

Needless Lies? Merchant Letters and Knowledge of
Japan in Early Seventeenth-Century England

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Now as concerning your lettrs ... They were sayd to bee copiuise but not compendious; large, but stufed with idell & nedles matter ill-beeseming one of your place, yeres & experyence ...

George Ball to Richard Cocks, 9 June 1617

Most gracious soveraigne,

About a yeare or two since I was bold to shew your Ma'ty l'res written unto me from the furdest part of the world eastward by an old acquaintance of myne resyding at Edo, the court of the Emperor of Japan. Wherein were so many strange things ... that your Ma'ty at the redelivery of the l'res unto me (not without cause) told me that they were the loudest lyes that ever yow heard of.

Sir Thomas Wilson to King James I, September 1621

Note on transcription, orthography and terminology

For transcription of Japanese names and words, the modified Hepburn system as employed by the *Kenkyusha's New Japanese-English Dictionary* is used (Watanabe et al. 2003). Diacritics marking long vowels are omitted from familiar names (*Tōkyō*, *Ōsaka*) and terms (*shōgun*, *daimyō*), i.e. those Japanese loan words found in modern English. Japanese personal names are given last name, first name.

Many of the Japanese words transcribed by the English merchants in Japan are not immediately recognizable to a modern reader. Several sound changes in Japanese account for the most prominent differences: initial /h/ sounds were voiceless bilabial fricatives, sounding more like /f/ to European ears (*Firando* for Hirado)¹; vowels were nasalized before voiced plosives and nasals (*Langasaki* for Nagasaki, *Umbra* for Ōmura); and initial /e/ was pronounced *ye* (*Yezo* for Ezo (old name of Hokkaido); cf. *yen*, for modern Japanese *en*) (Michel 1993: 2–4).

Two frequent Japanese titles require explanation. The English, following local practice, referred to the daimyo (and some high government officials) as *tono*. This epithet corresponds to the English “sir”, “lord”, or “esq.”, and can be used on its own, although it also appears as a suffixed voiced form, *-dono*. Another suffix, *-sama*, is more reverential, being roughly equivalent to “lord”.

The English adopted some other Japanese terms into their everyday use. Most of these were local measures (such as *tatami*) and names of things related to their business (such as *goshuin*). The extent to which these were employed can be seen in the fact that *tatami* came to be abbreviated to “tat” or “tatt”. The various terms are defined in this paper at their first occurrence.

¹ Modern Japanese retains this sound only before /u/. It is romanized as f (“fu”, as in Fuji).

Timeline

- 1298-9 Marco Polo's *Travels* written down.
- 1511 Portuguese reach South-East Asia.
- 1542 The first Europeans reach Japan.
- 1549 Jesuits led by Francis Xavier arrive in Japan.
- 1550–1639 Portuguese *náo* voyages Macao to Japan.
- 1568 The Netherlands revolt against and separate from Spain.
- 1577 Richard Willes publishes the first known account of Japan in English.
- 1579 First English translation of Marco Polo's *Travels*.
- 1581 Spanish and Portuguese thrones united (until 1641).
- 1587 Edict expelling missionaries from Japan (not enforced).
- 1588 Japan consolidated under Toyotomi Hideyoshi.
- 1588 The Armada.
- 1589 Richard Hakluyt publishes his *Principal Navigations*.
- 1589 *Marchants Avizo* published.
- 1597 First Christian martyrs in Japan.
- 1598 Death of Toyotomi Hideyoshi.
- 1598 English translation of Linschoten's *Itinerario* published.
- 1598–1600 Second, much enlarged edition of Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations*.
- 1600 William Adams arrives in Japan.
- 1600 English East India Company founded.
- 1602 Dutch East India Company founded.
- 1603 Tokugawa Ieyasu becomes shogun.
- 1609 Dutch East India Company establish a factory at Hirado.
- 1613 The English reach Japan on the *Clove*; Hirado factory founded.
- 1614 Edict proscribing Christianity (enforced).
- 1615 Final wars of consolidation in Japan.
- 1616 Death of Ieyasu; Dutch and English trading privileges curtailed.
- 1618–1620 Period of Anglo-Dutch hostility in the East Indies.
- 1620 Death of William Adams.
- 1620–1622 The Fleet of Defence visits Hirado.
- 1621 Dutch and English trading privileges curtailed further.
- 1623 The Hirado factory is closed; the English withdraw from Japan.
- 1624 Spanish expelled from Japan; death of Richard Cocks.
- 1625 Samuel Purchas publishes his *Pilgrimes*.
- 1639 Portuguese expelled from Japan; only Chinese and Dutch merchants allowed to retain trade with Japan.
- 1641 The Dutch in Japan restricted to Deshima.
- 1672 English attempt to re-establish trade with Japan.

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1. Introduction

1.1 “Immensely fruitful nonsense”: Chipangu and Japan

Chipangu is an Island towards the east in the high seas, 1500 miles distant from the continent; and a very great Island it is. The people are white, civilised, and well-favoured. They are Idolaters, and are dependent on nobody. And I can tell you the quantity of gold they have is endless; for they find it in their own Islands, [and the King does not allow it to be exported. Moreover] few merchants visit the country because it is so far from the main land, and thus it comes to pass that their gold is abundant beyond all measure.

Marco Polo, *Travels* (Yule 1903: II, 253)

Any discussion of European knowledge and/or conceptions of Japan must begin with Marco Polo. As the first European mention of Japan, his brief description of Chipangu continues to be enormously influential – while it no longer forms the foundation of its readers’ images of Japan, it does seem to tickle the fascination of scholars into looking at European conceptions of Japan². This is understandable, for rarely do we have the starting point of an idea, against which to reflect all following modifications of the theme. Yet it strikes me that the reason Polo’s description of Chipangu has had such tremendous influence upon history (of the West especially), is that it is a curious mix of fact and fiction, hearsay and myth: “[h]is two brief chapters on the country ... can without exaggeration be described as nonsense, yet it was to be immensely fruitful nonsense, while they remain the only western reference to Japan before the sixteenth century” (Larner 1999: 94).

The purpose of this study, however, is not as much to look at conceptions of Japan in Early Modern England, as to map out some primary sources of such conceptions. In other words, I will focus primarily upon knowledge of Japan that was transmitted back to England by Englishmen writing in/from Japan. The nature of this

² See i.a. Wilkinson 1981, Littlewood 1996, and Larner 1999.

knowledge and the interplay of fact and fiction are then discussed with reference to contemporary English knowledge of Japan.

With the publication of *The English Factory in Japan, 1613–1623*³, a corpus of firsthand accounts of Japan, which had hitherto been rather neglected, came into the reach of all scholars. It published nearly all the documents relating to the said English factory⁴ of the English East India Company (the East India Company archives are now called the India Office Records (IOR) and are located in the British Library). Manuscript archives have, of course, been both accessible to and used by scholars, and historians in particular have familiarized themselves with such material. For instance, Derek Massarella's seminal work on the "Christian Century" in Japan, *A World Elsewhere*, is largely based on the IOR in the British Library⁵. However, literary and cultural studies, such as studies of English conceptions of Japan, have hitherto largely ignored these, contemporarily unpublished, texts⁶.

The records left by the English East India Company venture to Japan can be divided into three types: business accounts, letters and letter-books, and diaries, journals and ships' logs. Farrington includes virtually everything that remains, omitting only previously published diaries (and including only extracts from some documents not dealing solely with Japan)⁷. Scarcely any of these documents have been studied in detail (with the exception of several documents investigated by Derek Massarella⁸), and almost all of the basic research remains to be conducted. Furthermore, a comprehensive survey of the sources of early knowledge of Japan has not been done, and scholars looking at early or historical knowledge of Japan in England have thus far been forced to limit their studies, or have not seen it necessary to delve into the subject any deeper⁹.

³ *The English Factory in Japan, 1613–1623*, compiled and edited by Anthony Farrington, London: British Library, 1991. Hereafter referred to as *EFIJ*.

⁴ The terms "factor" and "factory" were borrowed from Portuguese usage in Bruges, where the *faitor* "was the Portuguese king's diplomatic and commercial representative" and chief among local Portuguese merchants (Massarella 1990: 374, n. 37). Factory in practice meant a trading post.

⁵ Massarella's 1990 work focusses on the English East India Company's travails in Japan, and centres on the same IOR material which was published by Farrington in the following year.

⁶ See for instance Fleischmann 1999.

⁷ Previously published works are namely the diary of Richard Cocks (Cocks 1978–1980) and the journal of John Saris (Saris 1900 and 1941).

⁸ See Massarella 1983 and 2001, and Massarella and Tytler 1990.

⁹ For the primary studies, see Huissen 1973 and Massarella 1987, and pp. 329–334 in Massarella 1990.

The *EFIJ* documents are unique in that no comparable records remain for the period in any language: although missionary records from East Asia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are extant in prodigious quantities, the *EFIJ* documents stand out, for they were written by laymen, and do not carry religious agendas.

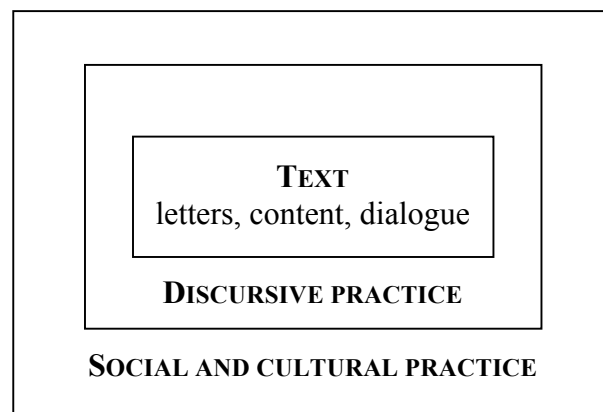
1.2 “Notis of what passeth”: letters from Japan

I have byn taxed by som for tediousnes in my lettrs, & therefore crave your Wor' p'don yf they seeme over large, for I would willing geve large notis of what passeth, in respect of the distance of place &c.

Richard Cocks to Sir Thomas Smythe 15 February 1618

Most of the documents printed in *EFIJ* are letters, and I have chosen to focus my study upon those of the letters that were sent home (that is, to England) by the members of the Hirado factory during their ten-year sojourn in Japan. Before looking at descriptions of Japan in them is possible – or, indeed, looking *for* descriptions of Japan in them – contextualization is important. A helpful tool for visualizing contextualization is provided by a modification of Johanna Wood’s adaptation of Norman Fairclough’s three-dimensional model of discourse (Wood 2004: 5):

Figure 1: Fairclough’s three-dimensional model of discourse adapted via Wood



The focusses of this study are *content* and *context* – what is said, where and why, more than how it is said. Therefore the textual level of analysis works with constant reference to the outermost level: the contents of the letters are continually

contextualized and discussed in the framework of Early Modern English merchants in Japan.

In looking at the letters, then, I shall begin with the tradition of travel writing against which the letters' function will become more apparent (cultural practice in the figure above). I will then look briefly at the tradition of Early Modern letter-writing, and discuss contemporary mercantile correspondence (discursive practice). The final contextualizing chapter gives the historical setting in some detail (social practice). I will then analyse and discuss the contents of the letters (textual practice), and conclude by viewing my discoveries in light of their context.

1.3 The material

Of the 437 documents reproduced in *EFIJ*, 401 are correspondence. The material chosen for this present study, letters written (in English) in Japan and sent to England, consists of 50 letters, dating from 1611 to 1622. In addition, one early letter (c. 1605) from William Adams is chosen to supplement them and to provide a point of comparison. The writers and recipients of the 51 letters can be seen in table 1 below (they are discussed in detail below in chapters 5 and 6).

Table 1: Writers and recipients of documents in this study

	The EIC	Sir Thomas Smythe	Smythe and the EIC	John Saris	others	Totals
Adams, Robert			2			2
Adams, William	1	1			2 ¹⁰	4
Cocks, Richard	5	1	15	4	6 ¹¹	31
Eaton, William		2	2			4
Neeve, John	1					1
Osterwick, John	1					1
Peacock, Tempest	1					1
Sayers, Edmund		1		2		3
Watts, Richard			1			1
Wickham, Richard	1	2				3
Totals	10	7	20	6	8	51

¹⁰ One letter to his wife, Mary Adams, and one to "his unknown friends and countrymen".

¹¹ One letter each to the Governor and Company of Clothworkers, the Merchant Adventurers of England, and Sir Robert Cecil; three letters to Sir Thomas Wilson.

Whereas the average length of the letters reproduced in *EFIJ* is about 800 words, letters home tended to be longer, averaging at about 1,500 words. Unfortunately, none of the letters written from England to the English factory members in Japan remain (although there are three official letters from King James I to the ruler of Japan); thus it is not possible to study the whole picture of the correspondence that took place between England and Japan.

All of these letters were written by merchants. Even William Adams, although he was trained as a pilot (see below chapters 4.3 and 6.2), spent most of his time in Japan doing business. Most of the English merchants who came to Japan had spent time abroad in their profession and were thus used to international communities (which the commercial sector of London also would have been) (Massarella 1990: 4, 241–242). Merchants were utilitarian: they spoke a universal language – that of money – and seemed to take everything else at face value, not spending time and energy on wondering, nor on writing about their surroundings in any detail (except for matters touching business). Business correspondence needed to deal primarily, if not exclusively, with business. Letters had to be factually accurate, and extraneous content was discouraged (see below chapter 3).

This study rests on the assumption that these Early Modern merchant letters thus contain some of the more “true” descriptions of the Other. The working thesis seems sound, if slightly simplistic: these are texts written without publication in mind, without literary or colonial agendas, and most of their references and descriptions of the Other are incidental (Massarella 1983: 377)¹². More importantly, they provide a hitherto neglected source for information on Early Modern knowledge of the Other.

2. Travel Writing and Ethnography

2.1 Travel Literature and Travel Writing

The last few decades have seen academic interest in travel writing expand from the confined spaces of “travel literature” to include non-literary texts, such as ships’ logs,

¹² The writer is aware of the weak points in this argument, but wishes to stress the pilot nature of this study. For discussion of fictional and non-fictional travel texts, see e.g. Neill 2002, p. 29.

merchants' diaries and letters¹³. Concise definitions of the genre remain as elusive as the genre is “polyphonous” (Pratt 1985: 141); the consensus is that travel writing in fact encompasses “so many forms that it is best defined in its plurality” (Rubiés 2002: 244). This definition is one adopted by most works – especially as new works increasingly look at texts hitherto unexplored, and the boundaries of the genre expand, in tandem with those of its critical tradition. Most works on travel writing continue to discuss works that were published, either contemporaneously or later.

This present study chooses to focus on texts that are non-literary and which were not written with an intent on publication¹⁴. Douglas Bush points out that the “great mass of travel literature was a by-product of trade, exploration, and colonizing” (1962: 181–182). Although he was talking about published texts, the same is true of unpublished letters, diaries, log-books, accounts, and other documents. These texts can be said to be the dark matter of travel writing, for they outweigh the published material. Yet not all of this dark matter escaped publication, and the success of the collections of Richard Hakluyt and Samuel Purchas are evidence to the increasing popularity of all travel writing, and not only of travel literature.

2.1.1 English Travel Writing c. 1600

Even a brief general history of travel writing falls outside the scope of this study¹⁵. Nonetheless contextualization requires an account of late sixteenth-century and early seventeenth-century travel writing in English.

The Elizabethan period saw a rapid increase in the popularity of travel literature. Not only were there more texts being produced, but more were published than ever before, a development which continued into the seventeenth century. Much has been written about the connection of travel literature to the mercantile and

¹³ This shift is visible in, for instance, *The Oxford History of English Literature* (vols. III (Lewis 1954) & V (Bush 1962)) concerning itself only with literary texts, while the recent *Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* “opted for a broad definition of travel writing” and no longer talks solely about travel ‘literature’ (Hulme and Youngs 2002: 1). It too, however, limits its scope to **published** works (in fact to post-1500 travel writing in English published in Britain) (2002: 1; see also Fowler and Kostova 2003).

¹⁴ The term ‘travel writing’ is used in this study to refer to texts in any way categorizable as ‘travel’ texts; the term ‘travel literature’ is used to indicate texts produced with publication in mind. The following subchapters pursue this idea further.

¹⁵ For informative general accounts, see the aforesaid *Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* and Mary Campbell’s excellent *The Witness and the Other World*.

colonialist (or imperialist) expansion of England¹⁶. The process became a self-feeding cycle: travel literature inspired commercial and exploratory expeditions, which in turn inspired the writing and publishing of further travel texts (cf. Kamps and Singh 2001: 6; Hulme and Youngs 2002: 3). The participants of voyages were expected, then required to write travel accounts by their funders (Sherman 2002: 17). The reading public, too, demanded more books. This demand was answered not only by the proliferation of individual accounts, but from 1555 of various collections which culminated in 1598–1600 in the second edition of Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations of the English Nation* (henceforth referred to as *PN*), and then in 1625 in Samuel Purchas's *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas his Pilgrims* (henceforth referred to as *PP*). While numerous other works on travel were published in Renaissance England (indeed many of them by Hakluyt and Purchas), the *PN* and *PP* are its truest landmarks, and defining examples of the period's travel writing.

Hakluyt's sources were various, and included previously published works as well as new translations of foreign books, and documents collected or borrowed from every possible source as well as texts written at his request (Parks 1974: 98). Many of the texts printed in the *PN* were letters. This was not unusual, as epistolary texts were considered "real" travel literature (Campbell 1988: 8)¹⁷; yet letters written with an intent to publication are categorically different in intent and audience expectation from the private (and business) correspondence of merchants and other travellers, some of which Hakluyt reproduced (see next section). Hakluyt's collection of 517 narratives came to over 850 pages in three volumes.

Where Hakluyt's work was a collection of mainly English travels, Purchas's aim was nothing less than a "history of the world as it was contained in the whole body of the literature of travel" (Bush 1962: 190). This ambitious plan failed to some degree, for *PP* is nothing as readable as *PN*, being badly edited, much abridged, and tied together with the compiler's "verbose rhetoric and obtrusive pietism" (ibid. 190). However, the sources at the disposal of Purchas were much wider than those available to Hakluyt, and the five-volume work ran to nearly four thousand pages, with texts from some 1,400 authors. Purchas built upon *PN* (dutifully marking the source of each

¹⁶ Although the field is indeed vast, see for instance Anna Neill's recent (2002) *British Discovery Literature and the Rise of Global Commerce*, Kamps and Jyotsna's (2001 ed.) *Travel Knowledge*, and the indispensable *Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, especially its extensive bibliography.

¹⁷ See also von Martels 1994: 140–157.

text he reprinted from *PN*), adding material from Hakluyt's extensive private collections of travel texts, and further material collected by himself. Significantly to the interests of this study, both Hakluyt and Purchas had access to the East India Company's archives (Massarella 1990: 330; Pennington 1997: 82), and the *PP* includes some of the letters discussed below in chapters 5 and 6.

Both the *PN* and *PP* were read for information on distant places and inspiration for voyages even by such organizations as the merchant companies¹⁸. In this period of radical increase of knowledge about the world, such information was valuable and needed to be controlled by its possessors. It is no wonder, then, that Purchas notes the suppression of half of a letter from William Adams (see beginning of chapter 5), nor that eventually the East India Company came to deny access to its archives for outsiders. Yet it is noteworthy that the EIC was slow to protect its archives, or indeed take advantage of them itself¹⁹.

2.1.2 Facts and Fictions

Travel writing is about liminality²⁰. Travellers are by definition in between states: they are neither here nor there, and for the moment, they are neither one nor the other²¹. This liminality is reflected in the texts they produce, and it can be said to be, in fact, the crux of the matter. No wonder, then, that travel writing has historically been inseparable from fiction, and the borders remain ambiguous. We still speak of "travellers' tales", and the interplay between description and narrative remains one much studied²². Travel writers have always been accused of fabrication²³. Whether one is concerned with separating fact/truth/description from fiction/lies/narration

¹⁸ See e.g. Vitkus 2001, p. 37. There is even evidence of the *PN* and *PP* being taken as reading on voyages (cf. Taylor 2001: 231).

¹⁹ Shamefully, the EIC's neglect of its own archives extended both to their informational content and their physical condition (see Massarella 1987 for a full account).

²⁰ **Liminality** was a term coined by the anthropologist Victor Turner to describe the state of existence of people during rites of passage (cf. Turner 1969).

²¹ See also Neill 2002, pp. 3, 14. This liminality extends to time spent in foreign places, especially in the case of new contacts, where the roles of locals and expatriates have not yet been established.

²² Some works exhibit this theme in their titles: see for instance von Martels's (1994 ed.) *Travel Fact and Travel Fiction*, Adams's (1962) *Travelers and Travel Liars*, and Parker's (1999) *Early Modern Tales of the Orient*. Mary Campbell notes that the development of the scientific method influenced the discourse of travel literature dividing into the "scientific" and the "novelistic" (1988: 260).

²³ See e.g. Sherman 2002: 31, and *EFIJ* 352: 857.

(which can be seen as a matter of the writer's intentions), or with the influence of audience expectations and the writers' predispositions on the form, content, and accuracy of the descriptions (which are arguably unintentional), the focus is on the analysis of the ambiguous²⁴.

It has been argued that most Early Modern travel writers had utilitarian aims (Bush 1962: 190). This makes sense for the merchants and mariners, who kept diaries and wrote letters out of duty, obligation and need, rather than out of a desire to record their experiences in writing. This utilitarian approach to writing resulted in texts which are usually sparse in detail and constrained in scope, but which are also lacking in verbose rhetoric and affectation. They are less likely to contain elaborate interpretations of the Other, unlike some comprehensive "relations" that were written about voyages and distant places²⁵. As such, they provide snapshots of the early European mindset, and arguably of its unconscious view of the Other.

2.2 Implicit ethnography and thematic typologies

[T]he key to ethnography [is] ... the discovery of knowledge.

Hymes 1996, p. 4.

The history of travel writing is essentially inseparable from ethnography²⁶. Having said that, it is worth emphasizing that ethnography does not simply mean travel writing, nor are all travel texts ethnography. Ethnography at its simplest may be defined as description of the Other: that is, as description of a foreign people. The term implies some kind of extant typology, be it unconscious or conscious, implicit or explicit, and systematic or free-form. It is worth briefly considering some ways of looking at implicit ethnographies before proceeding to analyse and discuss the letters in the following chapters.

In a paper on defining ethnography, building upon the history of anthropology, Dell Hymes distinguishes three progressive stages or types of ethnography. The first type he calls *comprehensive* ethnography (Hymes 1996: 4–5): it belongs to the stage

²⁴ There is also yet another dichotomy, that of myth versus reality.

²⁵ See Sherman 2002, p. 30. Such were Harriot's (1588) *Briefe and True Report*, and Drake's (1628) *The World Encompassed*.

²⁶ For the connection of travel writing and ethnography, see especially Rubiés 2002.

of information-gathering, where the writer attempts to be as comprehensive as possible. Many, if not most, early travel writings warranting classification as ethnography belong to this type, simply because they are trying to give an overview of a foreign culture. Comprehensive ethnography, thus, usually creates typologies reflecting the primary interests of the writer²⁷.

The second type listed by Hymes is *topic-oriented* ethnography, which presents the described people from a single viewpoint, for instance religious beliefs and behaviour (Hymes 1996: 5). The third type is *hypothesis-oriented* ethnography, which uses the broad range of knowledge acquired by comprehensive (and topical) ethnography in order to make precise investigations (6–7)²⁸.

Another approach to ethnography is through *topoi* (τόποι), or literary commonplaces (cf. Karttunen 1989: 121ff.). Studies of medieval travel narratives (especially of marvel stories, such as Marco Polo's *Travels*) create ethnographical typologies based on *topoi* of the marvellous (e.g. Friedman 1981²⁹). In a previous paper I built a rudimentary thematic typology³⁰ from three sources: Marco Polo's description of "Chipangu", the division of travel narratives into thematic chapters in Michael Cooper's *They Came to Japan* (1995), and the discussion of Marco Polo's *Travels* in John Larner's *Marco Polo and the Discovery of the World* (1999). John Larner (without using these terms) essentially classifies Polo's *Travels* as a work of comprehensive ethnography³¹ (Larner 1999: 96–97). Like Karttunen, Larner uses *topoi* to form a typology of the marvellous in the *Travels* (Kaislaniemi 2002: 6):

John Larner divides the "marvellous things" in Marco's book into six types: rational marvels (e.g. coal), towns of exaggerated size, Christian miracles, tales of men known in medieval Europe (e.g. Alexander the Great), non-Christian miracles, and "what might be called the traveller's tales. Here the marvellous consists sometimes in the abundance of wealth, sometimes in the strangeness of things beyond nature. Both are found most notably in Cipangu..." ([Larner 1999:] 80–81).

²⁷ These tend to be the primary interests of the writer's cultural origins (Larner 1999: 97).

²⁸ Hymes approaches ethnography as an anthropological method: "[e]thnography, as we know it, is in fact an interface between specific inquiry and comparative generalization" (Hymes 1996: 19). His categories can, however, be applied to non-systematic ethnography.

²⁹ See also e.g. Campbell 1988, Dathorne 1994 and 1996, Larner 1999, Le Goff 1988, etc.

³⁰ Hymes points out that structural organization does not reveal everything, and that interpretation requires presentation of the material (Hymes 1996 (1978): 12).

³¹ Larner is careful to point out that it is only the contemporary literary forms which enabled the *Travels* to be comprehensive (Larner 1999: 97).

Larner goes on to argue that Polo's *Travels* actually contains very few monsters and proper marvels, and (although without forming a systematic typology) discusses the two main categories of his descriptions: geographical knowledge and ethnography³². It is the "traveller's tales" which interest us, tales of the otherness of the Other, many of which tend to grow in the telling and become tales which Yule colourfully describes as "old 'yarns'" (Yule 1903: II, 253). They fall in fact into the two categories of geographical knowledge and ethnography, and "can be further divided into descriptions of the land, people, religion, state, riches, and marvels & unnatural things" (Kaislaniemi 2002: 7). What is more, as Larner comments, these "tales" "are found most notably in [Polo's description of] Cipangu" (Larner 1999: 81). As will be seen below, they are also found most notably in the descriptive letters from Richard Cocks to Sir Thomas Wilson (and Robert Cecil).

The function of ethnography, writes Peter Hulme, is to translate "the utterly strange into what we might call the familiarly strange" (Hulme 1994: 170). This holds for implicit ethnography as well as explicit, for it means translating observations through terms familiar to the writer. An example of this is Cocks's comparison of the size of Fushimi castle to the city of Rochester (*EFIJ* 318; see below chapter 6.6.3) – the comparison makes the strange comprehensible, yet does not make it *too* familiar: a castle the size of a city definitely sounds like a traveller's tale (Hulme 1994: 173).

These notions of ethnography are worth keeping in mind while reading the following chapters. I will return to these themes in the discussion at the end.

3. Early Modern English Merchant Correspondence

3.1 Early Modern English letters

Early Modern correspondence was guided by conventions. In Early Modern England, Latin letter-writing manuals were used in schools to teach Latin grammar and

³² Larner does not use this term, but notes that the *Travels* should be "thought of, judged, as a geography and neither a work of anthropology nor a travelogue", and as such Polo's contribution of new geographical knowledge to Europe is historically unsurpassed by another individual (Larner 1999: 97). However, the *Travels* is ethnography in the simple sense defined above on page 9.

classical rhetoric (Nevalainen 2001: 207, 213). These manuals belonged to the medieval tradition of letter-writing, the *ars dictaminis*, which built upon classical rhetorical conventions (Nevalainen 2001: 204). Yet epistolary conventions changed over time, for letter-writing practices developed according to need, and the rising middle classes required more practical letter forms. Thus, model letters found among merchant documents of the late fifteenth and first half of the sixteenth century no longer follow dictaminal models, but “pseudo-epistolary” business formularies – letters of sale, quittance, and attorney, as well as contracts, deeds and patents – which are letters only in form³³ (Richardson 2001: 5–7). Letters nonetheless retained conventional features, and their form, style, and contents were affected by their purpose and the social standings of the writer and the addressee – something especially emphasized by letter-writing manuals (Bergs 2004: 208; cf. Nevala 2004: 33, 53).

