit priests were extradited and Japanese Christians were put to death if they refused abdication. In 1623 the English left Japan, followed by the Spanish in 1624 and the Portuguese in 1639. The Dutch were allowed to stay within the guarded compound of Deshima in the bay of Nagasaki. Their only contact with the Japanese was confined to a handful of translators and women of the gay quarters. Japan remained a closed country until U.S. Navy Commodore Matthew Perry (1794 – 1858) forced the opening of Japan to Western trade by navigating his heavily armed fleet of ‘black ships’ into shelling distance of Tōkyō in 1852 and 1854.

Christian Music in Japan

The Jesuits kept records of their activities in Japan. These records were written in Latin, but also in the native languages of the priests: Portuguese, Spanish and Italian (although all Jesuits were obliged to learn Portuguese). From 1581 onward these records were compiled, translated and sent to Europe by way of Macao, Cochin and Goa once a year. At each port of call the letters were copied. The translations were not always done by people with a good knowledge of the names of musical instruments. In Europe some of the reports were printed. In these publications the names of musical instruments have often been modified from old-fashioned terms to ones more contemporary with the readers. Some of today’s research is done from Japanese translations of these same documents, adding yet one more layer of confusion about the exact nature of the musical instruments used by the Jesuits in Japan.

The first sung mass in Japan was celebrated on 25 December 1552 at Daidōji (church) in Yamaguchi. Soon the Jesuits would celebrate a daily mass in Hirado and Funai. The Portuguese sailors brought *charmela* (shawm), *flauto* and *saquabuxa* (sackbut). These wind instruments were used to accompany the choir in the Jesuit church in Goa. There is one account of their use in Hirado where they accompanied the procession on Holy Cross Day, 14 September 1560. In 1556 books of plain chant and sacred polyphony were brought to Japan. In the same year Spanish *cantigas* were sung at Christmas. In 1557 Funai Church had a *coros* (choir) that sang plainchant and *em canto d’orgão* (organum, although some scholars think they sang to the accompaniment of an organ). From around 1560 onwards there are reports of *violas de arco* (viols) being played in mass by the students of the seminaries. The *Missale Romanum* from the Council of Trent (1570) was brought to Japan in 1572. The head of the Japanese mission in Japan prohibited polyphony and stringed instruments in 1580, in accordance with the decision of the Council of Trent to use simple music in church only. But on the insistence of the missionaries that music was a good device both to move the heathens and to deepen the followers’ faith, within months he readmitted the singing of polyphony and the use of instruments at the seminaries and the churches.

The Jesuits founded seminaries in which they taught the sons of the Japanese nobility a curriculum of reading, writing, religious doctrine and music. At the peak of their power the Jesuits ran some 200 of these schools. The boys learnt singing of plainchant and polyphony. *Oratios* (prayers) and articles of faith were translated into Japanese and memorised as songs. Here follow three excerpts from the *Principles for the Administration of Japanese Seminaries* (1580) by the Jesuit Priest Alessandro Valignano. The *Principles* gives detailed instructions for all the daily activities of the students. These include music making.

Article 7: From two to three o'clock, exercise of singing and playing.

Article 12: In a week with no feast days, [...] take a little time for recreation, singing orgão [polyphony], and playing cravo, violas, and similar instruments.

Article 14: On Sundays and feast days [...] those who are good at Music should spend some time singing and playing musical instruments.

