

# Acceptance of the Nanban Costume in Japan, observed by European Missionaries from the latter half of the 16th century to the early 17th century

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## I Introduction

Needless to say, Prof. Kaoru Tanno's work on the Nanban costume\*<sup>1</sup> is a pioneer and a basic work, from which the present writer much benefits. Examining in the costumes which are called Nanban Costume, we actually realize the term connotes various conceptions. Prof. Tanno's work minutely investigated the Japanese Europeanized costumes of old age, making a comparative study of the costume-images painted in the Nanban folding screens, the costumes worn by Europeans, and the Europeanized costumes worn by Japanese of the same time. Generally "Nanban Costume" means the costume worn by Europeans, so that it is nothing but the European costume. But it can be applied to European-style costumes made in Japan under influence of Europe, too. Here in this paper, in which I deal with the period from the latter half of the 16th century to the early 17th century, I use the term both to the European costume and the Japanese European-style costume. However, in the case that discrimination is needed, I use the words "European costume" and "European-style costume": the former is what was worn by the missionaries of the Society of Jesus and Portuguese, the latter the Europeanized costume made in Japan.

However, not all of the European costumes which were brought to Japan were directly from Europe. The letters of the missionaries make us know that they were sometimes sewed in the countries which the missionaries and Portuguese passed through, using the materials of those countries. So that, we have to understand that some of the European costumes contained Asiatic elements.

## II Aim of the study

The word "Nanban" was originally used to indicate the southern regions adjacent to China by ancient Chinese who thought their nation to be situated in the center of the world. In Japan, the word appeared in the same meaning first in the paragraph of October 1st, the third year of the Chotoku era (A.D.997), of the *Nippon Kiryaku*.\*<sup>2</sup> In the Muromachi period (A.D.1392 – A.D.1573), "Nanban" was often used only to mean southern directions. Still from A.D.1543 onwards when Japanese came to see Europeans who reached Japan, they had to recognize them simply as those who came somewhere from southern directions, for they then had no precise knowledge of European yet.

At present, Japanese certainly have much information and knowledge about Europe, and can easily realize the geographical and cultural distance between Europe and Japan.

But at the beginning when Europeans first came to Japan, Japanese had so vague knowledge of Europe that they mistook Europeans for Indians, and Christianity for a Buddhist sect. So we can imagine that they accepted the Nanban culture without any resistance, though it was foreign to them. We have not a few evidences that Nanban costumes were first brought to Japan by the missionaries as offerings to the powers of the time. Those gorgeous offerings stimulated the fun-loving mind of them who liked novelty and were curious to wear a foreign dress. And it fostered acceptance of the Nanban costume in Japan.

On the other hand, the letters of the missionaries tell us that the common Japanese, in the various places, often crowded round the churches of the Society of Jesus as rites were performed, in order to see the beautiful decorations of the altars, the costumes of the priests, and the procession of the gaily dressed believers. As most of Portuguese merchants lived and worked only in port towns such as Sakai and Nagasaki, a few Japanese could see their costumes.

Therefore, the European costume which many common Japanese could see is what the priests and the people related to the churches wore, and what the missionaries offered to the lords or provincial rulers, except those which were painted in the Nanban folding screens.

In this paper, I mainly aim to investigate the process of acceptance of the European costume and making of the European-style costume in Japan, which is seen in the reports of the missionaries.

### III Method of the study

For the first step to achieve the above mentioned aim, I will, in this paper, gather materials from the priest's reports on acceptance of the Nanban costume in Japan, and make an interpretation of them, paying attention to Japanese spiritual attitude to acceptance of the Nanban costume. This does not mean that I will utterly neglect the costume materials and the pictures painted in the folding screens. But I will use them as auxiliaries.

The following are the materials which I use:

*\*A collection of all of letters written by St. Francisco de Xavier, 4 vols.\*<sup>3</sup>*

*\*Alejandro Valignano, Sumario de las cosas de Japon\*<sup>4</sup>.*

*\*A complete Japanese translation of Frois's Japanese History, 12 vols.\*<sup>5</sup>*

*\*A collection of reports from the Society of Jesus, 15 vols.\*<sup>6</sup>*

*\*Correspondences from Jesuits about Japan, 2 vols.\*<sup>7</sup>*

*\*A document of the Japanese mission to European Countries in Tenshou era, written by De Sande.\*<sup>8,9</sup>*

The reason that so many letters as mentioned above are remained is that Ignatius de Loyola (1491-1556), First President of the Society of Jesus, established a system of correspondence in order to strengthen and unify the Society, and to make sure of his

leadership. Accordingly, the missionaries, such as Xavier and those who came to Japan after him, sent many letters to the members who stayed in Europe and in India. Some letters were made open to the public, the other were not. The letters which I use as materials of this study are the former, so that it is probable that they may contain retouch and exaggeration, as Valignano tells in his work. So we have to carefully read the letters, observing conformity and unconformity between their informations.