England in the sixteenth century saw the publication of non-dictaminal vernacular letter-writing manuals. Some of them, such as John Browne’s *The Marchants Avizo*, did not discuss the rhetorical or epistolary theory in detail, only providing model letters. *The Marchants Avizo* came out in 1589. It was the first general textbook for merchants to be published in England, and as a small slim volume of some seventy pages, it proved very popular, going through six editions by 1640³⁴ (xxx). In addition to model letters, the *Marchants Avizo* contained models for various other business documents, information on weights, measures and commodities, and advice on spiritual, moral and social conduct³⁵ (McGrath 1957: v, xvi). Being aimed at apprentices going abroad for the first time, the *Marchants Avizo*

³³ “Mastering the various letter formats was an increasingly important business objective, for the letter format was widely used for a much wider variety of purpose than today” (Richardson 2001: 6; see Nevalainen 2001 for a study comparing conventions given in manuals to those employed in real letters).

³⁴ Many merchant manuals on single topics were published at the time (e.g. on arithmetic, book-keeping, business morality; on weights, measures and commodities; and even on how to dodge customs), but other general manuals for merchants were dramatically larger than the *MA* (for instance, *The Merchants Mappe of Commerce* (Roberts, 1638) was folio-sized and several hundred pages long (McGrath 1957: xxx-xxxii).

³⁵ Apprenticeship included moral training, and it was held that economics should not be divorced from ethics (McGrath 1957: xxi-xxii, xxviii). Merchants being nothing if not practical, while reminding the reader to perform his prayers, Browne essentially says that any prayers one remembers will serve, and even recommends the Lords Prayer and the Creed for their brevity – as merchants rarely have the opportunity “to continue long in prayer” (McGrath 1957: 11).

contained detailed instructions for when they reached their destination, especially on correspondence.

Correspondence was the primary tool of the trade, and venturing merchants were expected to keep their master(s) constantly informed of both the “progress of his ventures and of the state of the market abroad” (McGrath 1957: xix, 9). Such updates should be sent home with every available conveyance, especially upon arrival at a destination; subsequent letters should relate of business proceedings and news³⁶.

While it has often been pointed out that letter-writing manuals by no means offer any conclusive evidence of letter-writing habits in the Early Modern period (Nevalainen 2001: 221), they show that letter-writing was taught; in this respect it is not unreasonable to expect the influence of taught conventions in the letters of the Hirado factory merchants. The writers would naturally also have influenced each other, and especially the junior members of the factory likely picked up many habits from their seniors employed by the EIC.

The existence of these manuals reveals the existence of expectations for the recipients of letters, and thus of conventions for both form and content of mercantile correspondence. Writers straying outside the set of expectations were often reprimanded – for instance, Richard Cocks for being too verbose (see below chapter 6.6), and John Osterwick for the opposite reason (Massarella 2001). Therefore it was for a good reason that the *MA* admonished readers to observe the “plaine and briefe form of inditing” it gave examples of (McGrath 1957: 9), and for other letter-writing manuals to similarly exhort writing tersely, without rambling and unnecessary repetition³⁷ (Tanskanen 2003: 178). It is thus hardly surprising that the model letters in the *MA* are plain and brief accounts of how matters stand at the moment, usually followed by lists of commodities available at the writer’s location, together with their prices (McGrath 1957: 12–19). Many of the *EFIJ* letters below follow these guidelines, although not quite in such concise form.

³⁶ Browne does not specify what kind of news is welcome, yet it seems safe to assume that they include any events which affected business, while other stories were optional and, depending on the recipient, even undesirable.

³⁷ This point was not stressed needlessly. Although apologizing for being “tedious” was a stock phrase, as often as not its use was warranted: see for instance *EFIJ* 85: 260, 86: 265, and 267: 669.

3.2 East India Company Correspondence

For the English East India Company, correspondence to and from the East was regularly carried by all outgoing and incoming ships, and letters were entrusted to anyone going in the right direction (if such transport were available: often letters would return to their sender after some days, weeks, or even years had passed)³⁸. Indeed, finding “suitable conveyance” could be a problem, for reliable letter-carriers were scarce (such as EIC ships visiting Japan), a fact reflected in the dates of the *EFIJ* letters, many of which were written on the night before a ship departed³⁹ (see list of letters, Appendix I). When conveyance by EIC vessels was unavailable, letters were sent aboard other European ships – some of the *EFIJ* letters were carried on Dutch ships (see for instance *EFIJ* 317). This was possible due to personal contacts, which were much more relevant than the political situation in far-off Europe: other Europeans were invaluable as suppliers of scarce European commodities (see *EFIJ* 229), and also as members of a shared cultural background. The expatriate networks relied upon favours being done in every direction, and one of the favours commonly asked for was the conveyance of letters.

One means of helping ensure the safe transport of letters over long distances was, simply, to send many copies of the same letter (as also recommended in some letter-writing manuals (Nevala 2004: 63)). Copies would be sent on one or more ships in a visiting fleet, and one copy retained by the sender to be re-copied and sent again with the next available conveyance. A typical example of how this long-distance mail worked is found below in case 2 (chapter 5.3), where the delivery of two copies of the same letter is briefly discussed. Copies of previous letters were also inclosed with later letters (see for instance *EFIJ* 268). A method for keeping track of correspondence was simply by referring in letters to previous letters, both sent and received; these were occasionally even recapitulated in great detail (see *EFIJ* 237 and 267).

Although each “suitable conveyance” was duly taken advantage of, it is worth noting that letters commonly did not reach their (intended) destination. Some ships

³⁸ In the case of the *EFIJ* letters, they commonly changed carrier at Bantam (or somewhere else in the East Indies), regardless of the direction they were travelling in.

³⁹ See also Cooper 1981, p. x.

were lost at sea, some ships were captured (Farrington 2002: n.p.); some letters were withheld or destroyed intentionally. Many letters were read by those taking part in the chain of delivery (see for instance *EFIJ* 253, 267 and 268). In fact, it was common for EIC members to open and read Company letters passing through their hands, as well as to copy them – either into factory books, or to send on with yet another suitable conveyance (see for instance *EFIJ* 267; see also Nevala 2004: 70).

Letters were also in danger of being intercepted and read by complete outsiders; therefore it comes as no surprise that secrets and strong emotions were not readily written down (Nevala 2004: 70), and merchants were instructed to keep quiet about their business correspondence (McGrath 1957: 9; however, this was a slightly unrealistic instruction for those merchants whose factories were not frequently visited by their Company's ships). That interception was a real threat can be seen from the example of William Adams's letter of 1605 (see below chapter 5).

4. Historical Background: The “Christian Century” in Japan

4.1 The European “Discovery” of Japan

The European maritime expansion, led by the Portuguese, reached the East Indies⁴⁰ in 1511⁴¹. The Portuguese conquered the strategically located Malacca, and slowly worked their way towards becoming one of the primary operators of the spice trade to Europe⁴². The Dutch arrived on the scene in the late sixteenth century, and became a permanent presence when they took Bantam in 1602. Over the next century, the Dutch established their control over the Indonesian archipelago, using ruthless violence to suppress the locals and superior naval power to deflect the attempts of other Europeans to gain access to the Spice Islands. The founding of Batavia (modern Jakarta) in 1618 and the capture of Malacca in 1641 wrested areal control from the Portuguese. The English arrived in the East Indies in 1602, and had to struggle to gain a foothold, but managed to establish factories at various locations, the main being at Bantam. However, it was not until the eighteenth century that they became a major player in the East Indies trade, and even then it was through trade with India and China, and not with the Spice Islands⁴³.

China had been a primary target of the European merchant explorers. In 1556, the Portuguese had been allowed to establish a permanent trading place in Macao – the first, and for 150 years the only European direct access to the enormous markets of the Middle Kingdom. During this period the English and the Dutch did try to gain trade into China, but were systematically rejected. Massarella points out that it is

⁴⁰ This study uses “East Indies” to refer to maritime Asia from India to Japan in general, and the South-East Asian archipelago in specific. Contemporary European definitions were, if anything, even vaguer.

⁴¹ Books on the European commercial expansion into South-East Asia are legion, but see e.g. Penrose 1955, Boxer 1969, Tracy 1990, and Prakash 1997.

⁴² The Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494 had set Asia out of bounds for the Spanish, yet New Spain conquered and colonized the Philippines in 1571 (contemporary maps show tug-of-war as to the exact location of the Treaty line, both sides claiming the region, and especially the Spice Islands (Washburn 1952: n.p.)). Tordesillas became moot with the ascension of Philip II of Spain to the Portuguese throne in 1580. At any rate, Spaniards had visited the East Indies from early on, and there were many among missionaries (indeed, there were even English Jesuits in the East Indies (Massarella 1990: 57)). The joined Iberian thrones partly account for the English commonly referring to the “Spaniards or Portugalses” as a pair. Nonetheless, it is clear that they understood the Philippines to be exclusively Spanish, just as Macao was seen as exclusively Portuguese.

⁴³ One outcome of the long struggle of the English with the Dutch for control of the Spice Islands was the trade of the nutmeg island of Run for the Dutch colony of Manhattan in 1667.

necessary to remember that European trade in the East Indies was insignificant in volume in comparison to intra-Asian trade (cf. Massarella 1990: 135). This was one reason why the Chinese were not keen to establish trade with “red-haired barbarians”, as they called Europeans; the fact that the English and the Dutch regularly captured Chinese junks and took them as prizes did not help either. The Portuguese, too, were no strangers to such behaviour. They had reached China in 1513, but making prizes of Chinese ships did not endear them to the authorities, and they were initially refused trading access. Official restrictions of trade, however, were commonly circumvented. Smuggling was common, as was clandestine trade, often using ships owned by other Asians. It was such a ship that carried the first Europeans on record to have reached Japan.

In September 1543, a Chinese junk carrying three Portuguese merchants en route from Siam to China was blown off its course in a typhoon⁴⁴. It reached Tanegashima, an island off the southwestern coast of Kyushu, where the natives turned out to be friendly and hospitable, and the Portuguese not only managed to trade their wares for silver, but also received great help in restoring and resupplying their ship before departing again for Malacca. Within a few years the Portuguese had begun trade with Japan; from 1550 they began their famed *náo do trato*⁴⁵ voyages from Macao to Japan – at first mainly to Hirado, but from 1571 to 1639 annually to Nagasaki⁴⁶ (Massarella 1990: 39-40).

European missionaries were quicker on the uptake, and the Jesuits arrived in Japan in 1549 (mendicant orders followed later in the century). The Jesuits were led by the charismatic and energetic Francis Xavier, who stayed for two years, concluding before he left that “[j]udging by the people we have so far met, I would say that the Japanese are the best race yet discovered and I do not think you will find their match among the pagan nations” (Cooper 1981: 60)⁴⁷. The missionaries had fair success, especially in Kyushu, where converts included many of the of the feudal lords, the

⁴⁴ The facts of this encounter remain in an official account written in 1612 by the historian of Portuguese India, Diogo do Couta (Massarella 1990: 23–24, 376 n. 70; cf. Boxer 1951: 24–25).

⁴⁵ These “great ships of commerce” were of some 1,200–1,600 tons by the end of the century (Massarella 1990: 40). In comparison, the EIC ships that visited Hirado ranged 200–600 tons, with some flagships of the Fleet of Defence reaching 1,000 tons (Cordani 2005).

⁴⁶ For the definitive account, see *The Great Ship from Amacon* (Boxer 1959).

⁴⁷ His statement furthered missionary determination. For the Xavier and the Jesuits in Japan, see for instance Boxer 1951 and Massarella 1999.

*daimyo*⁴⁸. More importantly, the missionaries wrote extensively on Japan and are the primary source for sixteenth-century European descriptions of Japan (Sioris 1995: 192).

4.2 Making the Cuckoo Sing: Japan 1550–1650

When Europeans reached Japan, the land had been in turmoil for some fifty years. Japan was a feudal economy consisting of some 300 *han*, or fiefs, ruled over by territorial lords, *daimyo*⁴⁹. They were theoretically subject to the rule of a shogun, but the authority of the Ashikaga shogunate (1338–1573) had in practice dissipated by the sixteenth century, and Japan was in a state of civil war⁵⁰. The Japan which expelled the Europeans a century later was a completely different world, a united nation controlled by a strong central government. The Japanese call this turbulent period, especially the sixteenth century, *sengoku-jidai*, that is, the age of warring kingdoms.

The history of the period can be summarized through the lives of three men, who put an end to the civil wars, unified Japan, and consolidated it under a central government⁵¹. Their approaches are summarized in three sayings:

If the cuckoo won't sing, kill it. – Oda Nobunaga (1534–1582)

If the cuckoo won't sing, make it sing. – Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1535–1598)

If the cuckoo won't sing, wait until it does. – Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542–1616)

Oda Nobunaga succeeded his father as the *daimyo* of the province of Owari (around Nagoya)⁵². From 1560 to his death in 1582, Nobunaga pursued an aggressive policy of unifying Japan in the name of the emperor. Through his success in battle he subjected many provinces to his rule, and rose to become the mightiest prince in Japan

⁴⁸ It is estimated that the missionaries managed to convert 1–2,5 % of the entire population (c.20 million): 2–500,000 Christians (Sansom 1950: 139; Massarella 1990: 36).

⁴⁹ Literally “big names”. There were also some seventy geographical provinces, or *kuni*. The boundaries of the *han* and the *kuni* did not correlate. There were hierarchies among the *daimyo*, and many controlled several *han*, either directly or through lower *daimyo*.

⁵⁰ From the twelfth to the nineteenth century, temporal power in Japan was held by the shogun (or other warlords or nobles). However, they drew their legitimacy from the Emperors (who for the most part led secluded lives at court) and rarely attempted to supplant them or usurp them. *Sei-i-tai-shōgun* (“barbarian-subduing generalissimo”) was a title granted by the Emperor (Massarella 1990: 25–26, 376 n. 74). For more on the real emperor, see below chapter 6.6.5.

⁵¹ For a history of Japan in this period, see Sansom, *A History of Japan* (1989–1991).

⁵² This paragraph is based on Papinot 1972, pp. 465–467.

and its secular leader in practice (although never shogun). Welcoming international contacts, Nobunaga viewed the Europeans favourably, and encouraged missionary activity and trade.

Toyotomi Hideyoshi was born in Owari into a family from the lower social ranks⁵³. Possessing a keen intellect and ambition, he managed to enter the service of Nobunaga in the 1550s. He rose rapidly, receiving a fief in 1574, and in the succession wars following the death of Nobunaga emerged the victor. By the mid-1580s he controlled most of central Japan, and the emperor awarded him the name of Toyotomi and the degree of *Kampaku*, or regent; not being of noble blood, he could not be granted the title of *shōgun*. By 1590 he controlled essentially all of Japan, and next turned his eye on Korea. In 1591 he resigned his title of *Kampaku* in favour of his adopted son Hidetsugu, and took the title of *Taikō*, or retired regent⁵⁴. Hideyoshi led an ultimately futile campaign against Korea from 1592 until his death in 1598. He is considered a cunning politician and capable administrator; yet while he favoured foreign trade, he also initiated the persecution of Christians. He issued an edict against missionaries in 1587, but it was not enforced until a decade later, when the first Japanese martyrs were executed in 1597, 9 European missionaries with 17 Japanese Christians (Massarella 1990: 77).

The victor of the struggles for succession following the death of Hideyoshi was Tokugawa Ieyasu⁵⁵. Starting as the daimyo of Mikawa (next to Owari), he had risen to become the greatest daimyo after Hideyoshi himself. His ascent culminated when he received the title of *shōgun* in 1603 (he was of noble descent). Ieyasu worked hard to establish a lasting Tokugawa dynasty, nominally abdicating in 1605 in favour of his son Hidetada and becoming known as *Ōgosho-sama*, an honorific title for a retired shogun meaning something like “the great authority” (Farrington 1991: 1602)⁵⁶. The final wars to pacify Japan took place after the English had arrived, in 1614–1615, when Ieyasu defeated the supporters of Hideyoshi’s son Hideyori (1593–1615) (cf. *EFIJ* 149). In the Spring of the following year, however, Ieyasu fell ill and

⁵³ This paragraph is based on Papinot 1972, pp. 693–697.

⁵⁴ The English, probably following general European use, which was likely the Japanese use, referred to him (long dead by then) by these titles, calling him “Quabicondono” (*Kampaku-dono*) and “Tycus-samme” (*Taikō-sama*).

⁵⁵ This and the following paragraph are based on Papinot 1972, pp. 662–670. See also Sadler 1937.

⁵⁶ Thus the English referred to Ieyasu as the “old Emperour”, or “Ogosho Sama”, while calling his son Hidetada the “new Emperour” or “Shongo Sama” (cf. Cocks 1978–1980: I:10, n. 27). Abdication was standard procedure in Japan for all potentates; the abdicated shoguns retained real power until death.

died. Ieyasu had been favourable towards the Europeans, yet had a growing wariness of Christianity. In 1614, he issued an edict banishing missionaries from Japan. Unlike the edict issued by Hideyoshi, this one was enforced (letting the English in Japan display their *Schadenfreude* in their letters home).

Tokugawa Hidetada (1579–1632) continued his father’s actions, but took them a step further. He worked to strengthen the legitimacy of the Tokugawa shogunate, but also curtailed the trading rights of Europeans dramatically, and systematically sought out and persecuted Christians. Hidetada abdicated in 1622 and his son Iemitsu (1603–1651) became shogun. Iemitsu in his turn was fanatically anti-Christian, and during his reign Japan effectively closed its doors to the world⁵⁷. The English had left in 1623; the Spanish were expelled the following year, and the Portuguese in 1639 (Massarella 1990: 343). Only the Dutch were allowed to retain a trading post on Dejima, a strictly controlled and tiny artificial island in Nagasaki, where they were moved in 1641⁵⁸.

The Christian elements in this century of intercourse with Japan have led to Western scholars naming the period the “Christian Century” in Japan, a misleading but convenient title. Yet although the first three Tokugawa shoguns have been cast in a bad light in Western books, Massarella points out that their policies were quite logical steps in strengthening the Tokugawa shogunate (1990: 162–163, 343–344). On the face of it, Christians at least theoretically were subjects of a foreign power (converts were Roman Catholics, and hence their ultimate temporal leader was the Pope), and thus a possible cause of instability to the shogunate, especially should they ally with Europeans (there were rumours of Spanish expansionist ambitions). However, internal politics are more likely to have been the cause to lead to the directing of foreign trade into the hands of Japanese merchants, and thus shaving away at the privileges of European traders in Japan.

For the Europeans in contemporary Japan, however, the developments seemed to revolve around Christianity, and each side (Roman Catholics and Protestants) blamed the other for the increasingly unfavourable situation. Yet actual European influence on political decisions made by the shoguns was probably negligible, although the Japanese government did on occasion grow weary of European

⁵⁷ His reign saw many martyrings; see *EFIJ* 366 (see also Sansom 1950: 120–140).

⁵⁸ For a history of the Dutch in Japan, see for instance Boxer 1930 and 1950.

complaints of each other. It is true, however, that one reason for restrictions on Europeans was the justified suspicion of missionaries posing as merchants (cf. Massarella 1990: 292–296).

4.3 The Merchant Companies Trading into the East

The opening of a sea route to India and the East Indies only eventually led to the decline of the importance of the Levant market as a channel for spices to Europe⁵⁹. Yet once the Dutch began to import pepper in large quantities directly from the East Indies, they essentially undercut the market in Northern Europe, and English merchants were forced to diversify. After extensive political negotiations and intensive fund-raising, on 31 December 1600, Queen Elizabeth granted a charter to the Company of Merchants of London trading into the East Indies (Massarella 1990: 61). The English East India Company had been founded⁶⁰.

Although the Dutch East India Company (the Vereenigde Oost Indische Compagnie, or the United East India Company, henceforth referred to as the VOC) was not founded until 1602, the Dutch were already ahead in the game (Massarella 1990: 59). They had been accumulating experience in long-range trade through the sixteenth century, and from the start had been investing much more seriously than the English – the starting capital of the Dutch East India Company was several times as much as that of the English. From 1568, they had also been gaining experience in warfare through their struggle for independence from Spanish rule, and their growing nationalism was reflected in their approach to trade. Their combined financial and national efforts made them a force to be reckoned with in the East Indies; as one sign of this, in 1601 they defeated a Portuguese fleet in a full-scale naval battle in the Bay of Bantam. As another, their trading voyages generally had more capital and better merchandise than the English, as the members of the English factory in Japan were later to bemoan on every occasion.

⁵⁹ On Elizabethan foreign trade, see Willan 1959.

⁶⁰ Henceforth referred to as the EIC. The definitive works on the history of the English East India Company are Chaudhuri 1965 and 1978, and Keay 1991.

It was a Dutch trading fleet that carried the first Englishman to Japan⁶¹. On 27 June 1598, a fleet of five ships left Rotterdam for the East Indies. Instead of rounding the Cape of Good Hope, their plan was to brave the Straits of Magellan, attack Spanish possessions in South America, and finally cross the Pacific (Farrington and Massarella 2000: 6). The voyage was to be plagued with misfortunes, and in the end, only one ship made it across the Pacific. In mid-April 1600, *De Liefde* (Charity), carrying a sick crew reduced to two dozen, of which only about six were even able to stand, reached Bungo on the eastern shore of Kyushu, Japan. The locals were friendly, but did not hesitate to help themselves to pickings of the ship's merchandise and the belongings of the helpless crew. Nonetheless they also provided the crew with supplies and allowed them to disembark and tend to their sick. Hearing of the arrival of a ship, Portuguese Jesuits (who were numerous in Kyushu) soon arrived on the scene. On discovering that the arrivals were Protestant heretics, they did their best to convince the local authorities that the *Liefde* was a pirate vessel, and its crew should be banished or, preferably, executed (Farrington and Massarella 2000: 7). However, the regional governor sent a message to court, to Ieyasu, who had recently become the ruler of Japan in all but name. Ieyasu was curious about the arrivals, and ordered one or two of them to be sent to him for questioning. Most of the officers of the *Liefde* had perished on the voyage and all of its men were weakened by their journey. However the pilot, an Englishman named William Adams, was in decent shape, and thus it was him that was taken to Osaka. (Massarella 90: 74–79; Farrington and Massarella 2000: 7).

Ieyasu believed Adams's truthful explanation that the comers were traders, and took a liking to Adams⁶². Ieyasu welcomed further trade with Europeans, and became a generous patron of the *Liefde* survivors, eventually raising Adams and another crewmember, the second mate Jan Joosten Van Loodenstijn, to the rank of *hatamoto* samurai, or bannerman retainers, granting them small estates near his court in Edo. Further, both became his informal advisors, and were allowed great access to Ieyasu (to the great irritation of the Portuguese and the Spanish). However, this was

⁶¹ Or at least the first Englishman on record to have reached Japan. The following events are recorded in two letters from William Adams. See Appendix II for *EFIJ* 6.

⁶² The Jesuits had made themselves "information brokers": knowledge of Japan and Europe to each other travelled through them, and the different picture of Europe which emerged from Adams's account – a Europe not united peacefully under a Christian leader as the Jesuits had insisted, but divided into bickering states by politics and religion – was as disadvantageous to them as it was revealing to Ieyasu (Massarella 1990: 47, 78; Farrington and Massarella 2000: 7).

all in lieu of initially refusing to grant the *Liefde* survivors permission to leave Japan. The crew adapted to confinement in various degrees, some of them, like Adams, “going native” to the extent of using Japanese clothes and taking local wives. While some of the *Liefde* survivors eventually returned to Europe, both Adams and Joosten ended their days in the East⁶³. Yet they were both first to prove extremely helpful when the VOC and the EIC reached Japan. (Massarella 1990: 80 ff.).

The East India Companies were founded in order to monopolize spice imports. By pooling resources, individual investments, and thus liabilities, could be kept relatively low. The first twelve voyages of the English EIC were all separate stock voyages, the capital of which were gathered by subscription⁶⁴. Voyages to the East Indies usually took about two years on average to return. As the EIC sent voyages every year or two, ships from different EIC voyages often visited the same places at the same time. This created problems, for the separate stocks were essentially competitors: successful purchases by one ship could result in failure for competing merchants⁶⁵. Further, accounting for the Company’s merchants at settled factories became complicated to the extreme, each voyage naturally trying to defer expenses onto the accounts of other voyages. This problem was solved in 1615 by the EIC beginning to treat its capital as joint-stock, a move much welcomed by its employees in the East Indies (Massarella 1990: 167).

When the VOC and EIC had set up factories in the East Indies, their factors soon realized that the key to successful business there was the country trade, that is, intra-Asian trade. Indian cloth sold well in South-East Asia, Chinese silk in Japan, and so on. European goods, however, were never in great demand (although most sold tolerably well over time). One extremely successful example of European participation in the country trade was the annual Macao *náo* to Nagasaki, by which means the Portuguese drew great profits for nearly seventy years. The VOC and the

⁶³ Joosten drowned on a trading voyage to Batavia. Some hold that two areas of Edo were named in honour of Adams and Joosten; modern Tokyo retains the names of Anjin-cho and Yaesu, both near Tokyo station. “Anjin” refers to Adams, who became known as Miura Anjin, or “the pilot of Miura”, where his estate was located (near modern Yokohama). For more on Adams, including a debunking of his myth, see Massarella 1990, Farrington 1991, and Farrington and Massarella 2000 (pp. 1–25). For more on Joosten, see Iwao 1958a and Massarella 1985 (p. 3).

⁶⁴ For summary accounts of these voyages, see Farrington 2001.

⁶⁵ The Eighth Voyage which carried the Hirado factory merchants encountered one such situation at the entrance to the Red Sea. See *EFIJ* 149.

EIC were drawn to Japan from the start, for it had long been fabled for its prodigious supplies of silver, which the Portuguese had found the perfect way to exploit.

4.4 The English East India Company in Japan, 1613–1623

News of the *Liefde* survivors in Japan reached Europe in 1601, with the publication of a Dutch travel narrative which mentioned their presence in Japan (Massarella 1990: 81–82). Encouraged by this, both the VOC and the EIC hastened to attempt establish trade with Japan (Farrington and Massarella 2000: 10).

The Dutch reached Japan in July 1609. They were much welcomed by the remaining survivors of the *Liefde*; Joosten went with them to court and helped them receive trading privileges from Ieyasu and Hidetada. It was decided to establish a factory in Japan. But where?

When the Portuguese had begun to trade with Japan, their ships had originally come to Hirado. Being situated close to mainland Asia, the island had a long history of trading contacts with China; it was also the first port of call for ships arriving in Japan from South-East Asia (Farrington 1979: 39; Massarella 1990: 39). In 1571 they moved their shipping to newly founded Nagasaki, and the trade drawn in by their presence transformed the little village into a great, thriving city⁶⁶. Missionaries in Japan, being experienced in intercultural contacts as well as competent linguists, functioned as middlemen for the Portuguese merchants; Nagasaki became the focal point of the Catholic Church in Japan as well as of the Portuguese presence in Japan. Therefore the Dutch saw Hirado, whence the Portuguese had retreated, as a good place to set up a factory. (Massarella 1990: 39-40; see also *EFIJ* 85, and below chapter 6.6.1).

In addition to selling broadcloth (often English) in Japan and working the country trade, the Dutch realized they could use Japan as a supply base for their forts and factories in the Spice Islands. By the time the Eighth Voyage of the English East India Company arrived in Hirado in 1613, the Dutch were, as usual, ahead of the game.