The instruments taught at the seminaries were *viola de arco* (viola da gamba), *rabeça* (*rabequinha*, a violin-type of instrument), *arpa* (harp), *cravo* and *tecla* (keyboard instruments) and *laud* (lute or vihuela?). Also organ was played. One modern scholar suggests *viola da gamba* was taught from Diego Ortiz's *Tratado de glosas* (Rome 1553). The instrument most often mentioned in the letters of the Jesuits was the *viola de arco*. In most instances the word is used in its plural (*violas de arco*, *violasdarco*, *violas darco* and *violas*). This suggests the students played in consorts. The *violas de arco* were played in mass. *Violas de arco* were also made in Japan, but no instruments or pictures of the instruments have survived. In April 1551 Xavier presented Daimyō Ōuchi Yoshitaka with a musical instrument. A contemporary Japanese source has this description of the instrument: "... like a Japanese 13-string koto, on which can be played 5 sei [voices] or 12 chou [tunings]" but it can be played without touching the strings." This description suggests some kind of keyboard instrument. In the letters of the Jesuits the words *cravo* and *tecla* are used for keyboard instruments. These words are used indiscriminately. The exact nature of the keyboard instruments, with hammered (clavichord) or plucked strings (virginal or cembalo), as used by the Jesuits in Japan is unknown. Organs were also played in Japan. Here is an entry from Valignano's letter from 1581: "Among the things we brought to Japan, the Japanese were most pleased with organ, cravo and viola. We have two organs at Azuchi and Usukine, and cravos are set at more places and are played at mass." In 1582 an organ was brought to the seminary in Arima. The Jesuits started making positive or portative organs in Macao around 1600, and also in Japan, as an organ with bamboo pipes was built in Amakusa, Japan in 1600.



Left: Page from *Manuale ad Sacramenta Ecclesiae Ministranda* (Nagasaki, 1605).

The Jesuits set up their own printing press in Japan. One of their publications was the *Manuale ad Sacramenta Ecclesiae Ministranda* (Nagasaki, 1605). It is the first Catholic liturgical and ceremonial text printed in Japan. The *Manuale* includes musical notation.

From 1638 onwards Christianity was forbidden in Japan. In remote villages and islands in the south of Japan the religion continued to be practiced in secret by *kakure kirishitan* (hidden Christians). The *kakure kirishitan* disguised their statues of Mary and Jesus as

Buddhist images and had their gatherings in secret. There are still *kakure kirishitan* in Japan today. The *kakure kirishitan's* prayers are called *orasho*, and stem from the Latin *oratio* (prayer), which the Jesuits taught the Japanese in the 16th century. These *orasho* have been handed down orally through the generations. Over the years the words in the *orasho* have become unrecognisable, save for the occasional Maria, Deus or Sanctus. On Ikitsuki island, close to where the Portuguese had their first trading post and where Xavier himself has preached, some 29 *orasho* are preserved. Three of these *orasho* are sung to melodies. One of these melodies has been traced back to the hymn *O Gloriosa Domina*, as found in a book with liturgical songs printed in Madrid in 1553. On Ikitsuki the tradition was that only in the 46 days preceding Easter the *orasho* could be taught to new believers. To avoid being caught by the authorities, the *kakure kirishitan* went up into the mountains and hid under blankets to muffle the sound of their voices reciting the old texts. Here is an example of an *orasho* from Ikitsuki in a phonetical transcription of the Japanese:

“Deusupaitero, hīryō, superitosantono, mitsuno, birisōna, hitotsuno susutanshōno ochikarao motte hajimetatematsuru.

Wareraga dēusu, santakurosuno onshirushio motte, wareraga tekio nogashitamaiya. Deusupātero, hīriyo, superitosantono minaomotte, tanomitatematsuru, anmeizō.”

The Tenshō Envoys



Left: The four Tenshō Envoys and an accompanying priest on a German print (Augsburg, 1586).

In 1582 Father Valignano, the head of the Jesuit mission in Japan, sent four young Japanese noblemen to visit the Pope in Rome. The delegates became known as the Tenshō boy envoys. On the one hand the exotically dressed boys were to raise interest in the Jesuit mission in the Far East, and on the other hand a trip through Renaissance Europe was, in the words of

Valignano, sure to: *“... reveal to the Japanese the glory and splendour of the Christian religion, and the majesty and the power of the princes who have embraced this religion.”* The boys had received their education at the Jesuit seminaries in Japan. Their curriculum included singing and playing of musical instruments. During their time on board and in Europe they continued their musical studies. The envoys attracted much attention in Europe. No less than 78 books, tracts and pamphlets dealing with the visit were published in various languages between 1585 and 1593. The four boys were Julião Nakaura (Nakaura Jurian 1568 - 1633), Mancio Itō (Itō Mansho 1570–1612), Martinho Hara (Hara Maruchino 1569 - 1629) and Miguel Seizaemon or Chijiwa (Chijiwa Migeru 1563 - 1633).