#### **IV Acceptance of the Nanban Costume – As gifts, and then as everyday wear –**

The case of Fransisco de Xavier (1506-1552), who carried on a pioneer mission work in Japan, is the first evidence which shows how gifts quite effectively worked in the work of the missionaries. In 1551, Xavier made the second visit to Yoshitaka Ouchi (1507-1551) who then reigned over the vast domain of the western part of Japan. This time, as an envoy of the Viceroy of India, he wore full dress, unlike he was poorly dressed in his first visit. He wrote about his second visit as follows:

“Because I found Kyoto, then the capital of Japan, not peaceful and so not fit to preach the sacred word of God, I again came back to Yamaguchi (the center of Ouchi’s territory), and I gave to the Yamaguchi ruler the letters of Garcia Deza, Viceroy of India, and of Bishop Joao de Albuquerque, together with goodwill presents.\*<sup>10</sup>”

We can imagine what the meeting of Xavier and Yoshitaka Ouchi was like, from the stained glass (Plate 1) of Xavier Memorial Church in Yamaguchi, whose original was lost in a fire in 1991.

It is known that Xavier then presented to Yoshitaka Ouchi 13 following expensive gifts: a telescope, a music box, a European Koto, a piece of brocade, a piece of Portuguese dress, a decorated clock, a matchlock, a beautifully designed Bible, a sophisticated glass vase, a mirror, a pair of glasses for the aged, a piece of pottery, and a picture. Delighted with them, Yoshitaka Ouchi intended to offer in return many goods with gold, silver and so on. However, what Xavier requested him was only permission to preach Christianity, so that people could believe it without any trouble. The permission was granted. This is the first authorized permission to preach Christianity in Japan. Thus, Yoshitaka Ouchi is the first person who received a Nanban costume as a formal gift from Joan III (1502-1557), King of Portugal. To our regret, we had now no material to know how he wore the Nanban costume and used the brocade. However, it is clear that he is the first person among those who received gifts from missionaries in return for permission of their missionary work.

The letter of Louis Frois (ca.1532-1597) which was sent in 1577 to Alessandro Valignano, a visitor priest, too shows how effective for smooth missionary work gifts were. There, he wrote:

“In Japan, it is a prevailing custom that when anyone – either Japanese or a foreigner, either a priest or a layman – visits a man of position, he brings with him a gift. All Christian priests and monks who stayed in Japan, such as Master Francisco Xavier

and others who came after him, followed this custom, because visiting without gift is against etiquette, and makes it impossible for him to have good contacts with a man of position.\*<sup>11</sup>”

The main purpose of this letter is to make Valignano know the importance of gift and what kinds of gift are fitting.

Frois mentioned in the same letter the furnishings which were supposed to please the man of position whom Valignano was going to visit. Of them, I will mention those which have connection with accessories. He said:

“The articles which seem appreciated by Japanese are as follows: a Portuguese hat with taffeta or velvet lining, a skin of Cordoba, a wallet made of velvet or scarlet hair, . . . . a overcoat made of Portuguese cloth, Chinese but fine quality cotton fabrics, . . . . cloth of Flanders, a felt carpet, and so on.\*<sup>12</sup>”

He also advised to present sacred furniture and a sacred image to Japanese Christians of high standing.

In Louis Frois’s letter dispatched from Kyoto in 1581, it is mentioned that when Valignano visited Nobunaga Oda at Honnouji temple in 1580, he, following Frois’s advice, offered Nobunaga a gilded candlestick, a piece of scarlet velvet, and cut glass, so that he could receive hospitality from Nobunaga\*<sup>13</sup>.

From the above mentioned data, we come to know that velvet was highly valued as the material of gift costume. In fact, we find overcoats and Jinbaoris both made of velvet among the costumes of the 16th century of which only a few remains now. An example will be seen in the Plate 2 (Chajibirodo-Youtou traditionally said to be worn by Hideyosi Toyotomi, in Hideyosi & Kiyomasa Memorial Museum, City of Nagoya).

In Monk Amador Costa’s letter sent from China to the priests and the monks of the Portuguese Society of Jesus in 1577, it is mentioned how successful the missionary work in Japan was, and how Portuguese clothes were accepted as follows.