⁶⁶ The lucrative trade eventually led the Japanese government to take Nagasaki under its direct control.

In April 1611, the Eighth Voyage of the EIC left the Thames estuary with layered orders as was usual. If trade in India, Bantam and the Spice Islands was not forthcoming, at the discretion of the General (as the commanders of these voyages were called), the fleet should sail for Japan. In Japan, William Adams should be sought out, trade relations established, and if the merchants of the voyage deemed it fit, some should be left to set up a factory. The Company's instructions for the voyage also included an order to grant Adams free passage home should he desire it (Farrington 1979: 38).

As events transpired, in June 1613, the *Clove* reached Japan. The ship was towed into Hirado harbour, and letters to William Adams dispatched immediately. Adams arrived from Edo before August, and an English delegation consisting of Saris, Adams, and a dozen members of the crew of the *Clove* left for the court, bearing gifts to Ieyasu and the shogun⁶⁷. They visited Ieyasu's court in Suruga (to whom Saris presented the English request for trading privileges), as well as Hidetada at Edo (and received their privileges on their way back via Suruga). Compared with the rather vague privileges received by the Dutch in 1609, those received by the English were set out in some detail (Massarella and Tytler 1990: 200). Essentially they gave the English the right to trade anywhere in Japan and for their ships to call at any ports, and guaranteed them protection from abuse by anyone in Japan⁶⁸. The terms seemed very favourable, and it was decided to set up a factory. After a council, the location decided upon was, once again, Hirado (Massarella 1990: 120–121). The factory would consist of seven men: Richard Cocks would be its “cape merchant” or head, and with him would remain Tempest Peacock, Richard Wickham, William Eaton, Walter Carwarden, Edmund Sayers, and William Nealson⁶⁹. William Adams, too, was employed by the EIC after lengthy negotiations with Saris⁷⁰. Before the *Clove* left in December 1613, Saris left behind elaborate instructions on setting up and running the factory⁷¹.

⁶⁷ Ieyasu had abdicated in 1605 in favour of his son Hidetada. See above page 20.

⁶⁸ For a detailed account of both privileges, see Massarella and Tytler 1990, especially for more on English misconceptions of both the contents and the validity of the privileges.

⁶⁹ For brief biographies of some of the Hirado factory members see below chapter 6, and Farrington 1984 and 1991.

⁷⁰ The contract of William Adams and the EIC remains, see. *EFIJ* 17.

⁷¹ *EFIJ* 22.

The Hirado factory members immediately got to work. A house with adjoining storehouses had been leased from Li Tan; this was later expanded to include adjoining properties, and a firewall was built around the English compound. Factors were dispatched to Edo, Miyako (Kyoto), Osaka and Sakai, and also to Tsushima (Massarella 1990: 145 ff.). This last was an island between Kyushu and Korea, and the intention was to find out whether trade could be attained into Korea. Richard Cocks also began to look into attaining trade with China, for it was clear from the beginning that the best way to profit by trade in Japan was by importing silk from China, and then exporting Japanese silver obtained by it to the East Indies to pay for pepper and other goods which were in demand in England. Cocks found a liaison in Li Tan, the head of the Chinese merchant community in Japan; unfortunately no trade was forthcoming, and although Cocks's optimism endured through his stay in Japan, there is no evidence that Li Tan was doing anything more than milking the English for what they were worth (Massarella 1990: 182–184)⁷². Nonetheless, Li Tan was also one of the English factory's primary customers in Japan.

It is worth remembering that the Europeans were not the only ones trading into Japan; the volume of Chinese trade was much greater than that of the Europeans, and it was Japanese merchants who brought in most of the country trade. The Japanese government required all ships trading out of Japan to carry *goshuin*⁷³, “(great) vermillion-seals”, essentially licenses or passes for one or more voyages of trade to a specific destination (usually in South-East Asia). The purpose of these was to regulate the channels of the country trade, and thus direct much of the incoming wealth into the government's coffers. Ships without *goshuin* were considered equal to pirates or smugglers, and the passes also functioned as a means of protection: ships travelling with a *goshuin* were under the shogun's protection, and their captors would be answerable to the shogunate⁷⁴. (Farrington and Massarella 2000: 29).

⁷² The other Hirado factors (as well as other EIC members) were not as trusting, and on many occasions did not hesitate to express their suspicion of Li Tan and disapproval of Cocks in the matter (Massarella 1990: 184). For more on Li Tan, see (Iwao 1958b).

⁷³ Properly known as *shuinjō*, vermillion-seal documents (Massarella and Tyler 1990: 189). *Shuinjō* were official documents issued by the shogun(ate), and included both the trading privileges granted to Europeans, and the passes for individual voyages, which the English referred to as *goshuin*.

⁷⁴ The shogunate took trespasses of *shuinsen* (ships carrying *goshuin*) seriously. The Fleet of Defence (see below page 32) captured one in 1620 carrying two Spanish friars disguised as merchants. Yet despite edicts proscribing Christianity (carrying missionaries to Japan was punishable by death), the matter was not resolved until 1622, when the friars and the Japanese captain and twelve of its passengers were executed; the shogunate kept the cargo, giving the now useless hulk of the ship to the Europeans (Massarella 1990: 292–296).

According to their instructions, the Hirado factory also set out to partake in the country trade by chartering Chinese and Japanese *shuinsen*, and by buying junks and obtaining *goshuin* themselves. Over some four and half years, there were seven attempts on inter-Asia trade, namely to Cochin China (modern Vietnam) and Ayutthaya in Siam (modern Thailand). The very first voyage ended a tragedy, and the second a failure. Of the other five, three were fair successes, one a modest one, and the last one another failure. Yet the profits gained by these voyages were far overshadowed by losses incurred from the loss of the first voyage (including the lives of Tempest Peacock and Walter Carwarden and 13.3% of the factory's capital⁷⁵), the expenses of fitting and supplying ships (both the said junks and the English ships that visited Japan), of setting up the factory, and the great expenses occurred simply in conducting business in Japan (Massarella 1990: 154; Farrington and Massarella 2000: 32).

In practice, the European merchants in Japan did business with Japanese middlemen. These were either merchants in their own right, or servants of daimyo or the government. The centre of commerce in Japan was Kyō, or Miyako, “the capital”, as it was generally called (modern Kyoto). Other commercially important cities were Edo (modern Tokyo), where Ieyasu settled the shogun's court, Suruga (or Sunpu, the modern Shizuoka) where he held his court after retirement, and the cities of Osaka and Sakai near Kyoto. During the sixteenth century, Nagasaki rose to join these as another important commercial city. While the Dutch and the English spread their trade through Japan, the Portuguese did not have similar trading privileges. Their trade was practically limited to the annual carrack from Macao to Nagasaki. Its value, however, was often more than the annual sales of the Dutch and the English put together, as it brought a great cargo of silk, which was always in great demand in Japan. Yet the Portuguese were subjected to a buyer's market: they had to make their sales and leave before the monsoon ended. Over the years, the situation worsened for them, as in 1604 Japanese merchants formed a consortium (called *itowappu*) and forced them to accept fixed prices much lower than those on the free market⁷⁶.

One of the recurring themes in the letters home from the Hirado factory members is the request to be allowed more wages, or to be advanced more of their

⁷⁵ Conflicting accounts of what happened to Peacock and Carwarden filtered to Hirado via various channels; see Massarella 1990: 155–157.

⁷⁶ For more on the *itowappu*, see Massarella 1990, p. 84, 211–212.

wages in Japan⁷⁷. The expenses in Japan were greater than elsewhere in the East Indies, and this held true also for the running expenses of the factory⁷⁸. Fitting and supplying ships was a great expense: the factory's junks generally required extensive servicing at each stop⁷⁹, and when EIC vessels reached Japan, the expenses incurred by fitting and supplying them usually and unfairly fell upon the Hirado factory. But the primary expense in Japan was the giving of gifts.

Trade throughout the East Indies was framed by an elaborate system of exchanging gifts which greased the wheels of diplomacy and trade. In Japan, however, gift-giving was especially important. As much as ten percent of the capital of the Dutch and the English merchants in Japan was spent in presenting gifts to people without whose favour "there would be no abiding here, etc" (Cooper 1982: 141; cf. *EFIJ* 229): everyone from the local officials and daimyo all the way up to the shogun and the retired shogun (Cooper 1982: 141). The Dutch and the English discovered that their trading privileges required a visit to the court once a year, or at the arrival of every shipping. (There were also commercial reasons for this latter, as the shogunate wished to have first pickings of every cargo reaching Japan. In fact, the shogun's agents were some of the EIC's and VOC's major customers, being especially keen on buying such commodities as lead and armaments (*EFIJ* 351, and page 101 below)). But each time they were expected to bear gifts, which naturally had to be valuable enough to avoid the disfavour of the ruler⁸⁰.

Even the heavy expenses might have yet been bearable if the Hirado factory had received merchandise appropriate for the Japanese market. While the factory's junks eventually brought in such goods, each of the EIC ships bringing cargoes from England brought goods "best described as ranging from 'difficult to sell' to absolute rubbish" – a matter not helped by the usually poor condition of the ill-packed and ill-treated merchandise (Farrington and Massarella 2000: 27).

⁷⁷ The EIC employees received most of their wages on their return to England, although some part of the wages was advanced "for apparell" (Massarella 1990: 220–223).

⁷⁸ In one letter, after reporting the great amount of money spent in building the English House, as the English factory was known, Cocks goes on to lessen the impact by relating how much the Dutch had spent on their factory – a much greater sum (*EFIJ* 75).

⁷⁹ The junk bought by the factory in 1614 and named the *Sea Adventure* sprung a leak on its first voyage, and eventually had to be abandoned as unsailable in Siam (Massarella 1990: 254).

⁸⁰ Further expenses were incurred by the frequent loans demanded by the Hirado daimyo and his kin, which the English (and the Dutch) were forced to grant (often in merchandise instead of cash), although the Matsu-ura clan was slow in paying back (cf. *EFIJ* 319, and chapter 6.6.3).

When the *Clove* had reached England again in late 1614, Saris had been called to inform the EIC Committee of markets and prospects in Japan. Partly in order to emphasise the great success of the voyage, Saris told them to some extent what they wanted to hear⁸¹ (Massarella 1990: 126–127). In essence, he was building further on the myth initiated in England by Richard Willes in 1577, when he published a new edition of Richard Eden’s *History of trauayle* (a translation of Pietro d’Anghiera’s *De novo orbo* of 1533, a collection of texts on the Indies). In the chapter on Japan, he stated that Japan was “hillie and pestered with snow”, and therefore a good market for woollen cloth (Massarella 1990: 65-6) – something given also William Adams as a motivation for heading to Japan (*EFIJ* 1: 52).

This was a myth – while broadcloth did sell in Japan, it was never in great demand – yet a persistent myth, which seemed iradicable from the minds of those who did not experience trade in Japan⁸². The other marketable commodities listed by Saris were for the most part nonsense. In a recently discovered letter written in 1621 by John Osterwick, a member of the factory who arrived on the *Hosiander* in August 1615, the writer sums up concisely exactly which goods and in what quantities was there a market for in Japan⁸³ (Massarella 2001: 48-49):

For the Comodities most used & desired in Japon they are Silke, stvffs, deereskynns & Syam wood. [...] & for ye quantetie that yerely may be spent, so farr as I can learne, are as followeth:

600 peculls of silke, the most whereof to be Canton silke, and then it may yeild iiC xx t[ael]s p pecull. If more or lesse come, ye price is made accordingly.

60000 deere skynns of the iii sorts & then they may yeild from xx taies the C to xxxii.

7000 peculls of wood of Syam & then it may yeild xviii mas p pecull.

For stvffs it is vncertaine but much they doe spend. [...]

As for our English Comodeties, but little thereof doth vent heere. & that wch is most esteemed is broadcloath, whereof may vent in Japaon 500 tattames, w[hi]ch is about xxxi whole Cloathes, & then it will yeild x t[ael]s p tattame. The Coolers to Stam[me]ts & black, not high priced cloathes, but of the ordinary Cloathes comonly sent heither, for they make small difference in the fines of the Cloathes. [...]

As for any other Comodetie, but little doth vent heere of what kinde soever it be w[hi]ch we can bring. [...]

⁸¹ The voyage had indeed been successful, bringing returns of 311% (Farrington 2001: 155).

⁸² Saris had stayed in Japan for half a year, but very little was sold during his stay there, as Richard Wickham was careful to point out in a letter to the EIC wherein he complained of the unvendible merchandise delivered to Japan by the Company’s ships (cf. *EFIJ* 235).

⁸³ For a brief biography of Osterwick, see below chapter 6.4.2.

The sales of thirty-one rolls of broadcloth a year was hardly enough to turn Japan into the fountain of silver which the EIC believed was possible. The Hirado factory members regularly wrote to the EIC in London, informing them of the state of their sales and the markets, and complaining in virtually every letter how they kept receiving invendible goods on EIC ships, how expectations of the factory were unrealistic, and how the charges in Japan were much greater than elsewhere in the East Indies. Yet all this was to no avail, as somehow the EIC Committee never did accept or understand the reality of the markets in Japan as related by the Hirado factory members.

Ultimately, a greater problem than being brought poorly selling merchandise, was the fact that very few English ships came to Japan in the ten years of the factory's existence⁸⁴. The factory managed to sell all the broadcloth it received, and would have been able to sell more – if not great amounts, nonetheless enough to keep a trickle of cash coming in. However, after the *Clove* left, only three ships came from England, in 1615 and 1616. In August 1617 a ship brought goods from South-East Asia. The next ships arriving in Hirado were not forthcoming until July 1620⁸⁵. These were part of the Fleet of Defence, and brought mostly plunder from Chinese junks, including the desired silk (which was dispatched rapidly).

Every two or three years, the situation changed dramatically for the English factory at Hirado. The first crisis came in 1616 with the death of Ieyasu in June, when the English (and the Dutch) were required to journey up to court to renew their trading privileges with the new *de facto* head of state. They expected to receive the same privileges again, and were promised as much by the shogun's secretaries, yet in the event it turned out that the new privileges restricted them to Hirado (and Nagasaki), forcing the English to withdraw their merchants from Edo, Miyako (Kyoto) and Osaka/Sakai (see *EFIJ* 229, and chapter 6.6.2). This was a serious setback, for much of their sales had been conducted in these cities; over the following weeks, and then over the following years, Cocks, as well as the chief of the Dutch factory, tried to

⁸⁴ For a list of ships visiting Hirado during the factory's existence, see Farrington 1991: 1581–1588.

⁸⁵ The factory did carry out voyages to South-East Asia from in 1618 and 1619, yet the profits gained thereby were far below desired levels of turnover.

regain their former privileges, but without success⁸⁶. Indeed, worse was to come, as the Anglo-Dutch hostilities erupted in the East Indies in 1618 and lasted until 1620. Letters from this period occasionally contain even a sense of despair, and accounts of the Dutch bringing captured English vessels into Hirado harbour, of prices being set upon the heads of the English merchants, and of the Dutch attacking the English House (with Japanese troops intervening to restore peace), reveal how grim the situation was for the English merchants in Japan⁸⁷. No English ships reached Hirado during this time, and letters written in early 1620 begin by saying it is the third year since any shipping reached Japan (*EFIJ* 319: 783). Worse was to follow, for during that very Spring, William Neelson succumbed to consumption, and in May, William Adams died. Cocks was moved by the loss, and wrote a praising obituary of Adams in a letter to the Company (see *EFIJ* doc. 335, and Farrington and Massarella 2000: 12).

With the arrival of English ships in Hirado July of that year, however, it seemed their luck had turned. In March 1620 news reached the East Indies that the EIC and the VOC had not only made peace, but joined into an alliance, and formed three euphemistically named Fleets of Defence to harass the Spanish and the Portuguese in Asia (Massarella 1990: 271). One fleet, consisting only of Dutch ships, blockaded Malacca. Another, of Dutch and English vessels, tried to blockade Goa. The third, consisting of about five English and five Dutch ships, was meant to attack Spanish, Portuguese and Chinese shipping in the South China Sea, and kept Hirado as its base. For the two seasons from July 1620 to July 1622, the fleet engaged in two “Manila voyages”. It was not the finest hour of either the English or the Dutch: their primary achievement was plundering Chinese junks, and they had little if any effect on the Iberian trade. The plunder, nonetheless, was great, and even if most of it ended up lining the pockets of those involved instead of the coffers of the EIC and the VOC, the EIC profited some £40,000 from it⁸⁸ (Massarella 2001: 43). Yet at the same time as the Fleet of Defence was bringing both wealth and woes to Hirado (the latter due to unruly sailors and, more importantly, the great expenses of fitting out the ships), or perhaps because of it, Hidetada once again curtailed the trading privileges of the

⁸⁶ Massarella notes that the trading privileges were, indeed, *privileges*, and their conditions were entirely dictated by the Japanese: the Europeans could only accept them or leave (2001: 44).

⁸⁷ It is some consolation that the members of the Dutch factory, most of whom had been in Japan since the arrival of the English, continued on friendly terms with them even through this troubled period. Indeed, it was their chief, Jacques Specx, who came to warn the English of the impending Dutch attack.

⁸⁸ Which is ten times the amount Richard Cocks was later claimed to have lost the Company by his alleged mismanagement of the Hirado factory’s operations (Massarella 1990: 325).

English and the Dutch⁸⁹. From 1621, it became illegal to “carrie anie people out of this cuntrey”, nor “any powder, shott, swordes, pickes” or other munitions (*EFIJ* 350: 847), which put a stop to English attempts at country trade (for they had hired Japanese crews on their voyages), and frustrated half of the motives of the Dutch for using Japan as a supply base.

In 1622, the EIC council at Batavia had decided to recall Cocks, whose performance they considered to be unsatisfactory, as well as most of the other Hirado factory members. For some reason Cocks stalled for a year, and eventually a ship had to be sent from Batavia with the express mission to close the factory and bring all its members to Java. Thus, recalled in disgrace, Cocks was questioned by the EIC local president and council at Batavia, where it was decided to send him home, while John Osterwick would remain behind at Batavia to sort out Cocks’s disorderly accounts (Cooper 1982: 151; Massarella 1990: 314 ff.). Perhaps broken by shame or depression, Cocks died at sea on the homeward journey. In the end, only William Eaton returned to England, and all the other members of the Hirado factory died abroad.

5. Merchant letters from Japan: four case studies

5.1 Before the East India Company: William Adams in Japan

The rest of this letter (by the malice of the bearers) was suppressed, but seemeth to bee in substance the same with the former. I have added this also as containing divers things not mentioned in the former.

It is no coincidence that it was Francis Bacon, great advocate of discoveries, who wrote that knowledge is power⁹⁰. Yet as the European discovery of the world was led by merchant companies, for the East India Companies of the early Seventeenth

⁸⁹ Massarella repeats John Osterwick’s claim that the actions of the Fleet of Defence angered the Japanese government (Massarella 2001: 43, 46). Farrington merely notes that the two events coincided (Farrington and Massarella 2000: 33).

⁹⁰ “Nam et ipsa scientia potestas est” (Bacon 1597).

Century, knowledge meant money⁹¹. When Purchas in his *Pilgrimes* (1625) printed what he had of William Adams's first letter from Japan (or first surviving letter; it dates from c. 1605, and is addressed to his wife), he added a brief note at the end, from which I have quoted above (*EFIJ* 1: 54)⁹². As Farrington observes, it is quite likely true that the Dutch, who conveyed the letter to the English, cut out all the information that could be commercially useful to the English, their rivals in trade (Farrington 1991: 54, n. 1).

It is the value of information which forms the core of this study. Questions I am seeking answers to include: what, exactly, did the Hirado merchants say in their letters home? What aspects of Japan did they write about, and how did they talk about aspects of Japan? This chapter contains case studies of four representative letters from three representative writers in the *EFIJ* corpus (see introduction). I will investigate the letters in detail and submit the findings to close textual analysis. The letters are first put into context and discussed individually, and then compared and the findings discussed briefly. The next chapter will deal with the rest of the letters in a similar manner, but not write them out in such detail.

5.2 Case 1: William Adams to his countrymen 1611

What, then, did Adams have to say that was valuable enough for the Dutch to have felt it necessary to suppress? The abovementioned letter from 1605 survives only as the torso printed by Purchas; for an idea of its "suppressed" contents, I shall proceed to look at the "former" letter. This was printed by Purchas above the earlier letter, although it is dated later – 23 October 1611 – and its structure seems to match that of the earlier letter quite closely, as much as can be judged from what remains of the 1605 letter. The original does not survive, though there are three contemporary copies extant (*EFIJ*, 73 n.1⁹³); I shall discuss the copy printed in *EFIJ* (doc. 6, pp. 65–74).

The first case, then, is William Adams's 1611 letter "to his unknown countrymen"⁹⁴. It was written with the aim of establishing contact with his

⁹¹ For merchant companies and European expansion, see chapter 4; see also for instance Tracy 1990, Prakash 1997 and Neill 2002.

⁹² Letters in this study are referred to as "(*EFIJ* document number: page number)".

⁹³ The extant copies show some variation, but it is not significant (see Shimada 1992).

⁹⁴ Adams had learned from the Dutch of the English presence in South-East Asia, and therefore knew to write a letter to them (Massarella 1990: 87).

countrymen, and specifically with his friends and family. To this end, it begins with a brief biography, and consists largely of a long narrative of the events which brought Adams to Japan and to his present status as a retainer of the shogun. Adams repeatedly pleads the reader(s) to forward the letter to his family and friends, and writes that the “Emperor” refuses him leave of Japan, but he still desires to one day return to England. The letter also portrays Japan as a profitable target for English trade.

Adams wrote his letter in October 1611. The English East India Company’s Eight Voyage had left England in April 1611, and one of its aims was to establish a factory in Japan. That is to say, by 1611, Japan was not unknown in England, and the EIC for certain were becoming increasingly familiar with it⁹⁵. If nothing else, general descriptions and maps of Japan, compiled for the most part by Portuguese and Spanish missionaries, were readily available (especially to those with resources to acquire them, such as the merchant companies). Having said that, Adams himself could not have had an idea of exactly how well Japan was known in England at the time, yet he himself had spent eleven years there and was thoroughly familiar with everything about Japan. Keeping these things in mind, let us turn back to Adams’s letter.

At the end of the letter there are two exceptional passages which contain a brief general description of Japan (*EFIJ* 6: 72–73):

Yow shall understand that the Hollanders have here an Indies of monney, for out of Holland is noe need of silver to come into th’Est Indies, for in Japan is much silver and gold to serve for the Hollanders to handell wher they will in th’Est Indies allwaies provided for their commodeties, viz. rawe silk and pepper, w’th other commodetyes, and to excuse the reason best, lead, and such like is in Japan marchandiz allwaies redy money.
[...]

This island of Japan is a great lande and lieth to the northward in lattitude of 48 deg’, in the so’ in 35 degrees, no’ and so’, and then it lyeth e’ by no’ and w’ by so’ or w’so’west in length a 220 English

⁹⁵ The quality of the “knowledge” about Japan acquired by the EIC, though, was rather questionable. See above page 30 for John Saris’s spurious claims of merchandise vendible in Japan, and the Company’s failure to understand the truth about trade in Japan.

leagues; the people of the lande good of nature, curteous out of measure, and valliant in warres; justice is severely executed upon the traunsgressor of the lawe w'thout partiallety; governed in great civillety, I mean not a lande better governed in the worlde by civil pollecy. The people be very superstitious in their religeon, being divers in oppynion. Ther be many Christians by reason of the Jesuites, w'ch be many in this lande, and Fraunciscanons, havinge many churches in the lande &c.⁹⁶

These passages contain many facts worth hiding from competitors: the location of Japan (inaccurately portrayed in contemporary maps⁹⁷), a general word on the inhabitants (they are civilized), and the presence of missionaries and Japanese Christians (European presence was an indication that the English, too, could likely manage in Japan; Christianized inhabitants, be it Roman Catholics, were a bonus).

In the first passage, however, merely stating explicitly that Japan is flush in silver does not quite satisfy a modern reader. After all, Japan's status as the *summum bonum* of the East Indies had been long established (Massarella 1990: 335 ff.). Considering that he was writing from a land which was quite unknown to Englishmen, Adams seems to be saying very little about the country where he has lived for over a decade⁹⁸.

But what, specifically, does Adams reveal about Japan? Explicit facts in the letter are mostly limited to geography. Adams's comment of Japan's incorrect latitude in contemporary maps is invaluable, as are his remarks on directions and distances in Japan. He mentions by name five cities and two regions, but does not expound upon them ("a place called Bouingo", "a citty cauled Sakay"). He mentions no Japanese people by name, but distinguishes between "kings" and the "Emperor", whom he refers to as "His Highness" (and once or twice, accidentally it would seem, as "King"⁹⁹). He barely touches upon the Japanese people and culture (only saying that those who clambered aboard the *Liefde* "did us noe harme", mentions that crucifying is the common method of execution, and writes without comment on the presence of Japanese Christians).

⁹⁶ These passages make an interesting comparison with Marco Polo's words on Japan on page 1.

⁹⁷ See Washburn 1952, and Cortazzi 1982 and 1983.

⁹⁸ Even if Adams had been aware of works published on Japan in England at the time, he was in a position to relate much more information than they provided.

⁹⁹ Throughout the period, Europeans remain confused about titles of nobles and leaders in Japan.

Implicitly, Adams paints a picture of a country ruled by an unnamed “Emperor” who seems a true Renaissance character: interested in foreign affairs and the advancement of learning (he is taught some geometry and mathematics by Adams¹⁰⁰), not unkind or uncaring (granting daily rice allowances to all survivors of the *Liefde*), and eager for foreign trade. The Emperor is also generous, not only reimbursing the *Liefde* survivors when all their belongings are stolen upon arrival, but raising Adams to the status of retainer and giving him an estate. Yet the Emperor naturally considers his own interests to be more important than the wishes of Adams to travel home (and Adams seems to take for granted his master’s prerogative of denying him leave).

Most of the letter dealing with his time in Japan only indirectly describes Japan or the Japanese, and Adams spends more time talking about the Europeans in Japan. Overall, he paints a picture of a hospitable country where European ventures are successful: certainly the Spanish and the Portuguese are not only seemingly doing well (missionary success; the annual Macao carrack), but their efforts to exclude the *Liefde* crew are also suggestive of protective jealousy – justified jealousy, it would seem, at least according to the “Indies of monney” Adams claims the Dutch have found in Japan.

The body of the letter contains no unfamiliar vocabulary but for place-names, and Adams seems to take for granted that the reader has a level of familiarity with Japan. On the other hand, the absence of much concrete detail and the quality of the information could be taken to mean that Adams purposely wrote at a general level. For it is hardly surprising that Japan has an “Emperor”, nor that the Spanish and Portuguese (and the Jesuits) have established a presence in Japan, for it was well known that they had done so all through the East Indies, of which – to those back in Europe – Japan was merely one part.

In this light, the two descriptive passages at the end of the letter are revealing. Adams manages to summarize Japan as a cross between Xavier’s land of “the best race yet discovered” and a commercially exploitable version of Polo’s gold-rich country. The necessity of including such a succinct account of Japan suggests that, as with maps of the East Indies as mentioned above, he thinks there may be much misinformation about Japan in Europe. On the other hand, its presence at the very end

¹⁰⁰ Massarella notes that the pastime was quite likely merely recreational for Ieyasu (Massarella 1990: 80).

of the long letter could be taken to indicate its inclusion as something of an afterthought, or as the realization that Adams had forgotten to give it earlier at a more suitable point¹⁰¹.