In 1584 the boys arrived in Portugal. From here they travelled via Spain to Italy where they were to have an audience with the Pope in 1585. During their travels they attended many concerts, operas, ballets and intermedia. Mancio Itō and Miguel Chijiwa played the organ at the Cathedral of Évora. From 15 to 18 September 1584 the mission stayed with the Duke of

Braganza in Vila Viçosa. Frois reports: *“Senhora Dona Catharina [...] offered lovely music, sung quietly. The duke found that the Japanese gentlemen could play musical instruments. He had a cravo [keyboard instrument] and violas [viola da gambas] brought into the room. Those who heard the boys play and sing to a viola and cravo all admired them greatly.”*ⁱⁱⁱ

In Spain they are likely to have heard Hernando de Cabezón perform music by his father Antonio. They must have heard music by Juan de Cabezón, Alonso Mudarra and others. In November 1584 they had an audience with the King in Madrid. While they were waiting the boys entertained themselves with music: *“The Japanese gentlemen enjoyed various musical recreations in the house. They played violas de arco, cravicordio, and other instruments.”*^{iv} The King invited them to a church service with music: *“His Majesty asked them if they would like to hear a solemn vespers and when they agreed His Majesty made them enter the church where already the singers stood waiting and there began a vesper for double chorus in such order and with such manifold melodies that no greater perfection seemed possible.”*^v At the Spanish court they heard the *Capilla Flamenca* perform music by Morales, Herrera and Palero on harp, vihuela, clavichord, harpsichord and organ. They attended performances of the sacred vocal polyphony of Victoria and Morales. In the Escorial the boys inspected the organ. At the end of November they arrived in Alcalá: *“... at the church, charamelas [shawms] were played [...] a feast was held, accompanied by much pleasant music of various instruments, such as violas de arco, sytara, arpa, clavicordio ...”*^{vi}

In Florence they arrived at the time when Giulio Caccini, Vincenzo Galilei, Luca Marenzio and Giacomo Peri were working there. They heard Christofano Malvezzi perform on the organ of the San Marco. *“... at the Chiesa Maggiore the choir sang some Spanish canzone with organ accompaniment, newly composed in their praise; and in the evening, after midnight, they were entertained by a Commedia Volgare representing with much wit and charm the scene of their arrival in Rome by which the young Lords were not a little amused.”*^{vii}

In March 1585 the boys were allowed to inspect an organ in Florence: *“The cravo has infinite registers to manage every kind of music, such as cravo, craviorgão, carvo cõ suo contrabaixa, sacabuxa, four different instruments in four parts, or a soprano sound of the orgão, cravo tenor frautado a sacabuxa contrabaxa frautada, trombao, baixa sacabuxa, orgãos frautados, those meios frautados, charamelas, and trombetas. It also has stops of combined instruments, such as very beautiful sacabuxas, frautas and cornetas sobre canto d’orgão, descant de cravo, and viola, chitara, rabequinha, and pifaro, and tambor combined with other instruments.”*^{viii} In Rome Julião Nakaura was sick with fever. The other three boys appeared before Pope Gregory XIII in full Japanese dress and with musicians in their train, resembling the three Magi from the East.