“Now, there are no heretics in the territory of Don Bartromeu (Japanese name: Sumitada Omura). Don Bartromeu is very powerful. He built a new castle on a large natural rock. Because of it and the death of his most powerful and last enemy, his land is very peaceful. He has two sons, who are Christian warriors. They, liking only Portuguese clothes, do not use Japanese ones in their daily life. But as Portuguese clothes is unable to be made in Japan, they order them from China.\*<sup>14</sup>”

When a Portuguese ship arrived at Yokose in Bizen (now in Nagasaki prefecture) in 1562, Sumitada Omura (1533-1587) gave a Christian church the half of Yokoseura area. Next year, Yokoseura was attacked and was burned up by his treasonable feudatory. In the same year, he received baptism, being given Christian name Don Bartromeu. Thus, he is known as the first Christian Daimyo (feudal lord). 14 years after his baptism, his territory Omura became a land of Christianity as mentioned in the above letter. From the letter, we can know that Don Bartromeu’s two sons used to prefer Portuguese clothes to Japanese ones. It is a valuable report which makes us know that the Nanban costume

were no longer special, but everyday used. It is also notable that the Nanban costume were not made in Japan yet, but ordered from China.

## V Valignano and acceleration of the trend of the Nanban costume

Now, I wish to make clear that Valignano's missionary work accelerated the trend of the Nanban costume in Japan. During his first stay in Japan (1579-1582), though then the threat of persecution overhung the Christians, he carried through the project for sending a Japanese mission to Europe, which was called "the mission to European countries in the Tenshou era." His aim was to earn Japanese regard for the missionaries and in turn the Society of Jesus, by making Japanese know the real European culture and speak of the prestige of Catholicism in their own language. Eight years later, that is in 1590, the four Japanese young ambassadors, who accumulated considerable experience, came back to Japan. We can know from Frois's report that the project succeeded.

According to Frois's report, Valignano was allowed an audience with Kanpaku Hideyoshi at Jyurakudai hall in 1591. Then, Valignano accompanied the four young ambassadors, who came back from Europe just one year before, and Indian stablemen, mounted Portuguese, pages dressed up with borrowed Nanban clothes, priests of the Society of Jesus, and walking Portuguese, who, all wearing full dress, marched in procession from their rest to Jyurakudai hall. We cannot know what kind of costume the four young ambassasors wore in the procession. 'Tensho Iousisetu Shouzou' (Figure of the Japanese mission to European countries in Tenshou era) (Plate 3) in the Library of Kyoto University may give us some image of them.

Frois reported what the procession was like, as follows:

"Many people clustered together around the streets and the doors to see the unusual procession, and unanimously said that no body had seen such scenes as this since the foundation of the capital.\*<sup>15</sup>"

Furthermore Frois reported as follows:

"While the visitor priests stayed in the capital, they had visits from many Japanese noble men and feudal lords who were curious to see Portuguese and carry on conversation with them. Liking especially to talk with the Japanese young ambassadors who came back from Europe, the noblemen and the lords often invited them into their houses. There, they were strongly impressed by their talks about their experiences in Europe and the hospitality of kind European people. Besides, they came to notice the fineness of the dress which they wore. Thus Japanese regard for European became higher than ever. Hereby it can be said that the aim of the Japanese mission to European countries were accomplished.\*<sup>16</sup>"

Before the second visit to Japan, Valignano, hearing the news of persecution of Christians in Japan, stayed in Macao, where he edited *a document of the Japanese mission to European countries in the Tenshou era* in Spanish. He requested De Sande to translate it into Latin which was then common in all European countries as well as in the world of

Catholicism. The translation was published in Macao in 1590. Japanese Christians educated in the schools governed by the Society of Jesus learnt Latin, so that they could read the translation of the document\*<sup>17</sup>. Therefore those who had no chance to personally hear about European advanced culture from the four young ambassadors, too, could get a good knowledge of it from those who read the translation. In this way, the document of Japanese mission worked as a promoter of Japanese longing for Europe.

After Valignano's visiting Hideyosi at Jyurakudai Hall, Supreme Commander Gaspar Pinto da Rochas and his followers visited him at Nagoya (now in Saga prefecture). Their brilliant and gorgeous dress impelled the officers to fancy for Nanban secular costumes. Frois wrote in his letter in 1593 as follows:

"After the visitor priest and his followers visited Taikou Hideyosi, Japanese came to have a high regard for us. In the office, it happened so that wearing no Portuguese dress, no one was recognized as a human being. Such trend was really a wonder. Many lords had many kinds of Capa (Battle dress overcoat), mantles like a shawl, ruffs, knee trousers, caps, and so on. When Taikou Hideyosi left Nagoya for Kyoto, the common people as well as the officers followed him and went into Kyoto, wearing those Portuguese costumes. So, the tailors in Nagasaki were so busy in making Portuguese dress for them, that they could not have enough time to rest. And now the ball of amber, the gold chain and the button are in fashion among Japanese.\*<sup>18</sup>"