Most of what Adams writes about Japan is commercially relevant: the lay of the land affects travel; knowledge of the state and the ruler is naturally vital for a trading venture; European activities in Japan are, due to politics in Europe, highly relevant for they form the competition of any activities undertaken by the English¹⁰²; and information about markets and available riches are naturally of primary importance. As the primary reason for the Dutch and English being in the East Indies was trade, Adams was aware that he was writing to merchants, and his letter is an irresistible invitation to Japan¹⁰³. It is no wonder his earlier letter was suppressed.

5.3 Case 2: Richard Wickham to the EIC 1615

The second case is a rather typical letter from one of the Hirado factory members to their employees in England. Its aim is to inform the EIC of the state of its business at the factory location. It is written by Richard Wickham to Sir Thomas Smythe, the first governor of the English East India Company, on October 23, 1615¹⁰⁴. The English factory had been running for some two years at this time, and the second Company ship had arrived in Hirado two months previously; when it would leave on February 26, 1616, it would carry (a copy of) this letter, among many others¹⁰⁵.

The structure, content and size of the letter are representative of letters home. I will next conduct a paragraph-by-paragraph analysis of the contents of the letter.

1. The first paragraph contains the opening of the letter: salutation, reference to previous letters, health formula, and an elliptic form of notification to

¹⁰¹ It may have been boredom, for about halfway through the letter Adams seemingly tires of writing in such great detail and begins to cut himself short, stating on no less than five occasions how it would be “too tedious” to write out everything.

¹⁰² The state of Christianity in Japan is another key factor affecting European trading ventures (cf. following letters); however, local religions had very little influence on Europeans in Japan at the time.

¹⁰³ It was a previous letter, however, which reached the hands of the EIC in England and was read at their committee meeting; this letter reached Bantam after the *Clove* had departed thence for Japan (Massarella 1990: 88).

¹⁰⁴ *EFIJ* doc. no. 125, pp. 326–329.

¹⁰⁵ The surviving document is a personal copy in Richard Wickham’s copy letter book, IOR: G/12/15 pp. 23–25.

begin the letter – on a bad note, as it happens: “Since w’ch time we have bin much greeved that some businesses in this place hath had such bad successe”.

2. The first subject of the letter is the factory’s failed first Cochin China venture.
3. The second subject is the first Siam venture, which failed when the junk sprung a leak, forcing the vessel and crew to winter in the Ryukyu islands.
4. Next follows a description of the Ryukyu islands. The focus is mercantile, commenting on politics, trade, markets, and the factory’s followed success in receiving privileges to set up a factory there.
5. The fifth paragraph deals with business, then turns into an account of how the Dutch not only have superior merchandise (meaning broadcloth), but “goe beyond all, not only us but all strangers,” by robbing Chinese ships and selling stolen goods without great expense to themselves, and further how they use Japan as a supply base for their troops holding the Moluccas.
6. The sixth paragraph moves on into recent events in the East concerning the English, namely the movements of the Spanish and Portuguese, gathering their forces for a planned strike against the Dutch.
7. Then follows more news, of a Spanish embassy come from New Spain, with news of “certayne English shippes or Hollanders w’ch have done great spoyle in the South Seas the last yeare”.
8. The eighth paragraph finally gives some local news of import (aside from a brief comment in paragraph 5 about sales and markets), of the recent persecution of Christians in Japan, and a glimpse of the constant struggle for local favour between the English and the Jesuits.
9. More local news, this time of wars affecting the factory business, yet ending with optimism: “the Emperour offereth us all frindshipp & priveledge his cuntrys affoordeth, shewing us more favor than any nation in these p’tes”.
10. A brief comment on advice on “all p’ticulers of trade” sent to the East India Company agent at Bantam.
11. Last of all, Richard Wickham petitions for a salary raise, and for the Company to pay part of his wages to his mother, “a poore widdow, yf livinge”.

12. A humble valediction.

Nothing in the letter is atypical. Leaving aside formulaic passages, I will briefly comment upon the contents.

The letter is clearly focussed on East India Company business. The overseas trading ventures of the Hirado factory are dealt with in detail. The description of the Ryukyu islands mentions nothing strictly irrelevant to trade – Wickham does give two facts of their customs, but mentioning that they “are decended from the race of the Chines, wearinge theyre hayre longe but tyed upp on the right sid of the head, a peaceable & quiet people” is useful for future trade ventures.

Wickham does not comment extensively on trade in Japan, yet it may be safely assumed that he expected Richard Cocks to write to Smythe more fully about business in Japan. Paragraph 10 suggests that Wickham may not have thought it necessary to inform the Company at home on all particulars of trade, as the suppliers of the factory’s best selling merchandise were located in the East. Wickham’s main concern seems to be the Dutch. They are superior tradesmen and pirates and have more military might than other Europeans in the East; thus the detailed description of the forces the Iberians are amassing against the Dutch is highly relevant. Much depends upon the fortunes of others, and while the English believe themselves to be in better favour in Japan than other Europeans, their business suffers when the government or the markets respond the activities of others (as François Caron, head of the VOC factory in Hirado in the 1630s wrote, “when it rains on the Portuguese, the [Dutch East India] company gets splattered too” (Massarella 1990: 345)). It is interesting to note that Wickham does not mention Japanese merchants.

The persecution of Christians in Japan seems to work in favour of the English factory, although recent political turmoil has done the contrary. Altogether Wickham paints a picture of a hard-working English trading post beset by misfortunes from spheres outside their control. Yet he finishes on an optimistic note, and does not shy from asking for more pay, to be paid in his absence to his “poor widdowe” mother, and finally humbly takes his leave.

Structurally the letter is exemplary. There is no postscript, and the passages of news neatly follow the main part of the letter (state and activities of the Hirado factory). Wickham also manages to stylistically segue smoothly from section to

section. The letter begins with the earliest and most disastrous news of the Company's affairs, moves on to later events and from Ryukyu slides into talking about business. From there it slips on a tangent to talk about the Dutch, then the Spanish, moves on to the persecution of "the Jesuites & friers", which touches largely on recent local political events, which have affected business. Lastly and briefly, Wickham presents a humble personal petition.

Compared to Richard Cocks's letters, Wickham's letter is pithier, and quite exhaustive of Company concerns in Japan and the East Indies. Indeed, from the viewpoint of the EIC, Wickham's letter is close to ideal. Everything it includes relates to business (even the passage on Ryukyu is ultimately useful for trade), and the letter seems to omit little or nothing, and contains very little that is extraneous – the petition for a salary increase excepted (but even that is Company business!). This letter illustrates how the EEIC and its merchants generally saw themselves from a strictly commercial viewpoint.

I will next give out in detail what the letter has to say about Japan, again by paragraph. By this time the EIC had already received letters from the Hirado factory, and it was no longer necessary to keep reminding the reader of everything about Japan, and the names of places (and some people) are referred to casually, usually without comment. However, the letter in general does not deviate from business, and there is very little preliminary extra-commercial knowledge required of the reader.

3. Hirado is mentioned thrice (once as "the foresayd port") and Japan twice in the third paragraph.
4. Wickham's description of Ryukyu is in relation to Japan – in the first sentence he mentions how the islands were recently conquered by "Ximus Dono, Kinge of Satchma" (Shimazu Iehisa, daimyo of Satsuma, in Kyushu), and are now governed by Japanese "lawes & customes". He then mentions that some local products are in demand in Japan and vice versa.

At the mention of trade, Wickham next describes their success in receiving privileges to trade in the Ryukyus. This was done when Ralph Coppendale came up to "the Emperour in Surungava" (Ieyasu at Suruga): although William Adams' influence upon Ieyasu is not here mentioned, his

involvement in the operation is mentioned¹⁰⁶. The “Emperour” (shogun) then gave an order to this effect to the “Kinge of Satchma” (Shimazu Iehisa), “unto whom the ilandes belongeth” – a demonstration of power relations in Japan; the islands were “the Empe’ his dominions in Japon”.

7. A mention of “the Emperour” (Ieyasu).
8. The next two paragraphs deal specifically with Japan: the first with the shogun’s growing enmity towards Christianity, which has resulted in the banishment of the Jesuits and other orders, and the persecution of Japanese Christians and the destruction of the churches. All this “from a dislike that the Emp’ hath taken against the subtile practices & covetous dealinge espeacially of the Jesuites & others of religious order”, as “theyre owne proceedinges in such subtile & cuninge manner from time to time against the Emperour & state of Japon havinge more scandalled him than anythinge else”.
9. Local events are dealt with in this paragraph, which talks about the wars between the Tokugawa and “the Prince Fidayora Sama (the sonne of Quambacon Dono or Tsycho Sama, the late deceased Emperour)” (Hideyori, son of Toyotomi Hideyoshi). These events have hindered business, although the English are favoured more “than any nation in these p’tes”.
12. At the end of the letter comes the place where Wickham was located: “Edoe” (Edo).

Most of the references to Japan are, naturally enough, oblique, as Wickham is writing from Japan, and referring to events that have taken or are taking place locally. These references need no elaboration, as it is taken for granted that the reader is acquainted with most of the places and people involved, as they have been mentioned in previous letters sent home.

What concrete information, then, does this letter provide about Japan? Hirado is mentioned to be a port. Suruga is where the “Emperour” (who is not named) resides, somewhere closer to Edo than Hirado. The “Emperour” rules over all of Japan, including its newest acquisitions, the Ryukyu islands conquered by the

¹⁰⁶ Wickham also mentions that “I moved Capt Adames to p’cure the Emperour his l’re”, a reference to asking Adams to obtain a *goshuin* for the English.

“Kinge” of Satsuma (who is named); Japanese laws and customs now extend far south from the main islands. (Wickham also mentions what merchandise may be bought and sold there, and gives a brief general description of Ryukyu.) In other words, there is a centralized government, and the centre does have power. The English have some access to that power through William Adams – which goes some way to explain why the Japanese would view the English in a better light than the other Europeans. Nonetheless the country is yet unsettled, as recent wars with the son of the “late deceased Emperour” (who are both named) demonstrate.

The most important information about Japan that Wickham includes in his letter, however, deals with the persecution of Christianity. “Jesuites & friers” have been banished, yet there are also “Japon Christians”, that is, converted locals. Wickham’s suggestion that the Jesuits et al. brought this upon themselves may be taken with a grain of salt for, as he says, “we hath done the Jesuites little credit here”; nonetheless it is clear who the actor is: “the *Emperour* hath banished...” (my emphasis).

5.4 Case 3: Richard Cocks to Thomas Wilson 1617

Very few *EFIJ* letters contain much outside the sphere of interest of the EIC, and of these Cocks’s 1 January 1617 letter to his patron, Thomas Wilson is the most striking example¹⁰⁷. It contains nearly nothing concerning business, and consists almost entirely of descriptions of cities, temples and palaces, along with accounts of recent events in Japan¹⁰⁸. Although longer than the average, it is not overly long, at about 3,250 words. I will once more conduct a paragraph-by-paragraph analysis. For a brief biography of Richard Cocks, see chapter 6.6.

1. Cocks begins by referring to a letter he received from Wilson.
2. Next, he makes references to letters previously sent by him, mentioning their contents (“trowble” with the Dutch; receiving great privileges; recent wars in Japan). (Recapitulation was a standard practice of business correspondence: cf. chapter 3.2 above.)

¹⁰⁷ *EFIJ* 541, doc. no. 227.

¹⁰⁸ There was a reason for this, as Wilson had requested such intelligence letters from Cocks (see below chapter 6.6).

3. The letter properly begins in the third paragraph, as Cocks launches into an account of recent events, and describes the castle and court of the reigning “Emperour”, “Shongo Samme” (*shōgun sama*, Tokugawa Hidetada), which he recently had the chance to observe on a trip up to Edo.

Cocks describes Hidetada’s fortress castle as “bigger then the cittie of York”, estimating its inhabitants at no less than 100,000, with room for twice that much. The surrounding city he describes as being thrice this size. The fortress itself he describes as enormous, beautiful, and new, but “much more glorios w’thin” – meaning the castle itself inside the surrounding moats and walls, as well as the castle interior. Inside, the castle is gilded throughout, and there are wonderful paintings of creatures, and Cocks makes note of how drawing aside the sliding doors enables the “infynet rowmes” of the castle to be made into one single space.

4. The fourth paragraph gives a detailed description of Kamakura¹⁰⁹, the *tono* of which Cocks says was “Emperour of Japon 500 years past”. Cocks goes on to describe the temples and shrines of Kamakura, and lingers to describe the *daibutsu*¹¹⁰, which impressed Cocks sufficiently for him to overestimate its height at “about 20 English yardes”, and “that above 1,000 men may be containd” inside the hollow body of the statue.
5. Cocks next goes on to describe another of the “greate townes & citties” he passed through on his journey, Kyoto (which he in this letter calls *Kyō*). He describes Kyoto as “one cittie from Otes to Fushamy” (that is, Ōtsu to Fushimi, which he says are at least as big as York), with “howsing all the way for the space of 40 English miles”. This he describes as “the princepall city of Japon” and the center of commerce, and goes on to describe its “antient monumentes” which he visited.

The primary one was “a hudg pagod”, that is, temple (this was Hōkōji, though he does not name it), which also contained a large bronze statue of the Buddha, this one gilded and contained within a building, thus seeming more impressive than the one in Kamakura.

6. The description of the temple continues with mention of impressive stone pillars and other great statues, gilded ones of lions, and the two fierce-

¹⁰⁹ Kamakura was the Japanese capital during the Kamakura shogunate 1185–1333.

¹¹⁰ A “great Buddha”, or a 43-foot-high bronze statue of the Buddha, in Kōtoku-in temple.

featured Niō¹¹¹ which stand guard on either side of the main entrance to the temple.

7. Next Cocks mentions two mounds in the temple area: the Mimizuka, or the ear mound, within which are buried the ears and noses of Koreans killed during the Korean campaign of Hideyoshi (1592–1598); the other mound contains the wives, daughters and ladies-in-waiting of the first heir of Toyotomi Hideyoshi¹¹².
8. The next three paragraphs describe the Sanjūsangendō (which Cocks does not name), which contains a thousand gilded statues¹¹³.
9. “And just in the middell of this temple, upon an alter, is a bigger idall or dibotes [...]”.
10. The central Kannon statue is surrounded by 28 attending spirits, which Cocks describes looking “lyker devills then men”, and which he says are called *kami*, who “were princes or greate men that by their power brought others under subjection & so got them an imortall name, and soe are honored and prayed unto as demy-gods”. Further, next to them were statues of the gods of wind and thunder, and one of “a negro or a blackamore’s image” called “Shacka” – this was of Shakyamuni, the historical Buddha, who Cocks says “came from Syam above 3000 years past”, and whom the Japanese hold only second to the Creator, “Tento”¹¹⁴.
11. Next Cocks describes the tomb of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, another structure gilded and set with beautiful figures of various creatures. At the end of this paragraph, however, Cocks in exhaustion concludes his descriptions of the marvels he has seen. “In fine,” he says, “I saw many other matters worth the discribing w’ch I have no tyme to repeate &c”.
12. Now Cocks returns to present affairs, referring again back to his previous letter where he already described how the Jesuits and monastic orders had

¹¹¹ The *Niō*, “two kings”, are guardians of the Buddha, and their fierce muscular statues thus stand at the entrance of Buddhist temples in Japan. Cocks does not name them.

¹¹² His nephew and adopted heir, Hidetsugu. After the birth of Hideyori, Hideyoshi’s natural son, he eventually ordered Hidetsugu to commit suicide, and proceeded to execute the said women.

¹¹³ Built in 1132, reconstructed 1251–1266. It is a wooden hall 120 meters long containing 1,000 gilded man-sized wooden statues of Senju (Thousand-Handed) Kannon surrounding a central, larger figure. The statues are tiered in 33 bays alluding to the 33 incarnations of the Kannon, and the whole can thus be thought to represent the 33,033 aspects of divinity.

¹¹⁴ Massarella interprets this as *Tendō*, something like “the hall of heaven” (Massarella 1983: 384).

been banished from Japan by Ieyasu. Ieyasu's successor Hidetada, however, "is a greater enemy to them than ever his father was".

13. As this is mostly a social letter, Cocks has space to include a petition for Wilson to help his brother in London, Walter Cocks.
14. Displaying familiarity with Wilson's family, Cocks takes his leave, being careful to mention Wilson's immediate family.
15. As often is the case with Richard Cocks's letters, there is a lengthy postscript which covers the last three paragraphs. In the first, as if something of no importance that could be casually omitted from letters home, Cocks mentions the great restriction of their trading privileges, and the reasoning given to them¹¹⁵.
16. Having done with the single most important piece of news, Cocks moves on to trivial matters: a description of the shogun going hawking with a (seemingly) 10,000-man retinue, followed by a brief account of local wildfowl.
17. In the last paragraph Cocks tells the frivolous story of a "mad cavalero" who demanded the shogun's daughter in marriage, and was summarily executed and his family disinherited.

The letter was written at the beginning of 1617. By this time the English had been in Japan for three and a half years, and much correspondence had been sent home. Cocks writes that he had written Wilson three or four times since his arrival in Japan. Thus Japan had become familiar to those in England, and Cocks could take for granted that Wilson had some understanding of Japanese names and terms.

Cocks's description of the things he has seen focusses on impressive features of Japanese culture, namely the might and wealth of the government (or the "Emperour", at any rate). A sense of wonder permeates his account, and as a reader I feel that Wilson must have encouraged these detailed descriptions¹¹⁶. Perhaps even

¹¹⁵ The English (and Dutch) were told that missionaries posing as merchants was one reason for stricter control of the comings and goings of foreigners becoming necessary.

¹¹⁶ In a letter to Sir Thomas Smythe and the English East India Company of 15 February 1618, Cocks writes that "I have byn taxed by som for tediousnes in my lettrs, & therefore crave your Wor' p'don yf they seeme over large, for I would willing geve large notis of what passeth, in respect of the distance of place &c." (*EFIJ* 267: 669). Although apologising for being "tedious" was a convention, it is no wonder that Cocks was reprimanded for his rambling letters.

more noteworthy than present marvels is the fact that the country abounds in “[m]any ... greate townes & citties”, such as the 500-year-old Kamakura, which Cocks is told “was theare then 4 tymes bigger then Edo or Miaco”. In other words, Japan is not only rich and mighty at present, but has been so for centuries. Cocks is clearly amazed and intrigued by what he sees, and questions his hosts and locals in order to learn more about the history and customs of Japan.

The colourful descriptions of gilded temples also contain information about Japanese culture, especially religion. The existence of temples and monasteries, monks and nuns, reveals the existence of institutionalized religion (which was well-known by this time). This is further emphasized by the great and ornate statues Cocks encounters. It is striking that Cocks enquires into and is informed about who the statues represent, and his account of the advent of Buddhism in to Japan is especially interesting.

At the end of the letter, Cocks turns once more to recent events, and describes the increased persecution of Christians under Tokugawa Hidetada. This is of crucial importance to any European ventures in Japan, and as long as the Jesuits and other Catholics are the ones under fire, the Protestant English (and Dutch) merchants can consider this – if warily – good news. This good news is subsequently destroyed in the postscript, when Cocks relates of the restriction of their trading privileges, something which clearly is in the same vein as the banishment of the Jesuits¹¹⁷.

The last two paragraphs contain more examples of the might of the shogun, but add very little new information about Japan; these frivolous and incidental stories can be seen to function against drawing the letter to a gloomy close.

Structurally the letter is typical of Cocks. The organization of the contents is rambling, close to stream-of-consciousness, and the letter has a lengthy postscript. As one function of the letter is to strengthen social ties, the opening and closing are elaborate and contain lengthy personal references, including a supplication to help Cocks’s brother to a post. News is not separately marked as news, although the

¹¹⁷ Cocks’s use of postscripts makes the writer wonder whether he was following Francis Bacon’s advice on being cunning: “I knew one that, when he wrote a letter, he would put that, which was most material, in the postscript, as if it had been a by-matter. I knew another that, when he came to have speech, he would pass over that, that he intended most; and go forth, and come back again, and speak of it as of a thing, that he had almost forgot” (Bacon 2002: n.p.).

phrases “I advised you how [...]” and “I had almost forgot to note downe how [...]” function as markers.

It is worth having another look at what exactly is said about Japan in the letter. Names and descriptions of cities abound in the letter. However, there is only one mention of general Japanese geography: “all the cuntrey is mountanous”. Descriptions of temples and statues form more than half of the letter¹¹⁸. The last three shogun are named, and their might much wondered. There is surprisingly little on the Japanese people and customs: a description of promiscuous “heathen nuns”, and very little else. Europeans and Christianity too, are only touched upon as pertaining recent developments in the persecution of Christianity. What is most striking, there is no mention of business in the letter, and even the mention of restricted privileges is unaccompanied by the usual complaints of business prospects appearing unpromising.

A look at terminology is more revealing. All names of cities (except Nagasaki) are qualified as such, although most of them would have been familiar to readers with knowledge of Japan¹¹⁹. Names of regents (actually mostly their titles) are mentioned and adhered to. Cocks also names what he writes are the two “cheefe god[s]” of Japan. Cocks’s use of *tono* varies: he writes “tonos (or kynges)” as well as “tonos and kyngs” and “tonos and noblemen”. Three terms stand out in Cocks’s description of temples and statues: *daibutsu*, *kami*, and “caska matteca”. The latter seems to mean *kashikomatta*, that is, “sitting upright, in a formal position” (Farrington 1991: 547, n. 8). *Daibutsu* are literally “great Buddhas”, that is, great statues of the Buddha¹²⁰. Cocks uses *kami* in its sense as demigod, as it is explained to him. What is especially important about these terms is that Cocks is the first Englishman on record to use them. However, he is careful to explain all of them and at nearly every occurrence.

What, then, was the purpose of this letter? It does seem to consist of “traveller’s tales”, sounding to a modern reader like a descriptive list of some of the main tourist attractions in Japan. As such, overall it emphasizes the wealth (and

¹¹⁸ Interestingly what Cocks writes about both categories fit nicely into Larner’s category of traveller’s tales, as well as that of “towns of exaggerated size” (see above pp. 10–11). What is ironic is that half of what Cocks writes of these *topoi* is true. (Cocks gets the size of the *daibutsu* wrong, and exaggerates the size of various cities, but his descriptions of temples are accurate.)

¹¹⁹ What is particularly interesting is Cocks’s decision to use *Kyō* instead of *Miyako* for Kyoto; the first name does not appear again in the *EFIJ* documents.

¹²⁰ The ones described by Cocks (also as “colosso” and “idalls”) are noteworthy for being gilded.

might) of Japan through the marvellous – meaning nothing extraordinary, merely what is attainable to those with great resources. Although there are passages on the size of cities, strength of fortresses, and number of soldiers and servants at the shogun’s command, the letter at no point tries to offer a general account of the military might of Japan. The absence of descriptions of the Japanese people and culture is also interesting. It would seem thus that Cocks was either writing about facets of Japan he knew would interest Wilson personally, or then about facets of Japan which interested himself, and filled him with wonder. This letter is markedly different from the practical, exploitable information included in the *EFIJ* documents in general.

5.5 Case 4: Richard Cocks to the EIC 1614

The final case, Richard Cocks’s letter to the EIC, is similar to the second case. Like Wickham’s letter above, it aims to give account of proceedings in Japan (and of operations lead from Hirado), and is more than satisfactory in the amount of detail.

When the Hirado factory junk *Sea Adventure* left for Siam on 17 December 1614, it naturally carried various letters from the factory members. This particular voyage of the *Sea Adventure* ended a failure, and its letters returned to Japan to be sent off again at the next instance. I shall look at one of the letters it carried, written by Richard Cocks to Sir Thomas Smythe and the East India Company on 26 November, 1614¹²¹. The letter in fact did reach England in the end, by the *Dragon*, one of the ships in the Fifth Voyage under the First Joint Stock, which had left England in 1615 and returned there from Bantam in May 1617.¹²²

The letter is of average length, at about 2,300 words. Once more I shall summarize it paragraph by paragraph, and then analyse its contents.

1. The letter launches into East India Company business without further ado: “May it please yow to understand that...”. Cocks then describes the events

¹²¹ *EFIJ* doc. no. 75, p. 224.

¹²² In fact, another copy of the letter reached England first: it reached Bantam 20 January 1615 on a Dutch ship, the *Zeelandia* (*EFIJ* 97: 284), and returned home on the *Globe* (presumably of the Seventh Voyage of the East India Company, which left England in 1611 under Captain Anthony Hippon. At any rate, the ship left Bantam March 1615 (*EFIJ* 102: 292–293)), reaching London on 5 September 1615.

- leading to the failed Cochin China voyage and its outcome, and goes on to relate possible reasons for the events, namely the misbehaviour of the Dutch in Cochin China on the one hand, and “never byn such fowle wether and soe much shipwrack in these p’ts as hath byn this yeare” on the other.
2. Next Cocks deals with business in Japan, sales and markets of cloth, with a protest against the Dutch undermining the market thrown in for good measure.
 3. The third paragraph continues with sales and markets of other items. Cocks spends most of the paragraph on describing hopes for procuring rights to trade with China and his attempts at achieving it (not forgetting to claim credit should it come through). Here, too, he finds reason to speak against the Dutch, whose behaviour of “continewall robing and pilfering the junckes of China” acts contrary to his desires.
 4. Then Cocks describes the purchase of the junk *Sea Adventure* and the present fitting and stocking of it for a voyage to Siam, with detailed descriptions of what is sent aboard her, both money and merchandise.
 5. The next paragraph deals with the purchase, repairing and building of the Hirado factory site, with mention of its cost, cunningly compared with the much greater Dutch expenses for their respective factory.
 6. Practical matters continue in the next paragraph with the description of a Dutchman hired by Cocks for the East India Company, as recommended by William Adams. Then Cocks relates how Adams is true to his word, having paid Cocks back the money he asked the EIC to give his wife in London, and how Adams is “very tractable & willing to doe your Wor’ the best service he may”. Further, he mentions Adams as keen on seeking the north-west passage, in which he would receive aid from the shogun (and Cocks mentions his own interest in helping Adams in this venture).
 7. Finally, Cocks turns to local news: the banishing of the Catholics, and the rumour of wars to ensue in Japan¹²³. But these he passes in two sentences, moving on to describe matters relating to the East India Company which he had heard from John Jourdain at Bantam (mostly bad news).
 8. The closing is brief.

¹²³ This was the final conflict between the factions of Tokugawa Ieyasu and Toyotomi Hideyori, which Ieyasu would ultimately win in 1615.

9. The postscriptal paragraph is a stream-of-consciousness mix of business, news and description. Cocks relates of their failed attempt at trade with Korea. He then continues with a description of the land, its great cities and bogs and the “waggons or carts w’ch goe upon broad flat whiles under seale, as shippes doe”, and how “the deceased Emperour” (of Japan; meaning Hideyoshi) meant to use these to attack Peking, but the venture failed and Japan lost its holdings in Korea.

Compared to the intelligence letter Cocks wrote to Thomas Wilson analysed above, this letter deals with business almost without diversions. Its transitions from subject matter to the next are not quite as smooth as those in Wickham’s letter above, something especially evident in the postscript of the letter, where focus shifts from business to news to description from one sentence to the next. Otherwise, the letter is typical of both Cocks and the Hirado factory letters home in general. Cocks uses very short openings and closings, lets the body of the letter grow lengthy, does not mark news, and includes a postscript.

In November 1614 the first letters from the factory would have recently reached England as the *Eight Voyage* under John Saris returned. Cocks probably would have been able to take for granted a certain level of knowledge of Japan in the EIC. Among the letter’s passages dealing with business, there is very little said about Japan. Some detailed information about markets, including how linen cloth is abundant and much cheaper than in Europe, and hence those cloths sell poorly or not at all. “The Emperour” is mentioned as a customer, and the factory has sold its guns, gunpowder and lead to him. Among the goods laden on to the *Sea Adventure* Cocks lists £100 in “Japon armor, piks, cattans, bowes and arrows & other triffels to geve away in presentes”, as they were popular gifts in Southeast Asia.