On their way back they were again received in every town and village with music. In Perugia the choir sang a newly composed motet in their honour. In Ferrara they were welcomed by Alfonso d’Este, who held daily chamber concerts in his court with music on all sorts of instruments by composers such as Luzzasco Luzzaschi, Abbate Ludovico Agostini, Fiorini and Giacomo West. The concert held in honour of the envoys was *“with so much majesty and grandeur that nothing was left to desire”*.^{ix} In Venice they attended open-air concerts and *“a number of concerts given by the foremost musicians and on the programmes not only profane music, but also psalms, hymns and similar devotional numbers”*.^x Giovanni Gabrieli

had just succeeded Claudio Merulo as organist of the St. Mark's. Here they heard Andrea Gabrieli's mass for four choirs, probably composed in their honour. On their return visit in Alcalá they were entertained with music and theatrical performances. The envoys were presented with a "... *precious clavicembalo all encrusted with mother-of-pearl which had been specially ordered from Rome, a matter of heavy cost*" by Don Ascanio Colonna. This instrument was later presented to Taikō Toyotomi Hideyoshi. They were also given *harpe*, *liuti*, and *viuole* [plural].^{xi} On their return voyage they gave a concert on their newly acquired European instruments on the stop-over in Macao. Reports mention *arpa*, *cravo* (keyboard instrument), *laude* (lute) and *rabeca* (violin-type instrument).

After their return to Japan, the envoys had to wait till 1591 before Hideyoshi granted them an audience: "*After the meal, Toyotomi said he wanted to hear the four gentlemen play some music. Then the musical instruments were brought, which had been prepared in advance. The four gentlemen began to play and sing to the cravo, the arpa, the laude and the rabequinha*^{xii}. *They performed very gracefully because they had learned much in Italy and Portugal. [...] He ordered them to perform three times on the same instruments. Then he took each instrument in his hands, and asked the four princes questions about the instruments. He further ordered them to play the violas de arco and the realejo. He examined them with great curiosity.*"^{xiii} It is on this occasion that Hideyoshi is presented with the heavily ornamented cembalo the envoys received from Don Ascanio Colonna in Alcalá.

The boys' travel diaries were later put into a fictitious dialogue by Valignano. This dialogue was to serve as a Latin reader and an introduction to European culture for Japanese converts at the Jesuits schools. In the following dialogue Linus asks Michael about music in Europe.

Linus: Do the Europeans have many musical instruments?

Michael: Yes, many. And among these most pleasant instruments are nablia, also called psalteries, moreover lutes, the one-stringed pear-shaped violin (lyra), the four-stringed zithers (cithare), not to mention those which belong to the lower population and are wind instruments as, for instance, all kinds of transverse flutes (tibiae), the hurdy-gurdy (sambuca), recorders, trumpets and other instruments of this kind which belong to the orchestra and are either plucked or blown most artfully and give a most agreeable concord.

Linus: In fact, yesterday evening when we listened to you striking the musical instruments, we were exceedingly pleased; and yet we could not perceive such great sweetness as you describe.

Michael: From the matters discussed before we must remember the strength of an inveterate habit, and, on the other hand, the effect of unfamiliarity and strangeness; this is usually the same in the case of song. That is to say: you, who are not yet accustomed to European song and polyphony (symphonia) cannot experience its full sweetness and suavity. We, however, whose ears have become accustomed to it, we believe that nothing could be more agreeable: if only we avert our minds from habit and consider the very nature of the matter we will truly find that European vocal music is composed in a definite form and with admirable skill. Because in this music it is not as in ours, where all voices sing continually one and the same note, but some notes are high, others low, others in the middle range, and they all sound simultaneously and produce an admirable concord. Moreover, there are the so-called falsetto voices (falsas) and those producing higher than normal range, which all

perform either strictly according to rule or, sometimes, express elation and, accompanied by the sound of the musical instruments delight the ears of the listeners marvellously. Such variety of notes and such manifold modulations represent a blameless (integer) form of art created by men of genius with a particular gift for selecting component sounds in well-tuned harmony. The Europeans study this art diligently from their youth, making great progress. Truly, they do not have the lowest cultural level. But among us - because there is no variety of tone but always the same way of producing the voice – there is no art nor any theory of art containing the rules of polyphony (symphonia) whereas the Europeans are able to explain how to put together this great variety of sounds, the skilful manufacture of their instruments, the many musicians and the admirably large amount of [musical] figurations.