We have no material to know the real figures of those costumes mentioned here. However, the under-armor (traditionally said to be of Yorinobu Tokugawa) in Kishu Toshougu Shrine (Plate 4) may give us some image of the ruffs; the calcao (traditionally said to be of Ieyasu Tokugawa) in the Kishu Toshougu Shrine (Plate 5) some image of the knee trousers; and the gibao (traditionally said to be of Kiyomasa Kato) in Honmyouji Temple in Kumamoto city (Plate 6) some of the Portuguese costumes.

From this letter of Frois, we can see that Japanese could already tailor the Nanban costume in this time. Besides Frois's annual report sent from Nagasaki to the President of the Society of Jesus in 1596 tells us of the fact that a Japanese noble woman made Christian holy dress. It was when a lord of Iki area went to the war against Korea. The lord sent damask fabric from Korea to his wife named Agatha. She who was a Christian devoted to Zeus donated to a church the fabric, with which she made a *casula* and furniture for the church. Moreover, she made necessary dress with it for the priests and the monks of the church\*<sup>19</sup>.

We have no material to know what the *casula* itself which Agatha made looked like. What we can do is to refer casulas admittedly made in the 17 century. The Plate 7 is one of them. In the plate, we discern that the *casula* which a priest wore at a ceremony was quite gorgeous, though the daily dress of a missionary was simple.

It was said in the above mentioned Frois's annual report that she (Agatha) made necessary dress for the priests and the monks of the church. Then, what kind of dress did the missionaries like Francisco de Xavier and others wear in general? In seeing it, 'St.

Francisco de Xavier healing a sick Japanese' (by Andre Reinoso, 1619/22, in San Roque Museum) (Plate 8), 'Visitor Priest Valignano' (Plate 9), 'St. Francisco de Xavier giving a sermon to a Japanese Daimyo' (by Manuel Enriques, 1640, in Coimbra Diocese) (Plate 10), and 'Nanban folding screen' (part, in Suntory Museum) (Plate 11) may be helpful. In general, the missionary of the Society of Jesus formally wore a cassock which was black and long reaching his ankles, as seen in the figure of Xavier in the Plate 8. A white *alba*, (Plate 12) which was worn under the black cassock, was seen at the neck, the cuff and the skirt of the latter. Upper the cassock, a black overcoat was generally put on, as seen in the Plate 9. At a ceremony, a white surplice and a *stola* were worn. The *stola* was often made of splendidly embroidered cloth.

We often find missionaries painted in Nanban folding screens. Almost they put on a black cap, as seen in the Plate 11. The neck of the *alba*, which is seen under the neck of the cassock, is almost of stand-up collar in European painting. But in Nanban folding screens, a ruff, which was then in fashion, is often seen under the cassock as in the Plate 11. In the Plate 11, we find part of full trousers, called Bonbaxa in India, worn under a cassock and its silhouette. However, it is not sure if the painting is a real copy of what the missionary wore.

It is possible to think that it is because of confusion between the dress of the missionary and that of the merchant. Or, the missionary might wear the dress of a layman by some reason in life or in mission. On this problem, a further research will be needed.

The standard dress of the missionary of the Society of Jesus was such as mentioned above. So the dress which Agatha made for the priests and the monks of the church should be of the same kind. Thus, we can conclude that the European costume was accepted and the European-style costume was made by hand of Japanese not only in the secular society, but in the holy one.

## VI Summary

First of all, I made it clear that the acceptance of the Nanban costume was caused by the gifts of the missionaries in Japan. Next, I investigated how it went on among the secular people. We knew the latter mainly from Valignano's missionary work, that is Japanese mission to European countries and the procession which was organized by him after the young Japanese ambassadors came back to Japan. And the fact was recognized that Japanese came to make the Nanban costume themselves, as seen in the case of Agatha and of the tailors of Nagasaki. As known from the above mentioned Amador da Costa's letter sent in 1577, a Nanban costume was ordered from China. However, it is known from the mission letters sent in 1590s that Nanban costumes were mainly tailored in Nagasaki in Japan.

Prof. Chiyo Nakayama compared Kyoto and Nagasaki regarding the diffusion of the Nanban costume in her paper 'Nanban Fukushoku no Denpakeitai'<sup>\*20</sup>. She said that the diffusion was vertical in Kyoto, that is from the upper samurai (warrior) class down to the

commonality, and horizontal in Nagasaki, that is extensively from the surroundings of Portuguese and Christian.