The Dutchman hired by Cocks at Adams’s recommendation, a survivor of the *Liefde* crew, Gisbert de Coning (of Middelburg), is mentioned to speak Japanese fluently and, like Adams, have “entrance to speake w’th the Emperour yf need soe require”. While the influence Adams or Coning might have on the shogun can be dismissed as little, nonetheless Cocks seems to consider this to be a great asset for the English. In any case, as far as searching for the north-west passage is concerned, they have been promised assistance by the shogun.

Direct description of Japan occurs in only two sentences. The first describes the banishing of the Catholics by the shogun; the second, the rumours of war. In this light, the sale of cannons, gunpowder and lead to the shogun make sense, and while Cocks does not mention it, it seems evident that weapons and munitions will sell well in Japan in the future. War is also the subject of the final mention of Japan, Toyotomi Hideyoshi's campaign in Korea and its end.

At no point does Cocks talk about the general state of affairs. Sticking to particulars, he is detailed enough in his accounts of business and other East India Company affairs for the reader not to consciously miss anything. However, close reading reveals that business is not going all too well. The local markets and the goods provided by the English merchants do not match, and what is more, the Dutch undermine the local markets of the English mainstay item, woollen broadcloth. Nonetheless, as of yet there is no sense of the despairing tone of later letters.

The factory's great expenses are more difficult to conceal. While there is nearly nothing one can do about the failed Cochin China voyage, Cocks mentions that expenses of nearly £1000 in purchasing the junk *Sea Adventure* and fitting her out could have been saved if the EIC ship *Darling* had arrived in Hirado in time. The fitting of the factory grounds and buildings have cost hundreds of pounds, but Cocks cunningly mentions that the Dutch have spent over £2000 on their part, making this expense seem relatively small.

What, then, does the letter really say about Japan? Hirado and Nagasaki, and the names of the shogun and his predecessor are already familiar to the EIC in London. The persecution of Christians, however, is news at this point, being newly decreed and enforced. Markets are not only described as being affected by the activities of the Dutch, but also by rumours of war, and Cocks also goes on to describe in detail what actually sells and what doesn't, and includes comments on bad and redundant merchandise. However, the most interesting thing in the letter is its use of Japanese terminology. Cocks uses "tattamy or matt" (*tatami*) as a measure of cloth, "gownes or kerimons" (kimono¹²⁴) for the local item of clothing, and, most

¹²⁴ "[K]erimon" would be modern *kirumono*, literally "thing to wear", i.e. clothes; however, "kimon" (*kimono*) also appears in the *EFIJ* documents, and the two words are synonymous.

interestingly, “cattan” (katana) without explaining what it is¹²⁵. What makes this particularly noteworthy is the fact that not only were the Hirado factory merchants the first to write about any of these in English, but *katana* were only known in England through their letters, and by the few brought thither by ships from the East, usually as gifts either to the King or to the EIC Governors from Company merchants in the East¹²⁶.

All in all, Cocks is more prone to digressions than Wickham, and although the letter goes into business matters in great detail, its occasional apologetic tone, added to the mostly unnecessary postscript, make the letter feel altogether less professional¹²⁷. Indeed, the frivolous ending makes it almost seem like Cocks is more interested in matters outside business than in the many operations of the Hirado factory. Nonetheless, Cocks clearly knows the state of the market (even if his hopes for China seem hopelessly optimistic in comparison to the rather dreary situation in Japan), and his control of business terminology and detail is flawless.

5.6 Comparison of the Case Letters

In comparing the four case study letters, it is important to remember their different contexts. The aims of the writer and the role of the recipient affected the contents of the letter (if not the structure), and thus there are two major dividers: two letters are written to the English East India Company, two are not; two letters are by Richard Cocks, the other two by two different people. Therefore each letter shares features with two other letters, thus (numbers are case numbers):

Table 2: Case Letters

	not to EIC	to EIC
not by Cocks	1	2
by R. Cocks	3	4

¹²⁵ This may, however, be less surprising than it appears, for common knowledge of weaponry in the seventeenth century was much broader than it is today, and “sword” seems not have covered the same wide semantic field as it does today.

¹²⁶ John Saris certainly brought some katana to England. The Japanese armour sent to the King of England by Tokugawa Ieyasu is still extant in the Royal Armouries Museum in Leeds.

¹²⁷ This is, of course, exactly why Cocks’s letters are more interesting to the modern reader.

Knowledge of Japan in the letters of Richard Cocks tends to be contextual, and thus commercially oriented and practically applicable. Only case 3 contains extracommercial information – that is, commercially irrelevant, unexploitable facts about Japan.

In summing up what was written about Japan, cases 1, 2 and 4 are similar in their use of names and themes. Even William Adams's letter, which potentially could have contained a detailed description of his new homeland, sticks to the narrow parameters allowed to accounts of the Other set by cultural conventions. The brief general descriptive passages of Japan notwithstanding, Adams does not really reveal anything about the Japanese people or culture. What these three case letters do relate about Japan is mostly proper names of people and places – all of which, without context, are meaningless. The letters do, however, manage to contextualize them, for all the names they include are necessary in descriptions of business in Japan (and politics, which includes Adams's arrival), and form, indeed, the keywords for contemporary merchants in Japan¹²⁸. The contextualization includes descriptions of recent political activities, namely the turbulence surrounding the establishment of the Tokugawa regime, with all the ensuing wars. Especially with reference to how the English trading venture ended, more important is the Japanese government's stance on Christianity – or rather, against it. All these letters mention the presence (and influence) of Jesuits (and other Catholics, mainly Spanish and Portuguese) in Japan and the existence of Japanese Christians. All letters¹²⁹ mention the persecution of Christians (meaning Catholics) with various levels of *Schadenfreude* and concern (these fears were realized by the restriction of trading privileges in 1617).

Richard Cocks's letter in case 3 is nearly the opposite of the other three letters. It contains next to nothing related to business, and is much more revealing about Japan – although again, not about the Japanese. The letter conveys the wealth and might of Japan, and shows the level of importance applied to religious art and architecture¹³⁰. Its description of cities, castles and temples, but not of people or daily life, follows the example set by contemporary travel writers writing about civilizations on par with their own, with history, architecture and (religious) art being

¹²⁸ Although this is the case strictly on a theoretical level: these keywords are necessary for those looking at the business scene in Japan from the viewpoint of foreign, and specifically European, merchants (and merchant companies). On the day-to-day level, things were likely different.

¹²⁹ With the exception of Adams in case 1, of course, for his letter was written before the edict of 1614.

¹³⁰ Although this was, of course, just as common in Europe, and as such unsurprising.

the foci¹³¹. In this context, Cocks's use of Japanese names and terms is natural (although one is left wondering if he chose to leave out the names of temples and gods, or whether he forgot them, or was not originally told them). Perhaps more surprising is his use of Japanese terminology in case 4, as there is no real need for it, and he does use English counterparts for some terms. (Cocks's liking for foreign terminology and curious detail emerges with the repeated use of "caska matteca" (see above) – why did he not simply write "cross-legged" throughout?)

Even this small sample of the *EFIJ* documents illustrates the kind of information about Japan that was being relayed to England. The topics (or themes) covered were determined by the context of the letters, and new information within the letters was usually scanty. Business letters focus strongly on business, and even non-business letters reveal little about the Japanese people. Considering these letters as travel writing, as ethnography, they can be described as topic-oriented ethnography, for their viewpoint is tightly mercantile. Case 3, too, can be seen as topic-oriented ethnography, for while the other letters focus on business, it revolves around native religion, art and architecture.

Having looked at four letters in detail, I will next proceed through the remaining 47 letters, but only sum up their contents. This will be followed by a discussion of my findings.

6. Knowledge of Japan in letters sent home by English East India Company members in Japan

6.1 Writers and recipients

The case studies above illustrate in detail what kinds of information on Japan the *EFIJ* letters contain. This chapter proceeds to look at the rest of the material, although in

¹³¹ Similar texts exist of European cities (cf. Coryate 1611). In contradistinction, texts about the New World abound with descriptions of "savages" (cf. Harriot 1588).

less detail¹³²; each section goes through the information on Japan contained in the letters, and then discusses the findings briefly. The sections are arranged by writer: the three representative individuals encountered in the case studies are treated separately, and the rest in two groups according to their backgrounds. Each section begins with a brief biography of the writer in question, and ends with a general discussion of the writer's letters¹³³. The following chapters will discuss the meaning and value of the results.

Before proceeding with this chapter, however, an account of the main recipients is in order. The two main recipients are Sir Thomas Smythe and the EIC committee; two other major recipients are John Saris and (Sir) Thomas Wilson.

The EIC committee consisted of various major stockholders of the Company, who decided upon the actions of the Company, such as gathering subscriptions for voyages. The committee were the employers of all EIC merchants (Massarella 1990: 90), and thus were the recipients of most of their letters. Sir Thomas Smythe (c. 1558–1625) was a successful merchant (haberdasher), who was chosen as a Sheriff of London in 1599, and in 1600 was elected the first Governor of the EIC, a position he held almost continuously to 1621. He was knighted on the accession of James I. He was personally interested in exploration and trade, and welcomed informative letters from EIC employees. Hence many letters were addressed to him, or to him and the EIC committee.

John Saris (c. 1579–1643) was the son of a London merchant. He served as a merchant on the EIC Second Voyage from 1604 to 1610. He was chosen General of the Eighth Voyage, and thus many of the Hirado factory merchants knew him personally, and corresponded with him. Saris was not re-employed by the EIC after returning to England in 1614; he married and settled down, eventually retiring to Fulham, west of London.

Thomas Wilson (c. 1560–1629) studied law at Cambridge, and came under the patronage of William Cecil. From 1594 to 1605 he travelled the continent, and served as a “foreign intelligencer” for the Cecils. During this time, he met Richard Cocks in Spain, who became one of his sources, and enjoyed Wilson's patronage in turn¹³⁴. On

¹³² For a description of the chosen letters, see the Introduction. For a list of the letters, see Appendix I.

¹³³ Of most writers very little is known. The biographies in this chapter are based on the brief biographies in Farrington 1991, pp. 1542–1578.

¹³⁴ About a hundred letters from Cocks to Wilson from this time are extant in the Public Record Office: see Massarella 1985. See below the section on Cocks for more on their relationship (chapter 6.6).

returning to England Wilson became the secretary of Sir Robert Cecil, and in 1606 obtained from him the post of Keeper of the Records at Whitehall. Wilson was an original subscriber to the Virginia Company and keenly interested in the affairs of the EIC, and knew and corresponded with many of its servants (such as Cocks). He was knighted in 1618.

6.2 William Adams, c. 1605–1617 (3 letters)

William Adams was born in Gillingham, Kent, in 1564, and was apprenticed to shipwright Nicholas Diggins in London. From the late 1580s he served at sea as master and pilot. The story of his coming to Japan is related above on pages 23–24¹³⁵. He was employed by the EIC from 1614 to 1616, and afterwards as a free agent, making several country trade voyages for their and his own account, and helping sell the factory's goods in Japan after the Dutch and the English were restricted to Hirado and Nagasaki (for he was exempted from the restriction). Adams had a wife and daughter in England, of whose welfare he was concerned and regularly sent them money through the EIC. He also had a Japanese family, and at his death his Japanese son took on the lands granted to him by Ieyasu. In 1620 Adams fell ill, and died on 16 May in Hirado, where he was buried.

His three surviving letters to England are all to different recipients: the earliest to his wife, and two to the EIC and Sir Thomas Smythe from the period when he was working for the EIC. The latter focus on business, but his letter addressed to his wife contains a detailed account of his voyage to Japan and of events up to being interviewed by Ieyasu. However, the letter survives only as a torso printed by Purchas, and the latter half of it is missing (see beginning of chapter 5).

1 *EFIJ* doc. no. 1 (pp. 50-55), William Adams in Japan to his wife in England, c. 1605.

Adams's first surviving letter survives only as printed by Purchas. It is an account of Adams's journey to Japan up to his first audiences with the shogun

¹³⁵ His role as informal advisor to Ieyasu is explored in detail in Farrington and Massarella 2000.

Tokugawa Ieyasu; the second half of the letter, which would have presumably contained more information about Japan, is missing.

Since Adams is giving a narrative of his experiences, he does not stop to describe Japan, and only mentions things in passing. Bungo is not explained; Osaka is described as a city “about eightie leagues” from the former, where the shogun holds his court in a gilded palace. Interestingly, Adams calls the shogun (Ieyasu) the “principall King” and the “great King” instead of “Emperor”, as later became standard for the English merchants. He also calls the daimyo of Bungo “king”. Adams implies that the Portuguese (both Jesuits and not) have some measure of influence over the Japanese, yet he does not mention the existence of local Christians. He also implies that the Japanese are not by nature wicked (not harming the sick crew of the *Liefde*, although stealing what they could), and portrays their ruler as interested in Europe and Europeans.

The very first thing, however, that Adams mentions about Japan, forms the reason for the *Liefde* heading thither. This is the “report” of a Dutchman who had been in Japan¹³⁶ that “woollen cloth was in great estimation” there. This is, of course, the primary reason that the Dutch and English East India Companies headed to Japan in the first place, and also the most persistent myth about the country (at least for the English).

2 *EFIJ* doc. no. 19 (pp. 103–109), William Adams at Hirado to the East India Company in London, 1 December 1613.

This is Adams’s first letter to his new employees. It is mainly an account of Adams going to court with John Saris and receiving trading privileges for the EIC, of his becoming employed by the Company, and then of general trading prospects and the possibility to seek the northwest passage.

The letter’s references to Japan are generally more informative than in later letters. Hirado is mentioned to be an island, 250 leagues away from the court (of Ieyasu, which was at Shizuoka, although unnamed by Adams). Miyako is not explained. The “Emperor” (Ieyasu) had officially retired (in 1605), hence the journey

¹³⁶ “Dirck Gerritszoon, a Dutch gunner who has visited Japan in the Portuguese service in 1585–86” (Farrington 55, fn. 15).

continued to “Quanto” (Kanto¹³⁷), 42 leagues further, where the “Kinge, the Emperous eldest soon” (Tokugawa Hidetada, official shogun) resided. At court, protocol is shown to be important, although Adams with open access to Ieyasu seems momentarily to forget this. His intimate relationship with the “Emperor” comes through clearly, resulting in Adams receiving leave to return to England if he will¹³⁸.

Other facts Adams mentions are the abundance of cotton and “vyttelling”, and that the Japanese are able mariners (if not familiar with European ships). He also implies the existence of a system of post-horses for official travellers. There is also a passage on Ezo (Hokkaido), which mainly states that the inhabitants are not Japanese (and do not speak Japanese) and that it was not a part of the Japanese kingdom, although there was a “strong towne & a castell” established there (this was Matsumae).

Adams’s keenness to serve his country shows in the letter, his insistence on being hired for a proper salary notwithstanding (and against Saris’s best efforts to the contrary). He then goes through local markets and prices in some detail (dismissing the wares brought in the *Clove* as “not veri vendibel”), but is visibly enthusiastic about the prospect of putting together an expedition in search of the Northwestern Passage.

3 *EFIJ* doc. no. 230 (pp. 568-571), William Adams at Hirado to Sir Thomas Smythe in London, 14 January 1617.

This is Adams’s first (and only surviving) letter to Smythe, and its purpose is to inform Smythe of Adams being employed by the EIC, and of recent events in Japan. Its main interest lies in containing a passage on recent history, the wars of succession which lead to the recently enforced persecution of Christians.

Most of its references to Japan are given without comment, such as Hirado, Miyako and Nagasaki, as well as the “Emperor” (Hidetada). The Chinese are mentioned to be “most bitter ennemys” of the Japanese. He mentions a “gowshin” (*goshuin*, see pp. 27–28) without explanation. The most important piece of news is the curtailing of trading privileges upon their renewal, which came as a surprise to the

¹³⁷ The Kanto region is the large plain surrounding Edo.

¹³⁸ He mentions being thankful of ending his “longe and evill sarves”, but it may have been self-promotion and a further indication of his keenness to work for his country, i.e. make money.

English. But luckily this leads Adams into describing recent events which caused such measures to be taken by the shogun. Adams explains that the wealthy “Fiddayya Samma”, son of “Quambaco Dono” (Hideyori, son of *Kampaku* Toyotomi Hideyoshi) received support from various nobles and Catholic Europeans (“Jessuits and frieres”, i.e. Spanish and Portuguese) in his attempt to gain control of Japan. Yet the “old Emperor” (Ieyasu) defeated Hideyori’s forces in wars in 1615, and proceeded to banish Catholics and destroy their churches. The “old Emperor” died in 1616 and was succeeded by his son, who presently decreed Christianity punishable by death for his subjects and gave order, to prevent missionaries posing as merchants, that European merchants in Japan were not allowed to live in “anny of the great citties”, and would only be allowed to live, and thus trade, in Hirado and Nagasaki. The English merchants objected, but were told that the decree could not be recalled and was not alterable until the next year at the earliest.

6.2.1 Knowledge of Japan in the letters of William Adams

Adams’s first letter is tentatively dated to 1605, when some of the survivors of the *Liefde* were able to leave Japan. By then, Adams would have been settled in the service of Ieyasu; however, what remains of the letter contains little on Japan. Its most important contribution to knowledge of Japan in contemporary England is the mention of Japan as a market for woollen cloth – a reported statement, and the letter ends before Adams has the chance to confirm or deny its validity.

By 1613, when Adams wrote the second letter, he was fully established in Japan and to some extent naturalised. He would have been able to inform the EIC fully on matters in Japan, and it is interesting that he does not do so; even in the case study above the descriptive passages of Japan are remarkably short and frankly disappointing in informational content.

The third letter, dating from 1617, contains a short passage on recent events, yet Adams does not linger on them, and everything he reports fits neatly into the context of business correspondence: recent wars and political changes alike had direct effect on the prospects of English business in Japan, as did the persecution of

Christians. Perhaps surprisingly, the first Englishman in Japan had little more to say than the other Hirado factory merchants.

6.3 Richard Wickham, 1617 (2 letters)

Richard Wickham was employed by the EIC as a merchant in 1607, on the Fourth Voyage. His ship was captured in the Indian Ocean by Portuguese, and he was their prisoner 1609–1610, managing to escape in Lisbon through the help of a friendly Persian ambassador. He was then re-employed by the Company, and sailed as a merchant on the Eighth Voyage, remaining in Japan as a member of the Hirado factory. He left for Bantam in 1617, where he died in late 1618. He was the most competent businessman of the Hirado factory members, if sometimes ruthless in his dealings, and did not shy from amassing a personal fortune – an activity which he pursued with more fervour than his job. His personal estate was evaluated at some £1400 on his death, scandalizing the EIC committee at home. Wickham may have come from Wiltshire, as his mother lived in Devizes (and unsuccessfully sued the company for her son’s estate).

Wickham’s letters are written to Sir Thomas Smythe and the EIC. They focus on business, and incidental information in them is usually relevant to the state of trade in Japan.

1 *EFIJ* doc. no. 233 (pp. 576-581), Richard Wickham at Hirado to the East India Company in London, 15 January 1617.

This letter survives only as an unfinished draft, but it seems to be Wickham’s second letter home from Japan¹³⁹. It is an extended essay on business in Japan, focussing on how it might be made profitable. The first part of the letter deals with recent events in Japan, and thus contains much information about it. Places mentioned are Hirado, Nagasaki, and Edo (where the “Emperor” “ever keepeth his courte”). Wickham also mentions both the “old” and the “newe Emperour” by name (that is, their titles), “Ogosho Sama” and “Shongo Sama”, respectively (Ieyasu and Hidetada).

¹³⁹ In a later letter written at Bantam to the EIC (*EFIJ* doc. no. 244) he mentions having sent them a copy of the above letter.

Finally, he uses both “cattnes” (katana) and “tattamie” (tatami) without explanation¹⁴⁰.

In explaining business, Wickham reveals various things about Japan. He speaks of the great expenses of maintaining a factory in Japan, of 17 months of wars being a “great hinderance of our sales”, of the main marketplaces being elsewhere than Hirado, and of the sales of broadcloth being quite certain, but taking time (for ready money, Wickham’s answer is mainly silk from South-East Asia, along with some other commodities).

Wickham also relates of the death of the old “Emperor” (Ieyasu), and the loss of favour of the English and the curtailing of their privileges. He explains the reasons behind this: the “Emperor’s” (Hidetada) increasing persecution of Christians and edicts against missionaries, and how the edict restricting foreigners to Nagasaki and Hirado could not be recalled immediately. Finally, Wickham writes that the reason the old “Emperor” favoured the English, and the reason the Dutch and the English were given far greater trading privileges than the Spanish, Portuguese or the Chinese was simply “the favor the old Emp’ bore to Capt’ Adams”.

2 *EFIJ* doc. no. 234 (pp. 582-584), Richard Wickham at Hirado to Sir Thomas Smythe in London, 15 January 1617.

This letter seems to be Wickham’s second letter to Smythe from Japan. It is primarily an account of recent events in Japan, and contains no business details. Since it was written at the same time as the previous letter, its contents are much the same. It mentions Hirado, Nagasaki and Edo (where the “Emperor” has his court), but also the “small villedge called Orangava” (Uruga, at the entrance to Tokyo bay). The previous and present “Emperor” are again named (“Ogusha Sama” (Ieyasu) and “Shonggo Samma” (Hidetada)), and the date of death of the former, and the latter’s persecution of Christians and curtailing the English trading privileges and restricting their trade to Hirado and Nagasaki. Wickham also mentions a “cattan” (katana) sent by him to Smythe.

¹⁴⁰ *Tatami* was in fact not a measure, but the name for floor matting, which however came in standard sizes (c. 180 cm x 90 cm, although there was great local variation in the standard upon which it was based). The English incorrectly but systematically used it to measure cloth, one *tatami* being about two yards. (Massarella 1990: xii; Farrington 1991: 1606).

6.3.1 Knowledge of Japan in the letters of Richard Wickham

At the time of writing of both these letters, Wickham had been in Japan for three and a half years, and clearly had a very good view of the situation and business prospects. His use of terminology and names reveals his command of knowledge about Japan, and Wickham seems to expect quite a measure of knowledge and understanding of Japan from the Company.

The information on Japan contained in these letters is illustrative of what nearly all letters of the *EFIJ* corpus repeat. Most of the information would have been familiar to the EIC in England by now, or at least should have been, for the range of facts was, after all, rather limited. In fact, except for recent developments, the letter does not contain much that was not already included in his letter of two years earlier (see above chapter 5.3).

The state of the markets is the red thread going through all the *EFIJ* letters (naturally enough), and thus description of Japan is usually incidental. Facts about Japanese geography usually remain on the level of names: Hirado, Nagasaki, Edo, Uruga, Satsuma have been mentioned before, as have Suruga and Miyako in the case letter above. As for history, the English continually repeat the names of Toyotomi Hideyoshi (calling him “the deceased Emperor”, *Taikō-sama*, and *Kampaku-dono*) and Toyotomi Hideyori (“Prince Fidaia”), and Tokugawa Ieyasu (“the Old Emperor”, *Ōgoshō-sama*) and Tokugawa Hidetada (“the new Emperor”, *Shōgun-sama*), and remember to emphasize Ieyasu’s role in settling the country, as well as in defeating Hideyori, yet rarely comment on their characters or legacies. Other names that appear (usually only as titles – the “king” of such-and-such) are even less commented upon; the most frequent are daimyo of Kyushu, and the shogun’s “secretaries” (not mentioned by Wickham). The treatment of Europeans in Japan is another repeated theme, rising from the increasing persecution of Christianity, and it directly affected trade. Finally, the incorporation of Japanese terminology is evident from the first letters, for measures such as *tatami*, and for items such as katana and *goshuin*: there are only rare instances where adopted Japanese terms are from outside the practical sphere of doing business in Japan.

6.4 Letters from other Hirado factory employees

This section deals with the letters of four members of the English factory in Hirado. Tempest Peacock only spent a brief time in Japan, but the other three, William Eaton, John Osterwick, and Edmund Sayers, pursued sales in Japan and in the country trade, and ran the day-to-day business of the factory, and survived the factory's existence. All their letters are written to the EIC committee and Sir Thomas Smythe but for two from Edmund Sayers to John Saris, and all deal with factory business; thus their information on Japan is incidental, and they contain no comprehensive descriptions of Japan.

6.4.1 William Eaton, 1616–1620 (4 letters)

William Eaton was employed by the EIC for the Eight Voyage, and he remained in Japan as a member of the Hirado factory from 1613 to 1623. He was given responsibility for trade in Osaka and Sakai, where he spent most of his time until April 1616. Afterwards he took part in two trade voyages to Siam, from December 1616 to September 1617 and January 1618 to August 1619. He left Japan in 1623, and was still alive in 1668, when the EIC was reconsidering reopening trade with Japan¹⁴¹.

1 *EFIJ* doc. no. 224 (pp. 534-537), William Eaton at Hirado to Sir Thomas Smythe in London, 18 December 1616.

This letter is an update of recent proceedings of the Hirado factory. It mentions “Langasaque” (Nagasaki), “Shasma” (Satsuma), Miyako (Kyoto) and Edo (Tokyo). Other facts about Japan are all business-related. Sayers writes of the large privileges carried by Japanese mariners (whom the factory needed to hire for trips to South-East Asia) and the state of markets in Japan. He then relates the manner in which the trading privileges of all Europeans in Japan, including the English, were curtailed following the death of the “old Emperor” (Ieyasu), and the beginning of the persecution of Christians caused by the present “Emperor” (Hidetada).

¹⁴¹ Eaton left a daughter in Japan, but his son came to England and was the first (half-)Japanese to attend an English university: William (jr.) is recorded as a student at Trinity College, Cambridge in 1640.

2 *EFIJ* doc. no. 263 (pp. 645-649), William Eaton at Hirado to Sir Thomas Smythe in London, 20 December 1617.

Another business update, this letter contains very little on Japan, as it mainly recounts the recent trading voyages from Hirado to South-East Asia. It mentions Hirado, Nagasaki, Tsushima, Satsuma, and the “Emperor” (Hidetada). In its closing, however, it mentions that as a gift to Smythe and his wife Eaton sent a “cattan” (katana) and some “make work” (*makie* lacquerwork). He explains neither, although he does say that the “make work” items are various kinds of dishes¹⁴².

3 *EFIJ* doc. no. 316 (pp. 771–774), William Eaton at Nagasaki to Sir Thomas Smythe and the East India Company in London, 10 March 1620.

Like the previous two letters, this letter is an update on the Hirado factory’s recent activities, containing an account of Dutch-English animosities. But for mentions of Nagasaki, Hirado, Satsuma, and the “Emperor” (Hidetada), it contains nothing on Japan (although it does include some words on Ryukyu, and its capital of Naha).

4 *EFIJ* doc. no. 334 (pp. 817–819), William Eaton at Nagasaki to Sir Thomas Smythe and the East India Company in London, 12 December 1620.

Another business update from Eaton to Smythe, this letter contains little on Japan but for mentions of Hirado, its “king” (daimyo), and the “Emperor” (Hidetada), yet also uses the Japanese term “tattame” (tatami) and its abbreviation “tatta”, without explaining what it is (although from context it appears to be a measure of length, or possibly area). The letter also contains a mention that every year foreigners in Japan were expected or required to visit the “Emperor” with a gift.

¹⁴² Japanese(-style) lacquerware became increasingly popular in Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the method was even called “Japanning”. EIC ships visiting Japan, from the *Clove* onward, usually carried some lacquerware back to England (cf. *EFIJ* 233: 579).