Linus: All this is certainly true; I agree. The many different instruments and the books which you have brought home, as well as the modulation of vocal and instrumental music prove an admirable artistic skill. I do not doubt that the habit of always hearing only our own songs hinders our full enjoyment in the sweet concord of European music.^{xiv}

After their return to Japan, all four boys entered the Jesuit order and three became priests. Miguel Chijiwa seceded the Jesuit order before 1601 and died in 1633. Mancio Itō apostized in 1606 and died six years later in Nagasaki. When all missionaries were ordered to leave the country in 1614, Martinho Hara went into exile in Macao where he died in 1629. Julião Nakaura defied the expulsion order and continued working among the Christians in Japan. He was arrested in 1632 and died a martyr by *anatsurushi* torture (being hanged upside down in a pit) in Nagasaki on 21 October 1633. He was beatified on 24 November 2008.

Dutch and English Music in Japan

There is evidence of music on board of English ships in the 16th and 17th centuries. Sir Francis Drake (1540 – 1596) made his famous circumnavigation of the world with a consort of viola da gamba players on board. On his 1589 Lisbon expedition he was accompanied by the Norwich city waits, a group of five wind players. Here are two quotes connecting Drake to music on board of his ships: *“Neither had he [Drake] omitted to make provision also for ornament and delight, carrying to this purpose with him expert musicians ...”^{xv} “He [Drake] dines and sups to the music of viols ...”^{xvi}* William Keeling (1578 – 1620) was captain for the British East India Company. His crew performed plays by Shakespeare on board. Among the gifts he exchanged with other captains on his voyages were silk strings for a viol and a set of Italian madrigals.^{xvii}

The Dutch opened their trading mission in Hirado in 1609. The English followed in 1613, but already left in 1623. The Dutch were forced to move to Deshima in 1641. There are no reports of Dutch or English music at Hirado from this period, but domestic life must at least have included the singing of psalms. Perhaps instruments were brought to Hirado, but no records survive to prove this.



Left: Detail of a *makimono* showing life on Deshima with Indonesian musicians entertaining Dutch hosts and Japanese guest (Japan, 17th century).

From 1641 till the opening of Japan in 1856 the Dutch were the only Western people in Japan. They were confined to the artificial island of Deshima in the bay of Nagasaki. Once a year a trading ship would arrive. In the many months in between the inhabitants of Deshima entertained themselves with music supplied by Indonesian servants, as can be seen on drawings made by the Japanese.

We know of one lute player in Japan from this period. Engelbert Kaempfer (1651 - 1716) served as doctor for the Dutch traders on Deshima for two years. He is famous for his book *The History of Japan* (1727), which was published in English, French, Dutch, German and Japanese. For many years this book has been a major source of information on Japan. In 1680 Kaempfer travelled to Sweden, Russia and Persia. He made notes during these travels. These notes are preserved in manuscript Sloane MS 2923. In this manuscript are also tablatures of pieces for Baroque lute. One of the composers mentioned is JAK, possibly Engelbert's brother Johann Andreas Kaempfer (1658 - 1743), who travelled with him part of the way to Sweden in 1680. Other music in the MS includes pieces by Gaultier, Duffaut and duets for two Baroque lutes by Hans (Hinrich) Niewerth. Niewerth was lutenist to the Swedish court from 1666 to 1699. We do not know if Kaempfer brought a lute to Japan. The Dutchmen on Deshima were cut off from the outside world and had not much to do during the long periods between the arrivals of their trading vessels. Playing his lute would have been an ideal way of passing the time. During his stay in Japan, Kaempfer travelled twice with the trading delegation to *Shōgun* Tokugawa Tsunayoshi in Edo (modern day Tōkyō). Kaempfer danced and sang a German ballad during what he called the '*real clowning*', when the official part of the audience had ended and the ladies of the court joined the *Shōgun* to watch these *kōmōjin* (red-haired people) perform.