In the area such as Nagasaki, where people could have contacts with European merchants and missionaries, they might directly accept their religion and culture. However, in the case of Yokose which Sumitada Omura reigned over, people all converted to Catholicism after Omura received baptism, and then Yokose became an area of Christian as mentioned above. There people must have followed their ruler in religion and in manner. It means that the diffusion of Catholicism and probably of the Nanban costume in Yokose situated near to Nagasaki was not horizontal, but vertical.

In the capital and its surrounding, the Nanban costume was displayed by the missionaries in order to show Japanese the superiority of European culture and in turn to propagate Catholicism, as in the above mentioned procession which was planned by Valignano. However, many rulers such as Nobunaga Oda, Hideyoshi Toyotomi, and the other feudal lords liked the Nanban costume regardless of religion, and as the result the Nanban costume came to be in fashion. Then, even after the door was closed to foreigners by the Tokugawa Shogunate, the Nanban costume was continuously used through the Edo period. It was an ironical result contrary to the expectation of Valignano and the others, because it had nothing to do with religion.

- \* 1 Kaoru Tanno, *Nanban Fukushoku no Kenkyu – Seiyō Fukushoku no Nihon Ifuku Bunka ni ataeta Eikyō – (A Study on the Nanban Costume – Influence of European costumes on Japanese costume culture –)*, Yuuzankaku, 1993.
- \* 2 Kiichi Matsuda, *Daikōkaijidai to Nihon (The Period of Great Voyage and Japan)*, Sougōkouza: Nihon no Shakaibunkasi 4, Kodansha, 1973, p.96.
- \* 3 Yoshinori Kouno, tr. by into Japanese, *Sei Furansisuko·Zabieru Zensho*, 4 vols. Heibonsha, 1994.
- \* 4 Kiichi Matsuda, tr. by into Japanese, *Nihon Junsatsuki*, Heibonsha, 1978.
- \* 5 Kiichi Matsuda & Momota Kawasaki, tr. by into Japanese, *Kanyaku Furoisu Nihonshi*, 12 vols, Tyuokouronshinsha, 2000.
- \* 6 Kiichi Matsuda, tr. into Japanese under supervision of, *16·17 Seiki Iezusukai Nihon Houkokushuu*, 15 vols, Douhousha, 1987~1998.
- \* 7 Naojiro Murakami, tr. into Japanese, *Iezusukaisi Nihon Tsushin*, 2 vols, Yuushoudou, 1996-1998.
- \* 8 Hisanosuke Izumii, Sinjyu Nagasawa, Nobuji Mitani, Ichiro Sunami, tr. by, *De Sande Tenshou Ken·ou Sisetuki*, Yuushoudou, 1969.
- \* 9 The last two are contained in the Series of Shin-Ikoku
- \* 10 Y. Kouno, *op. cit.* (vol. 3), p. 181.
- \* 11 Kiichi Matsuda, tr. into Japanese under supervision of, *op. cit.* (the third period, vol. 5), p. 3.
- \* 12 *Ibid.*, pp. 3~4.



- \* 13 *Ibid.*, p. 291.
- \* 14 *Ibid.*, p. 23.
- \* 15 Kiichi Matsuda & Momota Kawasaki, tr. by into Japanese, *Kanyaku Furoisu Nihonshi*, vol. 5 (Toyotomi Hideyosi II), Tyuokouronshinsha, 2000, pp. 94~95.
- \* 16 Kiichi Matsuda & Momota Kawasaki, tr. by into Japanese, *Kanyaku Furoisu Nihonshi*, vol. 3 (Oda Nobunaga III), Tyuokouronshinsha, 2000, p. 278.
- \* 17 At the Seminarios Latin was learnt first, and then Japanese and music, as seen at the Seminario of Arima. Though it is disputable if there the education of Latin was well done, at least some of the seniors must have been able to understand Latin. See Kiichi Matsuda, 'Kirisitan Gakkou' (School of Christian), *Daikoukaijidai no Nihon* 6, Shougakkan, 1979, pp. 45-46.
- \* 18 Kiichi Matsuda & Momota Kawasaki, tr. by into Japanese, *Kanyaku Furoisu Nihonshi*, vol. 3, p. 320.
- \* 19 Kiichi Matsuda, tr. into Japanese under supervision of, *16·17 Seiki Iezusukai Nihon Houkokushuu*, the 1st period vol. 2, Douhousha, 1987, p. 164.
- \* 20 Her opinion is cited by Prof. K. Tanno. See Kaoru Tanno, *op. cit.*, p. 55.