6.4.2 John Osterwick, 1617

Osterwick sailed from England as a purser for the Third Voyage of the First Joint Stock. He came to Japan on the *Hosiander* on 31 August 1615, and remained as book-keeper for the Hirado factory from 8 February 1616 to 24 December 1623. After the factory was closed he was ordered to remain in Batavia to straighten out its accounts; he died there in 1626. His father was Dutch, and he was a kinsman of Richard Wickham (Farrington 1991: 1566). Cocks called him a “proud surly young man and one that scorns all men in respect of himself” (Cocks 1978–1980: II: 137).

1 letter – *EFIJ* doc. no. 236 (pp. 588-590), John Osterwick at Hirado to the East India Company in London, 20 January 1617.

Osterwick’s letter is to inform the East India Company of his changing role in their employment, and of the overseeing of the will of a deceased EIC employee. Besides mentioning “Firando” and “the Emperor” (Hidetada), it’s only comment on Japan is saying there is at present a “vacation of trade”.

6.4.3 Tempest Peacock, 1613

Peacock left England as a chief merchant on the Eighth Voyage, and came to Japan on the *Clove*. He remained as the second in command of the factory. However, he was killed in Cochin China on the factory’s first country trade voyage in 1614.

1 letter – *EFIJ* doc. no. 21 (pp. 116–118), Tempest Peacock at Hirado to the East India Company in London, 2 December 1613.

Peacock’s letter is a description of the *Clove*’s arrival in Japan and the establishing of the Hirado factory. He mentions “Ferando” and “the Emperour” (Ieyasu) and his court, but nothing else definite. His main point concerning Japan is that the place is costly, and prospects poor; however, with the right merchandise there is hope for profits.

6.4.4 Edmund Sayers, 1615–1618 (3 letters)

Sayers left England as a merchant on the Eighth Voyage in 1611. He was a member of the Hirado factory from its beginning to its end. He may have been a distant relative of John Saris. Sayers went on trading voyages in 1614, 1615 and 1617 and thus did not spend all his time in Japan. Sayers died at sea or in the East Indies sometime in 1626.

1 *EFIJ* doc. no. 132 (p. 339), Edmund Sayers at Hirado to John Saris in London, 5 December 1615.

This letter is essentially a quick update to John Saris. It contains a short account of the failed Siam venture. Its only information on Japan (besides the name Hirado) is mention of the wars between the “Emperour” (Ieyasu) and “Fidaia Sama” (Toyotomi Hideyori), and that the “Emperour” won, and some four hundred thousand men are reported slain.

2 *EFIJ* doc. no. 222 (p. 529), Edmund Sayers at Hirado to John Saris in London, 4 December 1616.

This letter is an account of the recent Siam voyage, and its only mentions of Japan are the names of Hirado and “Shachmar” (Satsuma).

3 *EFIJ* doc. no. 270 (pp. 698–700), Edmund Sayers at Hirado to Sir Thomas Smythe in London, 16 February 1618.

This letter is an account of Edmund Sayers’s trip to Cochin China. Besides the names of Hirado and Nagasaki, it contains nothing on Japan, except for the use of the Japanese word *miyako* to mean the local capital in Cochin China.

6.4.5 Knowledge of Japan in the letters of the other Hirado factory members

The letters which remain by the other Hirado factory members are all very much focussed on business. Their information on Japan range from nil (Peacock's letter) to the moderate inclusion of recent events in order to explain the state of markets (Eaton's letters). However, they do contain some explanations to their sparse-wordedness: Peacock writes of having been ill and thus unable to write at length, and Eaton and Osterwick refer themselves to the letters of Cocks and others, who "will write you at large of all matters". The EIC committee wrote back to Osterwick, stating that they expected each and every merchant to write extensively to them, and the penitent Osterwick later did just that (see Massarella 2001); it is likely the same holds for the other members¹⁴³.

There are occasional gems, such as Sayers using the word "Meaco", that is, *miyako*, or "capital city", for the capital of Cochin China. This can be explained by Sayers travelling with Japanese merchants: there were Japanese settlements in South-East Asia (so-called *nihonmachi*, or "Japan(ese) towns")¹⁴⁴, and the Hirado factory members, along with the Japanese crews of the ships they used, would have spent time among the local Japanese, who naturally would have referred to the capital city of the land with their own word; it is possible Sayers did not even know the real name of the city (which was Faifo).

It comes as no surprise that the letters incorporate the names of the familiar political figures (such as Ieyasu) and the usual Japanese terminology (e.g. *tatami*), all without explanation.

6.5 Letters by other EIC employees visiting Japan

English ships visiting Hirado sailed with the monsoons, and had to wait in Japan until the wind turned again. They all arrived between June and August, and departed between November and February¹⁴⁵; thus the crew aboard these ships generally spent

¹⁴³ Cocks received the opposite reprimands: see below, chapter 6.6.

¹⁴⁴ For more on *nihonmachi*, see Massarella 1990 pp. 135–137, and especially p. 395 n. 20 for the standard works on the subject.

¹⁴⁵ For details on English ships visiting Japan, see Farrington 1991, pp. 1581–1588.

half a year at a time in Japan. At least in theory, most of their time was occupied with taking care of the ship, but they did have the opportunity to get to know life in Japan – something which the sailors in particular participated in, to the disapproval of the officers, as the letters below illustrate. The following letters were written by crew serving in the Fleet of Defence that visited Hirado between 1620 and 1622. All these letters were written to the EIC committee and Sir Thomas Smythe, and deal with EIC matters, touching very little on Japan.

6.5.1 Robert Adams, 1620–1621 (2 letters)

Robert Adams was captain of the *Bull*, which left England in February 1617 (in the Tenth Voyage for the First Joint Stock). He then served on the *Moon* in the Fleet of Defence and visited Japan thrice. These letters were written during his first and second visits. He returned to England in 1624.

1 *EFIJ* doc. no. 331 (pp. 811–814), Robert Adams at Hirado to Sir Thomas Smythe and the East India Company in London, 6 December 1620.

The letter is an update of events in the East Indies. It consists of an account of Adams's voyage in the *Bull* to Jakatra (Batavia), of the formation of the Fleet of Defence, and of his trip to Japan in the *Moon*, and finally of repairs of the ships undertaken there. Adams also mentions that charges are great in Japan, and praises Cocks without whose good credit the EIC would not be able to function in Japan. The letter contains various bits of information on Japan. The names of “Nangasaque”, “Cochi” (Kawachi), “Ferando” (Hirado) and “Meaco” (Miyako, i.e. Kyoto) appear without any elaboration. The “Emparor” (Hidetada) is mentioned, as is “the king” (daimyo of Hirado), who is not explained. The letter also has a rare instance of a description of a Japanese custom. Adams begins with the complaint that Hirado is “a second Sodamye”, and that the EIC sailors spend all they have and more on drink and prostitutes. Finally he reports that Japanese women are allowed to kill unwanted babies¹⁴⁶.

¹⁴⁶ See below pp. 74–78, Cocks's letters of 1614 (*EFIJ* 84 and 85).

2 *EFIJ* doc. no. 350 (pp. 846–848), Robert Adams at Hirado to Sir Thomas Smythe and the East India Company in London, 27 September 1621.

This letter is an account of the second Manila voyage, and has little on Japan itself. Adams complains of the poor supplies of the Hirado factory for refurnishing ships. Further, he claims that the Portuguese and the Spanish have discredited the English and the Dutch so that “we are nothinge thought of and esteemed no better than base theves”. Finally, he reports that “the Emperor” (Hidetada) has banned the export of munitions and ordered that no Japanese may be employed on foreign ships leaving Japan.

6.5.2 John Neeve, 1621

Neeve was purser’s mate on the *Elizabeth* (second voyage of the Second Joint Stock, left England 1619). He visited Japan thrice with the Fleet of Defence; this letter was written during his second visit.

1 letter – *EFIJ* doc. no. 349 (p. 845), John Neeve at Hirado to the East India Company in London, 23 September 1621

The purpose of Neeve’s letter is to inform his employers of the fulfilment of his duties. The only mention of Japan is the place the letter was written, “Ferrando” (Hirado); Neeve writes he would have written “more largelier”, but had been ill for five months and thus was barely able to write this short letter at all. His mention of vices and abuses indicates that he probably would have written about (or complained of) Hirado as a “second Sodoma”, and likely not about Japan (cf. Robert Adams and Richard Watts in this section).

6.5.3 Richard Watts, 1621

Watts, the son of a London merchant and Company stockholder, was a purser aboard the *Bull* (second voyage of the Second Joint Stock, left England 1619). He

visited Japan thrice when he served in the Fleet of Defence. This letter was written during his second visit. He died before January 1626.

1 letter – *EFIJ* doc. no. 348 (pp. 843–844), Richard Watts at Hirado to Sir Thomas Smythe and the East India Company in London, 22 September 1621.

Watts’s letter is a complaint of the conduct of the captains, merchants and sailors in the service of the EIC in the East Indies. Aside from their general malconduct and private trading (prohibited by Company rules), Watts rails against “this sinefull Sodome of Jappon”, saying the factory at Hirado resembled a brothel rather than a place of business.

6.5.4 Knowledge of Japan in the letters of other EIC employees visiting Japan

The visiting EIC members used Japanese place-names without explanation, just as the Hirado factory members did. This is a clear indication of some degree of familiarity with the geography of Japan, both for EIC employees in general and the EIC committee at home.

One indication of the first impressions of Japan being quite shocking for contemporary Englishmen are references to two cultural differences in Japan: condoned infanticide, and comparative sexual freedom¹⁴⁷. However, merely calling Hirado another “Sodoma” is not particularly informative, and was likely a standard reprimand of some EIC officers.

¹⁴⁷ See *EFIJ* letters of the factory merchants to each other, and also Massarella 1990, pp. 235–237.

6.6 Richard Cocks, 1613–1622 (29 letters)

Richard Cocks was born in 1564 to a yeoman family in Staffordshire. As the second son, he was apprenticed to a clothworker, and was eventually made free himself¹⁴⁸. From 1603 to 1608 he worked at Bayonne near the Franco-Spanish border. At this time he was recruited to write intelligence letters to Thomas Wilson, later secretary of Sir Robert Cecil and keeper of the records at Whitehall. He returned to England in 1609, burdened by a legal case caused by a cheating debtor. Cocks was then employed by the English East India Company, and sailed to Japan as a senior merchant on its Eight Voyage in 1611. He remained in Japan 1613–1623 as the head of the English factory at Hirado. From this period remain 101 letters, and a long manuscript of his factory diary¹⁴⁹. He was finally recalled in disgrace, but died at sea en route to England on 27 March 1624. Cocks was an honest and a sociable man, if not the most competent manager, exact accountant, or acute businessman.

His letters below illustrate all facets of his life, as they are addressed to all the spheres he was connected with: two letters are to the guilds he belonged to (the Merchant Adventurers of England and the Company of Cloth-workers), three to his patron Wilson (with one more to Cecil), four to his acquaintance John Saris, and 21 to his employees, Sir Thomas Smythe and the EIC (see Appendix I for a list of letters). He clearly enjoyed writing long and descriptive letters, as not only did he dutifully write such intelligence letters to Wilson and Cecil as he was instructed:

I beseech your Lor' to p'don me yf I have byn over tedious in this my frivolouse discourse, w'ch I have donne in respect your Lor' should have true notis how the state of matters stand in these p'tes of the world, according as it pleased your good Lor' to comand me at my dep'ture out of England. (EFIJ 85: 260)

but this tendency occasionally comes through into his business correspondence, and occasionally elicited reprimands:

¹⁴⁸ See below his letters to the Merchant Adventurers of England (EFIJ 83) and the Company of Cloth-workers (EFIJ 317).

¹⁴⁹ A part of the diary is unfortunately missing. It has been published thrice; the most comprehensive edition is the newest one, by the Tokyo University Historiographical Institute (Cocks 1978–1980).

I have byn taxed by som for tediousnes in my lettrs, & therfore crave your Wor' p'don yf they seeme over large, for I would willing geve large notis of what passeth, in respect of the distance of place &c.

(*EFIJ* 267: 669)

However, this did not stop him from carrying on for several more sides. His letters can be frequently described as garrulous and rambling, and vary from a single sheet to ten or twelve closely penned folios.

6.6.1 First years, 1613–1616 (6 letters)

The first years of the Hirado factory were relatively promising, despite fierce competition from the Dutch, the disappearance of Tempest Peacock and Walter Carwarden with a large portion of the factory's capital, and the disappointing wares brought by the EIC ship *Hosiander* in 1615. The English privileges were generous, and while business was uncertain as long as the succession wars lasted (until the summer of 1615), at least the English merchants were allowed to try their luck in any place they chose. Of the letters written by Cocks in this period, three are near copies of each other, having been written (or at least dated) on the same day, but to separate recipients (*EFIJ* docs. 84–86)¹⁵⁰.

1 *EFIJ* doc. no. 18 (pp. 96–102), Richard Cocks at Hirado to Sir Thomas Smythe and the EIC in London, 30 November 1613.

This is Cocks's first letter to Smythe and the EIC from Japan. It is an account of the voyage from Bantam to Japan and the establishment of the Hirado factory with the hiring of William Adams, followed by a lengthy passage on the misconduct of some EIC employees. The letter contains little on Japan. Hirado, Nagasaki, Tsushima

¹⁵⁰ Case study 4 (*EFIJ* 75) above, page 49 ff., belongs to this same group, having been written two weeks previously. One of the letters was addressed to Sir Robert Cecil, who having died, the letter passed to his former secretary, Thomas Wilson.

and “Yedzo” (Ezo, now Hokkaido¹⁵¹) are mentioned, as are the “kynge” (daimyo) of Hirado and the “Emperour” (Ieyasu) and his court. Both the “king” and the “Emperor” are said to be “kyndlie” and generous. Other facts are mainly commercial: that there is assuredly much silver to be had, and broadcloth would sell, if at low rates, and once the Japanese “altar their myndes” and stop being so “adicted to silke”. Cocks also relates which South-East Asian commodities are readily marketable in Japan. In writing of runaway sailors, Cocks mentions the existence of “papist churches” and Jesuits in Nagasaki.

A very important piece of information about Japan is Cocks’s mention that William Adams had drawn a map of Japan and its surroundings, and was sending it to the EIC on the *Clove*. This would have provided the Company with potentially accurate and up-to-date geographical knowledge of Japan, and helped them understand the letters of the Hirado factory members, which rarely elaborated on place-names¹⁵².

2 *EFIJ* doc. no. 83 (pp. 250–251), Richard Cocks at Hirado to the Merchant Adventurers of England at Middelburg in Holland, 10 December 1614.

This letter is Cocks’s first letter to his merchant guild in nearly twenty years. It is a largely an account of his present employment by the EIC, with the journey to Japan in brief, followed by news. Half of the letter is concerned with the “mightie Empire of Japan”. Cocks writes of receiving large privileges from the “Emperour” (Ieyasu), thanks to William Adams, and of how the “Emperor” has banished Catholics from Japan and destroyed their churches and monasteries. Further, he mentions rumours of coming war between “Ogusho Same” (Ieyasu) and “Fidaia Same, the sonne of Ticus Same, the deceased Emperour” (Hideyori, son of *Taikō*, Hideyoshi). He continues that Hideyori is reported to be holding the castle of “Osekey” (Osaka) with “80 or 100,000 men”, and that the “Emperor” is personally leading an army of 300,000 men against him. Finally, Cocks mentions a “Japan almenack” inclosed in his

¹⁵¹ In this connection Cocks speaks of a possible expedition to search for the north-west passage. Cocks calls Ezo an island, but notes that it is “thought to be rather som p’te of the continent of Tartaria”. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century maps of Ezo oscillate between depicting it as an island and as a part of the mainland (see Cortazzi 1982 and 1983).

¹⁵² William Adams’s letter to the EIC sent at the same time on the *Clove* survives (*EFIJ* doc. no. 19, see above chapter 6.2.1), but it does not contain any mention of the map. In any case, the map is unfortunately not extant.

letter, which shows the Japanese script and “how they devide the yere into 12 monethes” (it does not survive).

3 *EFIJ* doc. no. 84 (pp. 252–255), Richard Cocks at Hirado to John Saris in England, 10 December 1614.

This letter seems to be Cocks’s second letter from Japan to John Saris¹⁵³. It is an update on factory matters, touching on many things Saris was familiar with, and containing much information about Japan. Cocks mentions Hirado, “Cochi” (Kawachi), “Osakey” (Osaka), “Fushma” (Fushimi near Kyoto), “Sackey” (Sakai), Edo, Nagasaki and Tsushima (the last being “no subject” to Japan¹⁵⁴). He begins with mentioning how the “Emperor” (Ieyasu) had banished Catholics from Japan and destroyed their churches and monasteries. He goes on to relate of the death of “Foyne Same the old king of Firando” (Matsu-ura Hōin, daimyo of Hirado when Saris visited Japan), and how “Ushiandono his governour” (the Hirado *bugyō* Ushinosuke¹⁵⁵) and two others “cut their bellies to beare him company”, having their bodies burned and ashes entombed with their Lord’s¹⁵⁶. He then describes how war is likely to ensue between “Ogusho-same the ould Emperour” (Ieyasu) and “Fidaia-same the yong Prince” (Hideyori), who is “sonne to Tico-same” (the “deceased Emperour” whom Cocks says is “otherwise called Quabicondono”, i.e. the *Taikō* and *Kampaku*, Toyotomi Hideyoshi). Hideyori is reported to have 80 or 100,000 men (“runawayes and banished men, mallcontents”) in his “fortresse of Osakey”, and the “old Emperour himselfe” to be personally leading an army of 300,000 soldiers against him, being presently at his castle at Fushimi. Cocks ends his news from Japan by saying how a “tempest or tuffon” struck Edo, and wrecked “the noblemen’s houses, which you know were beautifull and faire”.

In describing business, Cocks uses the measure “tattamy” (*tatami*), with which Saris would have been familiar. He also writes how foreigners are expected to bear a gift to the Emperor on arrival of a ship, and how they must apply yearly for trading

¹⁵³ Cocks mentions his previous letter was dated 25 November 1614; it does not survive.

¹⁵⁴ In fact, Tsushima was a part of the Japanese empire, and had been ruled by daimyo of the Sō family from the fourteenth century.

¹⁵⁵ Ushinosuke “appears to have been the Hirado *bugyō* primarily responsible for relations with the English” (Farrington 130, fn. 2). *Bugyō* were administrative officials of all ranks, working for daimyo and/or the shogunate.

¹⁵⁶ This is the first occurrence of *seppuku* (usually known as *hara-kiri* in the West) in the *EFIJ* letters. It was commonly mentioned in early European works on Japan (cf. Cooper 1981: 161–163).

license in order to employ Japanese junks and sailors (without which the Japanese are punishable by death). Cocks goes on to describe Tsushima and Korea, and mentions Hideyoshi's conquest of the latter.

Finally Cocks writes of infanticide committed by a woman who gave birth to an Englishman's child, and says infanticide is "an ordinary thing here"¹⁵⁷. He also mentions having inclosed a "Japan almanacke" (it does not survive).

4 *EFIJ* doc. no. 85 (pp. 256–261), Richard Cocks at Hirado to Lord Salisbury in London, 10 December 1614.

This letter is an intelligence letter on Japan, written to order. It is extraordinarily rich in information and accurate in detail about Japan.

Cocks writes that the Jesuits were the first (Europeans) to come to Japan. The "king of Ombra (or Umbra)" (the daimyo Ōmura Sumitada, from the province of Hizen) allowed them to settle in the "littell village" of Nagasaki and build a church there; the Jesuits proceeded to draw Spanish and Portuguese trade there (including the Macao carrack¹⁵⁸), and Nagasaki grew to a "popelose cittie" with 10–12 churches and monasteries and even a bishop's see. The Ōmura clan grew rich with rent, anchorage, customs and other revenues, and Sumitada became Christian along with "most p'te of his subjectes", granting great favours to the Christians. However, the Jesuits talked "Ogusho Same the Emperour" (Ieyasu) into letting them take control of Nagasaki, thus diverting the cash into the shogun's and their own coffers. Disgusted at losing a great source of revenue, Ōmura Yoshiaki (the son of Sumitada, now dead) and most his followers apostatized, and became anti-Christian.

Cocks then writes of the 1584 Japanese mission to Europe, and how the three members of the embassy were not "sonns or nephews unto [the] 3 kinges" (daimyos) of Bungo, Arima and Ōmura (Hizen), but "of base parentage only"¹⁵⁹. Further, one of them had "turned pagon" again.

Cocks mentions the presence of Jesuits, Augustins, Dominicans, Franciscans and "seculer priests", as well as nuns, all now banished by the "Emperor", and their

¹⁵⁷ This seemed to shock the English visitors, and Cocks reiterates his horror in the following letter (cf. also Farrington 1991: 255 n. 2). See also the letter of Robert Adams above, chapter 6.5.1.

¹⁵⁸ The *náo*: see page 18.

¹⁵⁹ It is likely, as Cocks assumes, that Salisbury had read an account of the event, as there were over seventy contemporary European publications on it. See e.g. Boscaro (1973) and Lach (1965).

churches and monasteries destroyed. Those who harbour relics of these churches are summarily executed. The “Emperor” also refuses to accept gifts from the Portuguese, and to see their ambassadors.

Next Cocks relates coming war between Ieyasu and “Fidaia Same, the sonne of Ticus Same the deceased Emperour”, “otherwaies called Quabicondono” (Hideyori, son of *Taikō* and *Kampaku* Hideyoshi). Hideyori, a young man of 22, held Osaka castle, the “greatest and strongest fortresses in Japan” and full of “treasure and riches his father left hym”, and had an army of “80 or 100,000 mallcontentes and banished men”. Now Ieyasu, said to be 75 or 78 years old, was personally leading an army of 300,000 men against him. Cocks next writes that Ieyasu is “more polletike and powrefull” than Hideyoshi was, and says the latter was “of base parentage yet by subteltie and his greate valure for pocession of the whole Japan Empire, w’ch never man did before hym”; yet reports he was poisoned by a “Corean lord”, leaving the empire to “three greate Japan lordes (or princes), of w’ch this Ogusho Same now Emperour was cheefest”, who later defeated his rival, and held all of Japan “newly conquered by hym by the sword”.

Japan is successfully used by the Dutch as a “storehouse”, providing them with victual cheaper than in Europe, and with munitions and skilled labour, enabling them to sustain their foothold in the East Indies. However, the “Emperor” reportedly refused a present from them, either because its carriers were not “men of accompt”, because they have been taking Chinese junks as prizes, or because their gift of two young tigers was considered ominous. (Cocks goes on to say that the Japanese name years after “weild beastes & burdes”, and that this one was a year of the Tiger, and that Ieyasu had been born in a year of the Tiger, and “his deviners & soothsaiers” foresaw his death this year.) While Japan and China are technically enemies, Ieyasu wants profitable trade to continue; on their side, the Dutch cannot afford to lose foothold in Japan.

Cocks writes he includes a list of (most of) the “greate princes and lordes of Japan” along with their annual revenues in “a measure of rice called a cokue [*koku*], w’ch is very neare 4 bushells English measure”¹⁶⁰. He goes on to describe the “Empire of Japan” as mighty, and as the “greatest and powrefullest teranny that ever

¹⁶⁰ “The description fits a *kan-shoku-goku*, a list of the principal daimyo showing their annual revenues in *koku*.” (Farrington 1991: 261, fn. 5). For an example of such a list and for more on *koku*, see chapter 6.6.5 below.

was”: all the gold and silver mined belongs to the “Emperour (or greate comander, as they call hym)”, who has absolute rule over all his subjects, being able to order them to “cutt his bellie” or face absolute destruction of “their rase”. Further, every master has this “lyke privelege” over their subjects, from the local “prince and lord” down to husbands and parents, so that husbands can sell their wives and parents their children if needed. Cocks goes on to say that “the most horriblest thing of all is that parentes may kill their owne children” if they are unable to raise them (and slaves, too, can be killed by their masters at whim and without legal consequences).

Cocks also mentions that William Adams “speaketh the Japan language p’fectly”; and in tangent that the “Emperor” offers help should the English choose to go search for the north-west passage. Finally, Cocks says he incloses a “Japan almenack”, which shows the Japanese script (it does not survive).

5 *EFIJ* doc. no. 86 (pp. 262–266), Richard Cocks at Hirado to Thomas Wilson in London, 10 December 1614.

This letter is a general update on matters in the East Indies, and its news and accounts focus on Europeans in the East. Cocks mentions the towns of Hirado and “Oringou” (Uruga), the city of Edo, and the “Emperour” (Ieyasu) who granted the English “large priveleges”. In relating an entertaining account of a Spanish miracle-monger¹⁶¹, Cocks mentions how there are “papists and other Christians remeaning amongst these pagonse”. As news, Cocks writes of a typhoon striking Edo, destroying buildings and making people flee inundation into the mountains. He says Edo is “as bigg as London”, and it is where the “cheefe of the nobilletie of Japan” have beautiful houses, and the “Kinge” (the shogun, Hidetada) a palace with gilded tiles located inside a newly built “fortresse (or castell)”. A typhoon this powerful striking Edo is reportedly unprecedented, and Cocks writes that the “pagons” blame it on “charmes and conjurations” of the lately banished missionaries, while “papist Japans” attribute it to the punishment of God on Japan for banishing them.

Finally, Cocks writes of having inclosed a “Japan almenack”, which showed the Japanese “order of printinge figures and carectors” (it does not survive).

¹⁶¹ A Spanish friar boasted he would perform a miracle and walk on water. He failed, and had to be saved from drowning (*EFIJ* 86: 264).

6 *EFIJ* doc. no. 149 (pp. 376–386), Richard Cocks at Hirado to EIC in London, 25 February 1616.

This letter is an update of business and EIC matters and some local news. Places mentioned in passing include Hirado, Ryukyu, Nagasaki, “Quanto” (Kanto), Edo, Osaka, Sakai and Satsuma. Other terms used without explanation include “bongews” (*bugyō*), “tattamis” and “tatta” (tatami), and “Japon cattans” (katana).

Of recent news, Cocks writes of the defeat of “Fidaia Samme, the sonne of Ticus Samme” (Hideyori, son of *Taikō* Hideyoshi) in wars, with 100,000 men killed, his castle burned down as well as Osaka and Sakai, two greate cittis”. Hideyori is presumed dead or escaped to Satsuma or Ryukyu; his mother “cut her owne belly” and his son and allies were executed by the “Emperour” (Ieyasu).

Cocks writes that “these troblesom tymes” had required great expenses in Japan, and further that personal expenses of the merchants were great. However, profit was still attainable, and the Dutch successfully used Japan as their storehouse, it being their “only supportar” in keeping their foothold of the Moluccas.

Cocks writes of troubles with “Gonrock Dono”, the “cheefe Governor at Langasaq’ [Nagasaki] for the Emperour”¹⁶², and the good relationship with the “king of Firando” (the daimyo of Hirado). Relations with the “Emperor” remain good, for William Adams has influence on the “Emperor’s” decisions and access to him “at all tymes, when kyngs and princes are kept out” (Ieyasu had recently asked him to remain in Japan, not even going on short trading ventures, although Adams had been given leave to depart Japan). Presents are regularly taken to the “Emperor”, delivered by the highest ranking members of visiting European groups. The “Emperor” remains set against the Spanish, the more so due to hearing of a edict made in New Spain banning foreigners “in payne of death”; in retaliation the “Emperor” decreed that no Japanese were allowed to trade with New Spain.