Vihuelas and Lutes in *Namban Art*

The Japanese were used to placing images of their gods in their household altars. After their conversion to Christianity they were asking the Jesuits for Christian images. In 1581 Japan had 150,000 converts and 200 churches. The Jesuit's report of 1584 says the Japanese mission was in need of 50,000 works of religious art. It became the Jesuit's policy to become self-sufficient in producing these works of art. With this aim, the Italian painter and Jesuit Giovanni Niccolo was sent to Japan to start a painting class. He and his class started copying Western-style paintings and copperplate engravings in 1590. The Japanese students were taught to make faithful copies of Western works. The painting class of Niccolo also copied European secular art. Because of the ban on Christianity, almost all religious works of the period have been destroyed.

Of the surviving secular paintings with European scenes, eight depict vihuelas da mano or lutes. The vihuelas have sharp waist-cuts, like in some European paintings. Most of the characteristics of the lutes are similar to those of the vihuelas: shape of the head, number of pegs, neck, position of bridge and position of rose. The woman playing both instruments is the same in all paintings. The scenery in many of the paintings is similar. All this would suggest there was one original painting. The variation in the bodies of the instruments can be explained as artistic variation of the artist(s). We can see a similar variation in the scenery on the various paintings.

First I will present a list^{xviii} of the surviving paintings with lutes or vihuela da manos made in Japan around 1600, each with one or more illustrations.^{xix} After the presentation of all paintings a short comparison of the instruments will follow.



1. Fujo-dankin Zu (Lady playing Vihuela da mano)

Nobukata (ca 1600) Painting, colour on paper. 55.5 x 37.3cm.
Yamatobunka-kan, Nara.

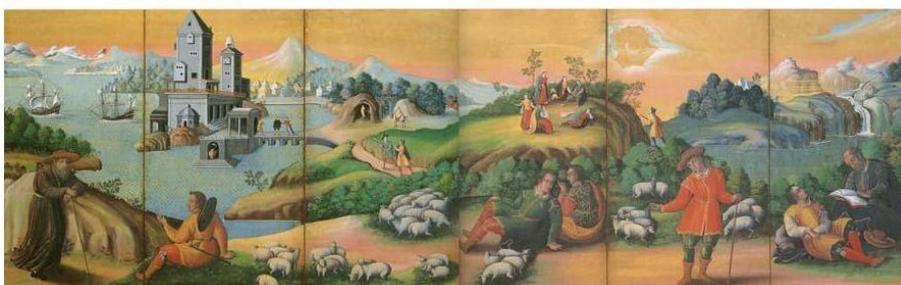
Woman with vihuela. This drawing shows much detail. It might have been closer to the original than some of the other paintings.



2. Yōjin-sōgaku Zu Byōbu (Pastoral scene of European Nobles)

Anonymous (ca 1600) Painting, colour on paper. 112.4 x 302.4cm each.

MOA Art Museum, Atami.





Details of no. 2.

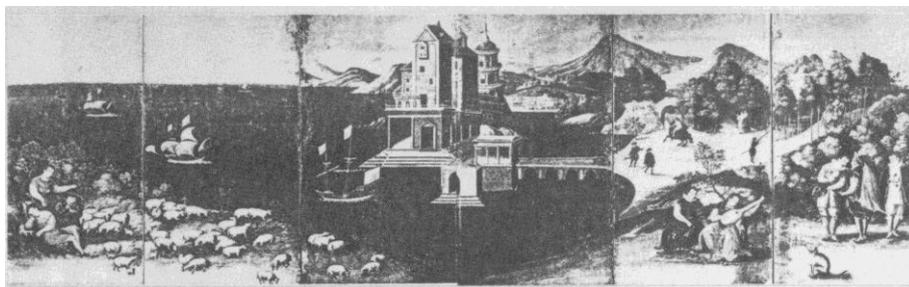
European scenery including lute and harp. Notice the lute lying in the field on panel four of the lower screen (see detail). Here we see also a viola da gamba-type instrument. Paintings number 2 and 3 are clearly copies from the same original or copies from each other.