Next Cocks reports that all “tonos (or kinges)” (daimyo) with their “wives (or queens)” had been commanded to move to the “Emperor’s” court for “7 yeares”, keeping “a servant of the Emperour” in their household, in order to settle Japan and

¹⁶² The *bugyō* Hasegawa Gonroku (or Fujimasa), who was the governor of Nagasaki 1615–1625, and a reluctant persecutor of Christians (Farrington 1991: 1557).

avoid war¹⁶³. The bachelor “tono or king” of Hirado had left thither recently, being promised a wife of the “Emperor’s” kin. Cocks also reports that “one Tuan Dono, a rich man of Langasaq” had been ordered by the “Emperor” to attack and conquer “an island called Ferosa” (Formosa, now Taiwan)¹⁶⁴, but in this connection Cocks also mentions that the expedition may have also been aimed at finding “Fidaia Samme the fugitive prince” (Toyotomi Hideyori), suspected to be hiding in Ryukyu or elsewhere. Ryukyu on the other hand had been very recently taken by the 60,000-man-strong army of the “king of Shashma” (Shimazu Iehisa, daimyo of Satsuma) – whom Cocks had went to meet at sea, taking a present, as the English desired trading privileges into Ryukyu.

Cocks writes briefly of sales and markets in Japan, and of opportunities: the Japanese are “not very expert” at casting ordinance, although the technology exists and casting would be cheap. As for Japanese goods, Cocks writes of “most excellent work in varnish, both chests, contors, boxes, bubes [*byōbu*, folding screens] & other matters”.

6.6.1.1 Knowledge of Japan in Cocks’s letters for 1613–1616

In his first letter, Cocks does not mention many facts about Japan, and these mainly names such as Hirado and Nagasaki and general comments such as of the presence of ample silver. However, from his second letter, as shown above page 34 ff. in the case study, the usual range of names and terms are already in use: within eighteen months of living in Japan, Cocks was in command of the vocabulary he was to use for his entire stay. These early letters nonetheless contain some degree of wonder: such as of the army of 300,000 men led by Ieyasu against Hideyori, of servants committing suicide to follow their masters into death, of a typhoon wreaking havoc on Edo (of beautiful houses and gilded palaces), of masters controlling the life and death of their servants at will, and of the common practice of infanticide. Cocks’s intelligence letter to Cecil from this time gives him a chance to write on Japan extensively.

¹⁶³ This was the *san'in kōtai* system, which required the daimyo and their spouses to spend alternate seasons at the shogun’s court; through the means of these hostages the shogunate thwarted uprisings.

¹⁶⁴ Murayama Tōan, an administrator of Nagasaki, led a failed expedition to take Taiwan (Farrington 1991: 1564–1565).

The subjects covered, as such, are familiar ones: the recent history of the land (which Cocks elaborates upon at length in his letter to Cecil) and more recent news with the names (titles) of its rulers, the usual list of places, and the growing amount of terms for Japanese measures and items. Elaboration on geography would have been unnecessary considering the map drawn by William Adams which Cocks says he includes with his first letter; however the description of Edo between the mountains and the sea is unique in the *EFIJ* corpus. In most of these letters, Cocks also writes he incloses a “Japan almanac”, which would have enabled many in Europe to see Japanese script for the first time. It is unfortunate that he did not take the pains to have translated the *kan-shoku-goku* he says he included with one letter. The presence of Christianity in Japan is underlined, as Cocks has gained a better understanding of the situation in Japan and the great influence of the missionaries; not that he does not manage to relay a feeling that the Catholic presence is not eradicable, what with apostasy and persecution, and the majority being nonetheless pagans. The story of Nagasaki puts the English presence in Hirado into perspective.

Some of the information Cocks relates is questionable: his accounts of the wars of 1614–1615 are based on hearsay and the reports of others, for he himself stayed in Hirado during this period. Accounts of other events are downright frivolous, such as that of the miracle-monger in *EFIJ* 86.

The English consistently referred to the shogun (and the retired shogun) as “Emperor”; in this light it is remarkable that Cocks should write the “Emperour (or greate comander, as they call hym)” – for *shōgun*, as stated above (page 19 fn. 50), means general, i.e. great commander.

A final fact that Cocks emphasizes is the importance of William Adams as a mediator to and influence on Ieyasu.

6.6.2 Curtailed privileges, 1616–1618 (8 letters)

With the death of Ieyasu in June 1616, the prospects of the English merchants in Japan darkened. They were just on the brink of beginning to succeed in the country trade, and further EIC ships would arrive in 1617 and 1618 (bringing inappropriate merchandise, but also money, and broadcloth and other cloth which were vendible in

Japan); being restricted to Hirado (and Nagasaki) severely affected possibilities of making a profit in Japan.

Cocks's letters from this period continue in the same vein as his previous letters, but this time include letters only to his employers, and two to John Saris. The former include his two longest letters, both to the EIC (and Smythe), which contain much information on Japan. The restriction of the privileges resulted in Cocks's most distressed letter, and his long letter to the EIC right after the curtailment includes much repetition and returning to previous topics – something which Cocks acknowledges, and apologises for:

Yt may be som may take exceptions of my forme of writing in mingling matters soe togeather, as also for repeating somthing oftner then once, but I hope your Wor's will judg the best, for truly I have a mynd to doe well. Soe that yf my wordes or writing may be dubly sensured, I assure your Wor's my meanyng is the best.

(*EFIJ*: 229 565)

7 *EFIJ* doc. no. 228 (pp. 548), Richard Cocks at Hirado to John Saris in England, 5 January 1617.

This letter survives only as a fragment printed in *Purchas his Pilgrimes*. It seems to have been, and the remaining part is, an update of recent events. There are mentions of the “Emperour” (Hidetada) and his disfavour of the Spanish, who have been banished from Japan¹⁶⁵. Cocks writes of reports that “Fidaia Same” (Toyotomi Hideyori) had promised them re-entry had he won and “been settled in the Empire”. Further, Cocks mentions the “extreame troubles” caused by recent wars.

8 *EFIJ* doc. no. 229 (pp. 549-567), Richard Cocks at Hirado to EIC in London, 1 & 14 January 1617.

This letter is a lengthy account of proceedings of the English factory at Hirado. It contains a lot of information on Japan, yet all of it is incidental.

¹⁶⁵ This meant the missionaries, for laymen were not banished nor traders barred from entering until 1624. See below *EFIJ* 366 page 102.

Cocks writes of spending 4 months “going up to the new Emperour”, “Shungo Samme” (Hidetada), “about renewing our privilegese”, which is something the Dutch also had to do. At court in Edo he received audience with the “Emperour”, giving his presents (Cocks also mentions the great expenses incurred in Japan from incessant gift-giving), and although quizzed many times by the “Emperour’s councell” about whether the English were not Christians like the Catholic Spanish and Portuguese “padres [who have been] banished out of Japon” (meaning Jesuits and friars), he eventually received new privileges with the “Emperour’s ferme” (seal), being told that they were the same as the old ones.

The new privileges, however, turn out to be curtailed, and after finding “a boze (or pagon prist)”¹⁶⁶ to read them, it turns out that all foreigners are ordered to withdraw to Hirado, with their shipping restricted there as well. After complaining that Hirado is a “fisher towne”, where no merchants live, Cocks is told that an “Emperour’s edict per act of parliament” cannot be recalled “w’thout scandalle”; yet the English are allowed to lead shipping to Nagasaki and settle a factory there as well. This is scarcely comforting, for although in Hirado the Dutch make life and trade difficult, and while Nagasaki “is a greate cittie & many m’rch’ntes in it & greate resort to it out of all p’tes of Japon”, Nagasaki is also the Japanese base of the “papistes” (the Spanish and the Portuguese).

Cocks writes that while he was at court, the Japanese “Amerall of the Sea” was interested in an expedition Northwards, saying there were “certen ilands ... rich in Gould”; Cocks explains that the Japanese suspect English intentions of seeking the north-west passage are really to seek gold. Cocks slyly suggests to the admiral that the Japanese attack the Philippines and conquer them.

Meanwhile, a group of visiting Spaniards are irked that the English have “axcesse to the Emperour” and they did not, and Cocks even causes mischief by telling the “Emperor’s” “secretaries” that the visiting Spanish ships might be harbouring intentions of landing an invading force, if a “papisticall tono might rise and rebell” and be joined with other Japanese “papistes”; in consequence (or at any rate) the Japanese try to restrain the Spanish ships at Nagasaki, but they cut their cables and manage to escape, but for one ship that is cast away.

¹⁶⁶ This is the first instance of *bōzu*, bonze (namely a Buddhist monk or priest), in the *EFIJ* letters.

Other names mentioned by Cocks are Tsushima (and its “kyng”), “Xaxma (or Shashma)” (Satsuma) and its “king” (daimyo), Camacora (Kamakura), where a rare red flower used for a precious dye grows, and the usual group of Miyako, Osaka, and Sakai. He also mentions “Ticus Samme (and his sonne Fidaia Samme, so lately slaine & disinhereted)” (*Taikō* Hideyoshi and Hideyori), as well as the late “Emperor”, “His Ma’tie’s father, of famous memory” (Ieyasu).

Cocks writes that “no stranger may sell anything at arivall of their shipp” until the “Emperor” has chosen what he wants. Further, Cocks mentions again how ships have to pay customs and foreigners go to court yearly with a present for the “Emperor”. He then writes of the country trade: chartering junks, hiring Japanese mariners despite their privileges of free freight, and the practice of *goshuin*. Cocks mentions the following captains or owners of chartered junks: “Skidoyen Dono ... cap’t or cheefe comander of the Japons” in a junk for Siam, “Shoby Dono”, master of a Nagasaki junk, and “Capt’ Giquan” or “Giquan Dono” – Cocks gives no further information on these people¹⁶⁷. Cocks also mentions several other people by name: “Safian Dono, Governor at Langasaq’ [Nagasaki] under the Emperour of Japan”¹⁶⁸, and “Oyendono and Codsquin Dono, the Emperour’s secretarys” (“*Ōi-no-dono*” and “*Kōzuke-no-dono*”¹⁶⁹).

Finally, Cocks writes of markets and merchandise (commenting that some of their customers were the other Europeans in Japan), and that there is abundant silver in Japan, but broadcloth (and other English commodities) “must have a tyme to sell”, while silk, sappan wood and deer skins would be vendible for ready money. He also writes of a root which is “worth the wight in silver”, held as “the most pretious thing for phisick that is in the world”, revitalizing anyone still alive, yet dangerous if overdosed (not named, but presumably ginseng). He also mentions that the Dutch have cast ordinance in Japan, finding it cheap and the products serviceable.

Cocks mentions a few other facts, namely the “Justice” at Miyako, the bonzes’ “pagon religion”, and “oban gold” (Japanese gold coins).

¹⁶⁷ No information remains besides their names and information about the various trading ventures.

¹⁶⁸ Hasegawa Fujihiro Sahyōe, *bugyō* of Nagasaki, who was “opposed to foreign influence in Japan” (Farrington 1991: 1557).

¹⁶⁹ The first, “*Ōi-no-dono*”, was Doi Toshikatsu, daimyo of Kōga, “one of the three counsellors of Tokugawa Iemitsu”, titled *Ōi-no-suke*; the second, “*Kōzuke-no-dono*”, was Honda Masazumi, minister to Ieyasu and Hidetada, titled *Kōzuke-no-suke* (Farrington 1991: 1554–1555, 1557).

9 *EFIJ* doc. no. 237 (pp. 591-595), Richard Cocks at Hirado to EIC in London, 16 & 27 January 1617.

This letter is an addition to the previous letter, but was however sent on the next conveyance. It is an update on matters relating to the factory, and contains information on Japan touching the factory's affairs.

Cocks recounts the death of "Ogosho Samme the Emperour" (Ieyasu) and the curtailing of the trading privileges of Christian foreigners in Japan by his son "Shongo Samme" (Hidetada), and restricting them to Hirado and Nagasaki. He also is slightly uncertain about receiving help for an expedition to find the north-west passage.

Cocks writes of the abundance of silver, but of the need for proper merchandise, namely silk, instead of English commodities, to procure it. Cocks warns not to send "rich picktures" as the Japanese "esteem a painted sheet of paper w'th a horse, shipp or a burd" more.

Cocks incloses a translation of the new trading privileges, translated "by a learned boz" (*bōzu*, priest; see above footnote 166) with the assistance of two interpreters and William Adams.

10 *EFIJ* doc. no. 238 (pp. 596-597), Richard Cocks at Hirado to EIC in London, 31 January 1617.

This letter is a short complaint of the ill condition of goods brought to Japan in English ships. Of Japan, it only repeats the comment that the Japanese do not value European-style "rich picktures", but would "rather have printed black pap' w'th shpps, horses, men, battells, burds or suchlyke trifles".

11 *EFIJ* doc. no. 267 (pp. 656-674), Richard Cocks at Hirado to Sir Thomas Smythe and the EIC in London, 15 February 1618.

This letter is a long update of Hirado English factory business. It begins with a lengthy recount of a letter received by Cocks, and follows initially by addressing each of the recounted points. It then proceed to recent events, and continues to the end through more business and recent events. It contains much on Japan, although most of it is incidental to business.

Geographical information mentioned by Cocks include (besides the usual Hirado, Nagasaki, Edo and Miyako) “a harbor called Cochi in Firando” (Kawachi), “Tushma” (Tsushima), and then “Isla Fermosa” (Formosa), called by the Chinese in Japan “Tacca Sanga” (Takasago; i.e. Taiwan).

The letter contains many names and titles. The “tono (or king) of Firando” (daimyo of Hirado) and the “Emperor” (Hidetada) are the most common, but Cocks also mentions “Capt’ Shoby Dono” and “Capt’ Giquan” (who was recently dead) whose junks the English factory chartered, the “kyng” of “Xaxma” (Satsuma) and the “tono (or kyng) of Umbra” (Ōmura), and at the “Emperour’s court” two of the “Emperour’s counsell” are named, “Codsquin Dono & Oyen Dono, the Emperour’s chefe counsellors” (see above, footnote 169). Finally Cocks mentions the “tono of Tushma”, calling him later the “kyng of Tushma” (daimyo of Tsushima).

Cocks relates William Adams’s report of visiting Korean ambassadors being “royally entertained by all the tonos (or kinges of Japon) thorow whose terretories they passed”, and dining at the “Emperor’s” “owne table, they being served by all the tonos (or kinges) of Japon, every one having a head attire of a redish culler w’th a littell mark of silver, lyke a feather, in it”. Despite the “Emperor’s” favour, “Japon lordes” call Koreans “barbarous people”.

Of recent events, the chief topics are the curtailment of the trading privileges and its effects, and the poor state of business. Cocks reports of their trade having been restricted to Hirado and Nagasaki and their shipping to Hirado, and opines it is not worth keeping a factory in Japan. The letter reveals that the English are not allowed to travel outside Hirado and Nagasaki except “when we goe yerly to the Emperour w’th a present”, and that the Dutch and the English were “vilely misused” by the Japanese at Hirado (relating to a legal process which could have ended badly for the Europeans). Despite the fact that the “king” of Hirado did not prevent this happening, Cocks restrained from complaining to the “Emperor”, although he claims had he complained, “the tono [of Hirado] had lost his chaune (or kyngdom)” (his *han*¹⁷⁰) (his reasoning was that the Hirado daimyo owed the English factory much money, which would have been unrecoverable if that had happened). The Hirado daimyo “caused 2

¹⁷⁰ See above page 19.

or 3 to cut their bellies as the cheefe occationers of such disorder”, though Cocks writes that they were not to blame, but the daimyo’s “brother & kynsmen”.

Cocks notes the EIC’s awareness (mentioned in a received letter) of the abundance of silver in Japan. Yet he goes on to say how the goods brought in EIC ships are not good enough: cotton cloth is cheap in Japan, and while broadcloth sells, “that culler w’ch is in request this yeare yet may be will not be looked after the next”. It might be possible to sell more broadcloth in Miyako and Edo, as “somtyms the tonos will clothe all their followers in cloth cloakes after Japon fation, all of one culler, w’ch at first were short & roght but a littell beloe their wastes, but now they make them allmost downe to their feete”. But as the curtailed privileges remain equal to “other strangers”, this requires entrusting Japanese merchants with the English factory’s wares, who cheat the English regularly.

Cocks relates how the country trade is run (chartered junks, hired crew with small wages but great privileges, and *goshuin*). Further, in Japanese junks freight is charged for “money as well as for m’chandiz, an ordenary course in Japon”. In Japan, silk prices have fallen and are controlled – “the Emperour’s magazin of silk” was opened recently to bring the price of silk down – as the “Emperor” would rather let Japanese profit from trade than foreigners. Cocks writes that it is “a company of rich userers [who] have gotten this sentence [the curtailed privileges] against us”, coming down to Hirado and Nagasaki and buying “by the pancado (as they call it), or wholesale”. This started with the Portuguese, who have no privileges, “only a monson trade” and thus must sell all they bring, but now it was extended to all foreign traders, confined as they were to Hirado and Nagasaki.

Cocks also repeats how “the charges of ap’ell in this place is treble as musch as in any other factory in the Indies”, and “going up and down to the Japon court” takes much time and money, hindering copying out accounts and journals. But go they must: Cocks writes of taking a letter and a present from “the Kinge’s Ma’tie” (of England) to the “Emperor” (Hidetada), and “w’th another present ap’tte for the shipp, as the Japon custom is”. He also mentions the Dutch giving “greate presentes” to the (“Emperor’s”) “councillers”. Yet as the letter from King James was addressed to the “Emperor’s” “father Ogosho Samma, the deceased Emperor” (Ieyasu), it remained unanswered, for Cocks reports that it was “held ominios amongst the Japons to answer dead men’s letter”.

Cocks also mentions “somo or refyned [silver] plate”, and uses the term “tattamy” (tatami). He also writes of a recent great storm “or tuffon”.

12 *EFIJ* doc. no. 268 (pp. 675-676), Richard Cocks at Hirado to John Saris in England, 15 February 1618.

This letter is another update from Cocks to Saris of events in the East. There is very little on Japan, only mentions of Hirado, Nagasaki, and the “Emperor” (Hidetada), and how the English are unable to restore their curtailed privileges.

13 *EFIJ* doc. no. 271 (pp. 701–702), Richard Cocks at Hirado to Sir Thomas Smythe and the EIC in London, 17 February 1618.

This letter is Cocks’s first additional letter to doc. no. 267 above, occasioned by unfavourable weather keeping the former’s conveyance in Hirado. The letter is a brief update on several business matters, and contains next to nothing on Japan; besides a mention of Hirado, Cocks writes of three grades of refined silver plate, “somo”, “seda”, and “fibuck” (*haibuki*).

14 *EFIJ* doc. no. 273 (pp. 705–706), Richard Cocks at Hirado to Sir Thomas Smythe in London, 22 February 1618.

This letter is Cocks’s second additional letter to *EFIJ* 267 and 271 (see above). It functions more as a statement of commitment and dedication than a source of information. Its only references to Japan are mentions of Kawachi, Hirado, “Xaxma” (Satsuma) and Nagasaki.

6.6.2.1 Knowledge of Japan in Cocks’s letters for 1616–1618

After three years in Japan, Cocks was not only knowledgeable of Japan, but used his knowledge well to contextualize his accounts of the state of trade in Japan, especially with reference to the increasingly bleak situation after the restriction of the English trading privileges in 1616. The Japanese government’s increasing antipathy towards

the Spanish is yet another reflection of the gradual shaving away at the prospects of European traders in Japan. And when the English sued for restoration of their former privileges, the court's negative answer due to a superstition of not answering letters addressed to dead men sounds like a perfect bureaucratic excuse.

Information about Japan nonetheless revolves around familiar features: the same cities, the same people, the same themes of Christian persecution and worsening trade, and the same terminology, used, as hitherto, largely without explanation. Several important comments come through. Cocks says outright how Hirado is a "fisher towne", raising the question whether the English locating their factory there was at all a good idea (considering they had been offered to settle in Edo). The issue of Japanese literacy arises when Cocks has to find a "learned boz" in order to have them translated (the word *bonze* (*bōzu*) was familiar in English since Mendoza's history of China was translated in 1588, yet its usage without explanation is noteworthy); yet it is unsurprising that William Adams was not be able to read official Japanese documents, for the script and language were both very distant from common speech¹⁷¹. The "Japan almanacs" and other documents sent to England by Cocks with previous letters would (theoretically) enable the EIC to see how difficult a script Japanese was written in.

New people, too, are mentioned. The existence of a Japanese "Amerall of the Sea" implies an organized navy. The "Emperour's secretarys" are named (although this would have meant little), and their role as Cocks's main opponents at court comes through well. The names of captains of junks, however, are hardly important (even when they are cast away and the Company must record a loss).

These letters do contain rare mentions of Japanese fashion: the Japanese nobility serving the members of the Korean embassy each wear red headgear with a silver decoration "lyke a feather". Further, the colour (and, one presumes, the pattern) of cloth in demand changes rapidly and wildly, and changing fashions had lengthened the hems of "cloakes after Japon fation, all of one culler" from slightly below the waste to "almost downe to their feete". While court fashions may not have had more than ethnographical interest, the fickle tastes of the Japanese go some way to explain the difficulties the Hirado factory had in making a profit selling cloth.

¹⁷¹ There is evidence that Adams was able to read and write the *kana* syllabaries, translating and writing out John Saris's petition for trading privileges (cf. Farrington and Massarella 2000, pp. 1–25).

6.6.3 Period of isolation, 1618–1620 (3 letters)

From the Spring of 1618 until late 1620, the English at Hirado were nearly isolated. No EIC ships came to Japan, except for vessels captured by the Dutch (cf. Massarella 1990: 258), and the factory's country trade ventures were few and failures (but for two voyages captained by William Adams for his own profit, the factory chartering his junk). The eruption of hostilities between the Dutch and the English led at its worst to the English factory being under siege, and to a full-fledged (if likely rather drunken) assault on the factory¹⁷². The Hirado daimyo, however, would tolerate no fighting in his territory, and used troops to ensure peace prevailed. At the same time as the Dutch were making business nigh impossible for the English, the Japanese attitude towards the Europeans began to change, and reports of being ill-treated in business as well as in other ways start appearing in Cocks's letters (see also next section). It was the factory's darkest moment.

Cocks's three letters from this period are accounts of recent events: a short general letter to the Company of Cloth-workers, a lengthier letter to Wilson (filled with details about Japan as usual), and a very long letter to the EIC, also filled with much information on Japan.

15 *EFIJ* doc. no. 317 (pp. 775–776), Richard Cocks at Nagasaki to the Governor and Company of Cloth-workers in London, 10 March 1620.

This letter is an update of events in Japan and the East Indies written by Cocks to the Company of Clothworkers, to which he belonged. It mainly reports the Dutch hostilities towards the English, and does not contain many references to Japan.

Cocks mentions “Nangasaque” (Nagasaki), “Firando” (Hirado), the “kingdom of Japon”, and “the tono (or king) of Firando” (daimyo of Hirado) and “the Emperour” (Hidetada). He also writes of the Japanese “taking our partes” when the Dutch attacked the English factory.

¹⁷² See below p. 93 ff. (*EFIJ* 319). Despite Dutch animosity towards the English, the Japanese authorities were sure to suppress any sign of no real hostilities between Europeans in Japan, and relations between the Europeans remained much as they had been.

16 *EFIJ* doc. no. 318 (pp. 777–782), Richard Cocks at Nagasaki to Sir Thomas Wilson in London, 10 March 1620.

This letter is another intelligence-type letter to Cocks's patron. It deals with the current situation, with focus on the deteriorated relationship between the English and the Dutch, and recent developments in Japan. It contains quite detailed information about Japan, covering people, places and customs.

Recent events figure prominently in the letter. Cocks writes how despite their large privileges given by the new "Emperour of Japon" (Hidetada), the Dutch have grown increasingly hostile. The Japanese, "our neighbours", have helped the English defend themselves against the Dutch. The "Emperor" commanded the Hirado daimyo to act against the Dutch hostilities, but as of yet "there is noe justice executed against them".

The new "Emperor" is a "great enemy" to Christians, especially Japanese Christians, who are summarily executed. Cocks witnessed 55 people martyred at Miyako (Kyoto) for not apostatising, including children "burned in their mothers' armes, criiing out 'Jesus receve their soules' ". In Nagasaki 16 more were martyred: 5 "burned and the rest beheaded & cutt in peeces & cast into the sea in sakes at 30 fathom deepe"; yet "the Christians" rescued them to keep as relics. Many Christians are imprisoned and waiting for execution, as "very fewe turne pagons".

The "Emperor" has "pulled downe his castell at Fushamy [Fushimi], w'ch I think was far bigger than the cittie of Rochester & a very gallant, beautifull thing, wherin I saw hym this yeare", and its stones are used to rebuild the "ould ruenated castell w'ch Tycus Samma built & Ogosho Samma pulled downe" (*Taikō* Hideyoshi, and Ieyasu), thrice as great as before, and "all the tonos or kinges" have been appointed tasks at their own charge, which they like not, "having leave after soe many yeares to retorne to their owne homes" but being thus recalled. "But goe they must, will they or nill they, in payne of belie-cuting."

Recently the "Emperour hath displaced one of the greatest princes of Japon, called Frushma Tay, of 60 or 70 mangocas" (Fukushima Masanori), moved to a small

province in northern Honshu; which he must do or “cut his belly”¹⁷³. “Frushma Tai’s subjectes were up in armes”, fortified “the cittie of Frushma”; but the “Tay hymselfe, and his sonne, beinge in the Emperour’s court” wrote to their subjects to yield or “cut their bellies”. The former “two kingdomes” of the “Tay” were given to “two of th’Emperour’s owne kinsmen”.

Rumour says “Fidaia Samma [Hideyori], the sonne of Ticus Samma, is alive & in the Daire’s howse at Miaco”¹⁷⁴. But Cocks thinks it “but talles”, as reports of him being alive have been frequent but all “proved untrue”. Yet Japanese merchants fear Miyako should be burned by the “Emperor” if they were true. Further, if he were alive, “yt may turne this Emperour’s estate upside downe, for [Hidetada] is noe marshall man but a great polletitian”. Not that this would change things for the English, for “it cannot be worse for us then it is, &c”.

Though most churches had been pulled down, some remained standing in Nagasaki until this year, but now the last churches and the monastery of Misericordia had been destroyed, and “graves & sepulturs opened” with remains of bodies taken away by the relatives and friends of the dead. The places of the churches, monasteries and graveyards were now covered by streets and, in some places, the “Emperor” commanded “pagods to be erected, & ... heathen pristes to live in them”, for he wished to eradicate “the memory of Christianetie out of Japon”. There was a place outside “this cittie of Nangasaque where divers fathers & other Christians were martered in the tyme of Ogosho Samma”, where people had planted trees and built altars, and where “many hundreds went every day to pray”; but this place too was now razed.

Cocks mentions how Portuguese and Spanish were at court at the same time as the English, “to doe their duties to th’Emperour as they doe every yeare when shiping cometh”. He then relates of a Dutchman who had “lived in Japon almost 20 yeares & speaketh the Japon languadg well”¹⁷⁵. This fello, in my hearing & others, began to extoll their kinge of Holland to be the greatest king in Christendom & one that held all the others under, he littell thinking that we hadd understood what he said”. But Cocks

¹⁷³ Called *Saemon no Tayū*. He tried to avoid his task of rebuilding Nagoya castle, and was transferred as punishment (Farrington 1991: 1556). For “mangocas”, a measure of revenue, see below chapter 6.6.5.

¹⁷⁴ *Dairi*, the actual emperor of Japan. See below chapter 6.6.5.

¹⁷⁵ This was Jan Joosten (see page 23).

responded that the Dutch have no king, unless it was the King of England, their former protector, at which “both Spaniardes, Portingales & others did laugh apace”.

Cocks reports that there have also been sightings of two comets, and the “wissardes in these partes doe prognosticate greate mattars thereof”, but nothing has happened so far but for the “deposing of Frushma Tay”. Finally, Cocks writes that he incloses “a blind prophesie” (which does not survive).

17 *EFIJ* doc. no. 319 (pp. 783–794), Richard Cocks at Nagasaki to Sir Thomas Smythe and the EIC in London, 10 March 1620.