3. Yōjin-sōgaku Zu Byōbu (European Landscape with Musicians)

Anonymous (ca 1600) Painting, colour on paper. 105.5 x 308.0cm each.

Eisei Bunko Collection Tōkyō.



4. Seiyo-fūzoku Zu Byōbu (Western Landscape with a Hunting Scene)

Anonymous (ca 1600) Painting, colour on paper. 84.0 x 268.0cm each Namban-bunka kan, Osaka.





Detail of no. 4.

European scenery including lute. Painting number 4 appears to be a variation on paintings number 2 and 3.



5. Taisei-fōzoku Zu Byōbu (Western Genre Scene)
Anonymous (ca 1600) Painting, colour on paper.
97.0 x 270.5cm each.
Fukuoka Art Museum.



Detail of no. 5.



European scenery including lute and harp. Painting number 5 appears to be a variation on paintings number 2 and 3.

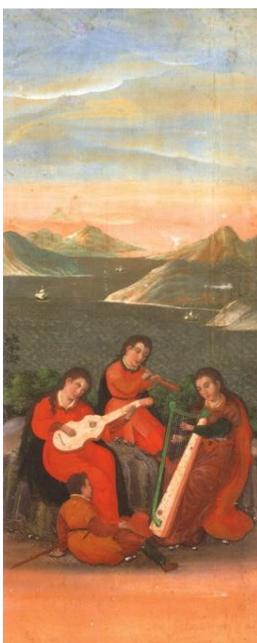


6. Sōgaku Zu
(Western Scene with Musicians)
Anonymous (ca 1600) Painting, colour on paper. 126.0 x 53.0cm. Private collection, Osaka.



Detail of no. 6.

European scenery including lute. The panels seem to be put together from different originals and do not match up.



7. Seiyō-fuzūku Zu Byōbu (Western Genre Scene)
Anonymous (ca 1600) Painting, colour on paper. 126.0 x 53.0cm. Kobe City Museum.

One panel with vihuela, wind instrument and harp. The other panels of the screen are lost. Painting number 7 looks like a variation on paintings number 2 and 3.



8. Dankin Zu (Woman Playing the Lute)
 Anonymous (ca 1600) Painting, colour on paper. 80.0 x 38.5cm
 Nagasaki Prefectural Art Museum.

Here follow the instruments from the eight different paintings, scaled to the same size for easier comparison:



Five instruments are lute-shaped. A similar instrument is lying in the field in the background in painting number 2. Three instruments are vihuela-shaped with sharp waist-cuts. Each instrument has a long neck with space for twelve frets. On painting number 1 we can count seven tied frets. On each instrument the rose is close to the neck, and the bridge is close to the edge of the sound board. Each instrument has a flat head with pegs sticking out from the back. Where there is enough detail, we can see nine tuning pegs, suggesting a five-course instrument with a single chanterelle. On painting number 1 we can see four courses of two strings each, but each of the nine peg shows a string leading to it. The left hand is in the same position on each painting. The position of the right hand seems to be slightly different on the two

different instruments. Each instrument is played by the same woman wearing the same red dress.

It is tempting to speculate about the instrument on the original painting. Regrettably, that painting is lost. Either it was destroyed by the Japanese authorities, perished in one of the frequent fires following an earthquake - the way so many things in Japan have been lost - or the painting was brought back by the Jesuits to Macao and has vanished there. What we can find, however, are paintings in Europe of similar instruments. Notice for example in the following painting from Spain the sharp waist-cuts, long neck and position of bridge and rose; all reminiscent of the vihuela on the paintings from Japan.



Left: Angel with vihuela. Rodrigo y Francisco de Osona. Church of Nuestra Señora de Jesús. Santa Eulalia, Ibiza, Spain (end of 15th century).

Lasting Traces

During what is called the Christian Century in Japan, music played an important part in the cultural exchange between the West and Japan. Because of the following ban on Christianity and the closure of the country to all things Western, most music and musical instruments have been destroyed and forgotten in the following centuries. But some traces can be found even today. The *kakure kirishitan* still sing their *orasho* to a Western melody, and one of the koto tunings still in use is the so-called *orandajōshi* or Dutch tuning, also known as *orugōrujōshi* from the Dutch word 'orgel' for organ. Furthermore, recent research suggests that some traditional music from the Christian Century in Japan has been influenced by Gregorian chant as taught by the Jesuits.^{xx}

Short bibliography in English:

Minamino, Hiroyuki: *European Musical Instruments in Sixteenth-Century Japanese Paintings (Music in Art, XXIV/1-2 1999)*.

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Kambe, Yukimi: *Viols in Japan in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries* (*Journal of the Viola da Gamba Society of America*, Volume XXXVII 2000).

Schneider, Eta Harich: *Europe through Japanese Eyes* (*Early Music*, Vol. 1 No. 1 1973).

Takahashi, Minoru: *A Portuguese Clavichord in Sixteenth-Century Japan?* (*The Galpin Society Journal*, Vol. 54 May 2001).

ⁱ Franciscus Xavier was canonised in Rome in 1622. To celebrate the occasion three Jesuits dramas were mounted. One of these was *Apotheosis sive Consecratio SS Ignatii et Francisci Xaverii* by the lutenist and composer Johannes Hieronymus Kapsberger (ca 1580 – 1651). The *Apotheosis* is a five-act drama. It exists as an autograph, and there is a printed *Argomento* with a summary of the libretto.

ⁱⁱ *Sei* and *chou* are words already found in old Chinese instructions, and might have changed meaning over time.

ⁱⁱⁱ Louis Frois: *La première ambassade du Japon en Europe 1582-92*.

^{iv} See note iii.

^v Guido Gualteri: *Relationi della Venuta de gli Ambasciatori Giapponesi a Roma, fino alla Partita di Lisboa* (Venice 1586).

^{vi} See note iii.

^{vii} See note v.

^{viii} See note iii.

^{ix} See note v.

^x See note v.

^{xi} See note v.

^{xii} The Spanish manuscript uses the words *rabel* and *viguelas dearco*. The Italian print uses *ribeca* (*Lettera del Giappone degli anni 1591 et 1592*. Rome 1595).

^{xiii} Daniello Bartoli: *Dell'istoria della Compagnia di Giesu Il Giappone* (Rome 1660. Reprint Tokyo 1961).

^{xiv} *DIALOGUE on the Mission of the Japanese Legates to the Roman Court and on the matters observed in Europe during the whole journey Collected from the Diary of the same Legates and translated into the Latin Language by Eduardo do Sande, Priest of the Society of Jesus In the Port Macao of the Chinese Empire in the house of the Society of Jesus by permission of the Ordinarius and the Superiors in the year 1590*.

^{xv} Sir Francis Drake: *The World Encompassed* (London 1628).

^{xvi} Letter to the Viceroy of Mexico (1579) by Don Francisco de Zarate who was kidnapped by Drake in 1577.

^{xvii} From the journals of William Keeling's 1607 and 1615 expeditions.

^{xviii} I adopted the numbering of the paintings from Yoshio Miyama: *Musical Instruments in Namban Art* (1989, Tōkyō). And although the translations of the Japanese titles into English in that publication are not consistent, I have used these too.

^{xix} Regretfully, not all illustrations are of very high quality. If people are aware of better reproductions of these paintings, they are kindly requested to contact the author at: davidvanooijen@gmail.com.

^{xx} Minagawa Tatsuo showed similarities in the traditional koto piece *Rokudan* and the Gregorian *Credo*. (Private lecture notes from 2010).