This letter is an update of the situation in Japan written by Cocks to the East India Company. It focusses on the deteriorated relationship between the English and the Dutch, business proceedings over the last two years, and the recent developments in Japan. It contains some extensive descriptions of Japan, and of commodities available in Japan.

The letter contains an extensive comparison of Nagasaki and Hirado. Nagasaki is “a greate cittie & many ruch march’ntes dwelling in it”, whereas “Firando is a fisher towne & a very small and badd harbor”, fitting 8–10 ships, but both entering and leaving the harbour requires both favourable wind and tide, as well as 8–10 “penisses or barks to toe them”, for the current is strong and swift so “that otherwise they canot escape runing ashore”. In contrast, the “harbor at Nangasaque is the best in all Japon”, writes Cocks, “one of the fairest and lardgest harbours that eaver I saw”, fitting 1000 sail riding land locked. The “greatest shippes or carickes” may go in and out at their pleasure without help from boats (“the wind serving”), and ride “before the towne w’thin a cable’s length of the shore” in 7–8 fathoms of water.

Further, in Nagasaki “there is noe king nor nobleman, but only the Emperour’s bongew [*bugyō*] (or governar) of the place”, so that presents need be given to but one “at any shipp’s entring”; whereas at Hirado there is the “tono (or king)” (daimyo), “w’th two of his brothers & 3 or 4 of his uncles besides many noblemen of his kindred, all w’ch look for presentes or else it is no living amongst them”, and further, they constantly borrow and buy but “sildom or neaver make paym’t” except for the “king hymselfe”. Therefore in the future, ships should head to Nagasaki, where the “governor” would let the English “have a plott of ground or to take a howse in any

place of the cittie”. Cocks and the others in Japan have wished the factory had been at Nagasaki, but hitherto it “was not thought fitt”, for a “papist Portingalle bushopp” lived there and there were “10 or 12 parish churches besids monestaries”. However, these are now all destroyed, “this yeare an end being made thereof”, with the locations of the churches, monasteries and graveyards being turned into streets, and the remains of the dead being dug out and given to friends and family to bury as and where they chose. The curtailed privileges had also initially restricted English shipping to Hirado, but “Shongo Samma, the Emperour that now is” (Hidetada) had now permitted English ships to go to Nagasaki or Hirado as they will.

Describing recent events, Cocks writes how despite their large privileges thanks to which “the Japons themselves may not meddell w’th us”, the Dutch have been increasingly hostile. Recently the English rescued some Englishmen captured by the Dutch, called by the Dutch their “kengos (w’ch in Japons is sclaves)”¹⁷⁶. The Dutch attacked the English factory, but the Japanese “took our partes” against the Dutch, and the daimyo ordered a watch and placed a guard, acting to restore peace. Cocks went to “the court of the Emperour of Japon” to complain, and “His Ma’tie” and “his previe councell” gave order that the “tono or king of Firando” should perform justice, but nothing has been done. Instead, after a quarrel between some “servantes of a gentleman called Semi Dono”¹⁷⁷ and Edmund Sayers, both sides were banished to Nagasaki on pain of death; meanwhile the Dutch have done worse, but have not been punished similarly.

At the time of writing of this letter, it is the third year since the last English ship came to Japan. All this time there have been many Englishmen (left by various ships) “lyinge idly in the factory”; recently they were sent to the East Indies in a junk, having hired Japanese mariners as extra crew, and “also because their seals are of matts after the Japon fation, wherin they are more expert then our Englishmen”.

As for the country trade, Cocks now speaks against hiring a local crew, for “all the benefite falling to the Japon marrenars, whoe are so unruly when a shipp is wholly manned w’th them that there is no dealing w’th them”. Business prospects are grim, there is no “good to be donne in Japon” unless trade were procured into China. Trade

¹⁷⁶ “Japanese *kego*, domestic servant” (Farrington 1991: 794, fn. 2).

¹⁷⁷ “Sagawa Nobutoshi, Sume-no-suke (bugyō at Hirado)” (Farrington 1991: 1647).

in Japan was spoiled by “a company of rich users whoe have gotten all the trade of Japon into their owne handes”, having “soe charmed th’Emperour & his councill” to make the English lose their large privileges granted by “Ogosho Samma th’Emperour” (Ieyasu), which allowed trade everywhere, and have them restricted by “Emperour Shongo Samma” (Hidetada) to Hirado and Nagasaki. These Japanese merchants also participate in the country trade, and thus when the Portuguese bring silk from Macao to Nagasaki, the “usurers joyninge w’th th’Emperour’s bongew” impose prices well below market value, which the Portuguese, having no privileges and needing to depart during the monsoon, are forced to comply with. In fine, Cocks says the Japanese merchants “overthrow the trade of Japon for all strangers”. Overall, Cocks writes that Japan is “a place of much losse & expence”.

Of other commodities, Cocks writes that broadcloth will not sell in great quantities, it not being used for clothes, but for “cases or coveringes for armours, pikes, langenattes [*naginata*¹⁷⁸], cattanes (or sabres), w’th muskettes or guns”, which are mostly required before wars. None dare buy lead “for feare of th’Emperour”, whose “bongew” buys it from the English. Presently the *bugyō* is called to court by the “Emperor”, reportedly “to put another in his place, w’ch God forbid”, for the present one is wealthy and thus manageable, but a new one would be wanting to fill his own pockets and thus require many gifts from the merchants in Nagasaki.

On the other hand, Japan can be used as a “storehowse” for a foothold in the East Indies, as is done by the Dutch, for here is abundant provision: ordinance, gunpowder and shot cheaply, beef and pork, meal and biscuits, chickpeas, “dried fish lyke a breame, called heare tay [*tai*¹⁷⁹], in abundance”, salted tunny, liquor, rice, “other sortes of Japon wine made of rise”, and pilchards. Further, there is timber and planks, good carpenters, resin (but no tar), hemp for decent cables, ironwork and smiths.

Finally, in speaking of the persecution of Christians, Cocks writes that “I doe not rejoyce herin, but wish all Japon were Christians.” Yet while the bishop lived in Nagasaki, there were “soe many prists & Jesuists, w’th their p’takers, that one could not passe the streetes w’thout being by them called Lutranos & herejos”, while now none dare say such things out loud.

¹⁷⁸ A weapon something like a glaive, or a spear with a long, curved blade.

¹⁷⁹ Sea bream.

6.6.3.1 Knowledge of Japan in Cocks's letters for 1618–1620

Cocks's letters for this period contain many important new facts about Japan. Of primary importance as information on Japan is his extensive description of the poor harbour of Hirado¹⁸⁰, and the excellent harbour of Nagasaki. He also discusses the history and present state of Nagasaki, and argues for moving the English factory thither. Other new things Cocks writes about in his letter to Wilson include a mention of Fushimi castle being larger than the city of Rochester, of the Dairi at Miyako (it is ironic that Cocks does not realize he is the real emperor of Japan), and a rare description of Hidetada's character – being an excellent politician, if not a good soldier¹⁸¹. The relating of the displacement of Fukushima Masanori is peculiar, for the fate of a particular – if mighty – Japanese noble cannot be seen to be meant as anything but entertainment. As an indication of Cocks being aware of this, he writes: “I pray yow p'don me for writing such fopperies, w'ch I doe to the entent to have yow laugh a littell”.

The letters include, as ever, the usual range of names of cities and people, as well as Japanese terminology used by the Hirado factory members. In connection with the persecution of Christians resulting in razed churches, Cocks also mentions “pagods”, “heather pristes” and “monestaries”, a rare instance of him mentioning local religion (but for the lengthy account of the temples of Kyoto in case 3, chapter 5.4 above). These letters contain a few other instances of Japanese terminology. Illustrating that there was a semantic difference between “katana” and “sword”, Cocks writes “swordes and cattans” (katana) at one point, but “cattanes (or sabres)” at another (cf. above footnote 125). A more interesting case is Cocks writing how the Dutch called their English captives their “kengos (w'ch in Japons is slaves)”. The context of this was their complaint to the Hirado daimyo, yet Cocks using the Japanese term in a letter home is nonetheless curious.

The most revealing passages in the letter, however, are from Cocks's visit to the court in Miyako. Cocks writes of Jan Joosten bragging about Holland within hearing of him and the Spanish and Portuguese present, and it seems that Joosten was speaking in Japanese, for Cocks first mentions that he “speaketh the Japon languadg

¹⁸⁰ For which reason ships often anchored in the road of Kawachi nearby.

¹⁸¹ In another letter, Cocks describes Hidetada as “the politikest prince that ever rayned in Japon” (*EFLJ* doc. no. 75).

well”, and then that he little thought that the other Europeans “hadd understood what he said”. This is evidence that Cocks, and the other Europeans present (to some extent¹⁸²) not only understood Japanese, but could speak it: “I was not behindhand to tell hym he needed not to lie soe loude”, writes Cocks, putting Joosten in his place and entertaining the others.

Finally, Cocks blames the curtailing of their trading privileges to “a company of rich userars”. From a business perspective, this can be taken as true, for certainly bleak trading prospects are largely the result of changed circumstances in business, from the English being restricted to Hirado and Nagasaki to the control of prices by the “Emperor” (or at least his *bugyō*) and the Japanese merchant cartel. Cocks’s repeated comments, that “I esteem our Japon trade alltogether unprofetable yf wee procure not tradde into China”, have by this time become more resigned. Although the Fleet of Defence was yet to come, the situation for business in Japan had become irrecoverably dismal.

6.6.4 Fleet of Defence, 1620–1622 (10 letters)

During 1620, the situation for the factory became both better and worse. One of the factory members, William Nealson, died of consumption in March. Only two months later, William Adams, the greatest ally of the English in Japan, died in May after a brief illness. This effectively removed their influence on the court – or perhaps it is better described as the court’s favour, for at no time did the English manage to persuade the court to perform their desires, such as restore their curtailed privileges. However, in July, after an absence of two and a half years, English ships finally arrived at Hirado. The Dutch and the English East India Companies had allied and formed so-called Fleets of Defence, one of which came to Hirado. It was to use Hirado as a base for three seasons, and its ships – and thus its crew of hundreds of Englishmen and Dutchmen – would stay in Hirado and Nagasaki between 1620 and

¹⁸² They would of course have had interpreters present, but Cocks’s words indicate that he at least, and some of the others, understood Joosten’s words. In a letter by John Osterwick there is also a reference to the Dutch head factor, Jacques Specx, having “vnderstanding in the ... Language of the Countrie” (Massarella 2001: 46). While these references should not be exaggerated, claims of the European merchants in Japan never picking up Japanese are surely nonsense.

1622 for a total of fifteen months, causing the factory, and especially Richard Cocks, great expenses and greater headaches.

If the Hirado factory grew tired of the visiting fleet, it seemingly had a similar effect on the Japanese government, for in 1621, the shogunate curtailed the Dutch and English trading privileges a second time, prohibiting the export of men and munitions (see letter 342 below, page 100). This effectively put a stop to the factory's country trade (although with the fleet visiting, there was scarcely time for that at any rate). Japanese merchants, too, further tightened their hold on forcing the Europeans to succumb to a buyer's market, and general Japanese opinion seemed to turn entirely against the English and the Dutch (cf. letter 351 below, page 101). At the abdication of Hidetada in 1622, persecution of Christians increased, resulting in increasing numbers being martyred (cf. letter 366 below, pp. 102–103).

Cocks's letters become darker as time passes. Thus the decision of the EIC council at Batavia in 1622 to recall most of the members of the Hirado factory would seem to have been a godsend – however, Cocks stalled, excusing himself by saying he needed time to settle the factory accounts, and chose to remain in Japan, thus forcing the entire factory staff to do the same.

His letters from this period are all addressed to Sir Thomas Smythe (and the EIC). They include three longer letters, which contain decent amounts of information about Japan, and seven shorter letters which are more or less afterthoughts to the previous three, written when ships were forced to wait for favourable winds in order to depart.

18 *EFIJ* doc. no. 335 (pp. 820–826), Richard Cocks at Hirado to Sir Thomas Smythe and the EIC in London, 13–14 December 1620.

This letter is an update on current affairs, namely the developments in Japan, business, and the Manila voyages. Most of the information about Japan touches these current affairs, but there are several more general pieces of information.

Cocks mentions the “port of Firando” (Hirado), Nagasaki, Edo, the “provinces of Japon”, and also “Isla Fermosa (called by [the Japanese] Taccasanga)” (Formosa; Takasago; i.e. Taiwan). He also mentions that they live “in this cold contrey, where we have frost & snow allready” (it was December).

Cocks writes of “v or vi thousand howses burned in the cittie of Miaco the yeare past”, where much of the broadcloth in the land was burned, including English wares. Then he relates of a fight between the English and Portuguese in Nagasaki, over some English sailors who had run away to the Portuguese, and how the “justis” of Nagasaki interfered on the behalf of the English. Further, how “a nobellman’s men of this place (called Semi Dono)” had quarrelled with Edmund Sayers and all parties were banished to Nagasaki by the “king of Firando”, but now it was revoked (see previous letter 319).

Of business, Cocks writes that no-one dare by lead but “th’Emperour only, & his councill sett the price from tyme to tyme as they please”, and that the “Emperor” has commanded no more lead to be brought into Japon until present stocks are sold. Broadcloth remains the “best comodetie for Japon”, as all is sold eventually, though it takes time. Cocks also writes how strange it is how much “m’rch’ndizing” has changed “since our first arivall in Japon”, relating of fallen prices; the “reason is a company of ruch men have got all the trade of Japon into their hands” and control the markets.

The letter mentions how this year there are “4 men sent up to th’Emperour’s cort w’th presentes”, who are not back yet after 3,5 months, although letters from them report they have been “frendly entertayned” by the “th’Emperour [Hidetada] and his councill” (and the implication is at Edo).

Finally, Cocks writes of the death of William Adams and of his will to leave half of “his estate” to “a sonne and a doughter he hath in Japon” (and half to his daughter and wife in England). Cocks says that he had “byn in such favour w’th two Emperours of Japon as never was any Christian in these p’tes of the worlde, & might freely have entred & had speech w’th th’Emperours when many Japon kings stood w’thout & could not be p’mitted. And this Emperour hath confermed the lordshipp to his sonne w’ch th’other Emperour gave to the father” (cf. Farrington and Massarella 2000).

19 *EFLJ* doc. no. 337 (p. 828), Richard Cocks at Hirado to Sir Thomas Smythe and the EIC in London, 16 December 1620.

This letter is a brief update to the previous letter (see doc. no. 335). Touching ongoing business, it merely mentions Hirado and its “king” (daimyo), and the “Emperor” (Hidetada).

20 *EFIJ* doc. no. 339 (p. 830), Richard Cocks at Hirado to Sir Thomas Smythe and the EIC in London, 20 January 1621.

This letter is an update to the previous (doc. no. 337) upon the same matters. It contains more references to Japan, although no descriptions. Cocks mentions Hirado, Nagasaki and Edo, the “bongew [*bugyō*] or governor”, the “Emperor” (Hidetada) and the “king of Firando” (daimyo), and also a “goshon [*goshuin*] or passport”.

21 *EFIJ* doc. no. 340 (pp. 831–832), Richard Cocks at Hirado to Sir Thomas Smythe and the EIC in London, 31 January 1621.

This letter is the first addition to doc. no. 339 (see right above), occasioned by the conveyance lingering. It consists of updates on the same topics, with some further matters. Cocks mentions Hirado, Nagasaki and the “Emperor” (Hidetada) as usual. He also names “the Emperour’s governor” (*bugyō*) at Nagasaki, “Gonrok Dono” (Hasegawa Gonroku (cf. *EFIJ* 149 above). In an uncharacteristic outburst, frustrated at unrelenting bureaucracy, Cocks calls the Japanese “barberous people”.

22 *EFIJ* doc. no. 342 (pp. 834–835), Richard Cocks at Hirado to Sir Thomas Smythe and the EIC in London, 10 February 1621.

This letter is the second addition to doc. no. 339 (see right above), occasioned by the conveyance “staying upon som occations best knowne to the Duch”. It is a continuation of the same business, and contains the same mentions of Hirado and Nagasaki, the “Emperor” and “Gonrok Dono, governor of Nangasaque & bongew [*bugyō*]” (cf. *EFIJ* 149 above). In addition, Cocks writes of an order for 30 or 40 “tattames” (tatami) of broadcloth, and of the rising price of broadcloth due to the burning of “the greate cittie of Miaco” (Kyoto), where most of the broadcloth in Japan was stored (see letter 335 right above).

23 *EFIJ* doc. no. 351 (pp. 849–856), Richard Cocks at Hirado to Sir Thomas Smythe and the EIC in London, 30 September 1621.

This letter is an update to the EIC on the proceedings of the Fleet of Defense, and the English factory in Hirado in general. It contains much information on Japan, mainly included in explanations of recent events and developments.

Cocks relates that the “king of Firando” recently married the “Emperour’s kinswoaman, w’ch hath brought hym into greate credit”. Yet, despite their large privileges from the “Emperours of Japon”, which set the Dutch and English beyond local justice, the “Justis of this place” (Hirado) executed 2 Dutchmen for fighting – although this happened without permission from the “king of Firando”. The Japanese, too, have begun to abuse the Dutch and the English, with sailors in town given “wine & whores till they be drunk” and then stripped of all they have, or kept prisoners for forged debts. Cocks writes that this “abuse is greate & never seene till the last yeare & this”, for the daimyo had ordered locals not to trust foreign sailors unless they had money.

Of commodities, Cocks writes that tar is not to be had in Japan, though resin is available. Hemp is expensive, but of better quality than English hemp. Of spices, very little cloves and nutmeg is “spent in Japon”, especially nutmeg, and mace will not sell at all. Cocks calls “Gonrok Dono, governor” of Nagasaki “our enemies”, as he has taken the side of the Spanish and Portuguese (“our enemies”), while being “th’Emperour’s factor for buying all matters”. “Gonrok Dono” and all the merchants of Nagasaki, Miyako and Edo have turned the Japanese in general and the “Emperor” and his council in specific against the English and Dutch, to the “utter overthrow of the trade in Japon”, for Cocks reports that people do not dare to approach the English and Dutch merchants for fear of their reputation as pirates. Altogether, “the change of our good usage is soe altered of late that it maketh us amased”. Yet for the moment, “all m’rch’ndiz in Japon begyn to rise”.

Nonetheless, the “Emperor” has recently prohibited foreigners from carrying out of Japon “ordinance, gunpowder, shott, guns, pikes, langanattes, cattans” and other weapons, as well as Japanese crew. Further, there have been (false) rumours of similar prohibitions concerning provisions.

By “order” of the Hirado daimyo, Cocks and Leonard Camps (head of the Dutch factory) were to go to the “Emperor’s court” in Edo with presents “to procure

redress” without which “it is noe abindinge for us in Japon”. Cocks intended to take John Osterwick with him to Edo, “for one is not to goe alone to th’Emperor”.

24 *EFIJ* doc. no. 353 (pp. 858–859), Richard Cocks at Hirado to Sir Thomas Smythe and the EIC in London, 4 October 1621.

This letter is an addition to the previous letter, dealing with EIC business. As an update on the current situation, it contains some information on Japan.

Cocks reports that the mother of the “king of Firando” is a “Papist Christian”, and the “kinge” with his brothers “christened” (the rumour was false). This would make them, along with “Gonrok Dono” (who is not explained) “& the Papistes, our enemies”. Yet Japon Christians are put to death “for harboring of Papist pristes secretly”.

Although Cocks would be going to the “Emperour w’th our presentes”, they cannot leave Hirado without the “king’s” leave, nor will any ships take them without permission.

25 *EFIJ* doc. no. 366 (pp. 895–900), Richard Cocks at Hirado to Sir Thomas Smythe and the EIC in London, 7 September & 14 November 1622.

This letter is an update of business matters written to the EIC. It is mostly about local events and developments in Japan and business.

Recently Cocks had been to Edo with presents to the “Emperor” (Hidetada) and his council, spending 3 months at Edo, but finally the petitions of the English were refused, and they were not (re-)allowed to carry out “men & munition as in tyme past”, for “such a mighty prince as th’Emperour of Japon is” will not change his decision for “such people as we are”. Cocks writes that “I dowbt [it] wilbe every day worse then other”, repeating it later: “God send us well out of Japon, for I dowbt it wilbe every day worse then other”.

The letter contains a bleak portrayal of the increased persecution of Christians in Japan. Lately the crew and passengers of a Japanese ship carrying two Spanish friars or seminary priests were executed: the friars and “Yoshen Dies, capt’ of the friggat” were “rosted to death”, and 12 mariners beheaded. Later, 12 other Spanish

and Portuguese “fryres & Jesuistes” were burned at Nagasaki, and “above a hundred Japons put to death by fire & sword, both men, woamen & children, for entertayning & harboring of them”. Four Spaniards or Portuguese lately come in a Chinese junk are imprisoned in Nagasaki and presumably will be burned; the son of the owner of the junk is gone to court “w’th great presentes” to try save the goods of the ship. Another group of Portuguese and Spanish are also “empresoned & condemned, and all their goodes confiscat, & look howrly when they shall be executed”; and also a group of Japanese were recently executed, men with their wives and children.

With good reason, therefore, does Cocks write of “this Emperour Shongo Samma [Hidetada] being such a mortall enemie to the name of a Christian, espetically of papisticall Christians”. Though the letter does not contain a tone of worry for the safety of the English and the Dutch, at “court at Edo” Cocks is repeatedly asked if the English were Christians. His explanations of the difference between the English and the Catholics are accepted if not understood, yet in other circumstances, Cocks is told that had a decision of the Emperor gone against the English and the Dutch, Cocks and Leonard Camps (head of the Dutch factory) would have been executed, and all the English and Dutch goods seized. Further, if the Japanese had then been met with resistance, all of them would have been killed and their ships burned.

For the moment, though, the English and Dutch are still in some favour, while it is said that the “Emperour will banish all Spaniardes and Portingall howseholders out of Japon”, allowing none to stay, in order “to prevent entertayning of padres” – yet their trading vessels would be allowed to visit for the time being.

26 *EFIJ* doc. no. 372 (p. 908), Richard Cocks at Hirado to Sir Thomas Smythe and the EIC in London, 14 November 1622.

This letter is a recommendation of John Portis (“a Scotsman”) for EIC service, and contains nothing on Japan but for the name of Hirado.

27 *EFIJ* doc. no. 374 (p. 910), Richard Cocks at Hirado to Sir Thomas Smythe and the EIC in London, 23 November 1622.

This short letter merely records a debt being paid to the factory by the “king of Firando’s secretary”.

6.6.4.1 Knowledge of Japan in Cocks's letters for 1620–1622

During the visits of the Fleet of Defence to Hirado, Cocks's letters increasingly turned from recent events to factory business. From containing descriptions of events in Japan in general, they turned to the business of refitting ships and sorting out local problems, both matters where Cocks's command of business in Japan stand out.

These letters, unsurprisingly, repeat much of the same names of places, people measures and things as have been encountered in letters above. They also contain, however, some hitherto unencountered information. Although Hirado was in the southernmost parts of Japan, in December Cocks writes that they live “in this cold contrey, where we have frost & snow allready” – surely further support of the myth of woollen cloth selling well in Japan – yet Cocks follows it with the poor rate of sales of broadcloth.

Many of this group of letters are short notices of developments, and in one of them Cocks uncharacteristically lashes out in frustration of bureaucrats, writing that “it is noe trusting to the promises of these barberous people be they never soe faire, or the personages w'ch promis never soe greate, for they will promis today and deny it tomorrow, as I myselfe have fownd by experience”. The strain Cocks was under is further revealed in a later letter, wherein Cocks relates how the Hirado daimyo and his family had converted to Catholicism. This was simply not true (which should have been obvious in light of escalating persecution of Christians), and suggests both that Cocks was beginning to crack under the strain, and that at the end of the day, the English (and perhaps all the Europeans) knew their local rulers very poorly.

On the other hand, relations with the Japanese were deteriorating, as locals abused the visiting Englishmen, officials were unhelpful, the curtailed privileges were cut further, and the merchant cartel tightened their grip on the markets. The death of William Adams is another nail in the casket of English business in Japan, although his role was ultimately less influential than Cocks's praising obituary suggests. Finally, Cocks writes how the English were told that the “Emperor” (Hidetada) would not rescind his previous decisions for “such people as we are”, showing the condescending attitude of the Japanese for the Europeans.

6.6.5 Last letters, 1622 (2 letters)

The last two letters date from right after the Fleet of Defence left Hirado for the third and final time. Despite his decision to remain in Japan, Cocks reiterates his hopes for returning to England in the first letter. The letters are written to Sir Thomas Smythe and John Saris, and they are updates on recent events. The last letter is special, for it contains facts and figures about Japan hitherto unseen, and is a revealing example of the wide range of material included in letters sent home from Japan. Unfortunately it only survives in the edited form in *Purchas his Pilgrimes*, yet its survival at all is welcome to scholars of the Early Modern period.

28 *EFIJ* doc. no. 375 (pp. 911–912), Richard Cocks at Hirado to Sir Thomas Smythe and the EIC in London, 3 December 1622.

This letter is an update of mainly business matters. Cocks mentions rumours of war, and the discovery of a conspiracy of some of the “powrfullest princes in Japon” against the “Emperour Shonga Samma” (Hidetada). Places mentioned are Hirado, Edo (where the “Emperor” resides), and Miyako (Kyoto). He mentions the distribution of presents, and how the “Emperor” has granted his “goshon” (*goshuin*, cf. page 27) to the Chinese merchants, and thus the Dutch, who have been making prizes of Chinese vessels, are spoken ill of, and by connection also the English, so that prospects in Japan are looking poor.

29 *EFIJ* doc. no. 377 (pp. 916–917), Richard Cocks at Hirado to John Saris in England, 31 December 1622.

This letter is from Richard Cocks to John Saris, and contains recent news from Japan. It remains only as printed in *Purchas his Pilgrimes*, and therefore it is impossible to tell just how much of the actual letter was omitted by Purchas. Its personal style follows that of Cocks’s previous letters to Saris, and can be seen by comments in the line of “when you were here”, and by the references to people and customs Saris was familiar with.

It is a remarkable letter for it is essentially a list of the names and revenues of nine of the greatest daimyo of Japan (it reproduces and translates a *kan-shoku-goku*,

such as Cocks mentions above in letter 85 (cf. footnote 160)). The occasion for the list is the discovery of a great “conspiracie” against “Shonga Samma, the Emperour of Japon now raigning” (Hidetada) in which these nobles were implicated. Yet Cocks reports the “Emperor” is unlikely to proceed against “such great personages”, but will “winke at it and make peace with them”. Cocks writes of the following people¹⁸³:

“Cangano Figen Dono, the Emperour’s kinsman” with one “of the greatest revenues in Japon, per annum 200 mangocas” (for *man-goku*, see below), calculated by “G. Saris” (George Saris) “at 1,875,000 pounds sterling money” (*Kaga no Higendono*, Maeda Toshitsune, daimyo of Kaga).

“Shimaszu Dono, King of Xaxica and Liqueas, most feared of any prince in Japon for the strength of his countries and valiantnesse of his souldiers”, revenues of a 100 “mangocas” (Shimazu Tadatsune (Iehisa), daimyo of Satsuma, conquered Ryukyu in 1609. See also above case 2 and letter 149).

“Micauano Camy Dono”, son of the “Emperour’s eldest brother, called by the same name, a valiant man, but disinherited by Ogosho Samma [Ieyasu] his father because hee had lost his nose by too much venerie”, 70 “mangocas” (*Mikawa-no-kami-dono*¹⁸⁴, Matsudaira Tadanao, daimyo of Echizen; son of Yūki Hideyasu and grandson of Tokugawa Ieyasu.).

“Massamoneda Dono, King of Oshew”, 70 “mangocas” (Date Masamune, daimyo of Ōshu).

“Mengamy Dono, King of [blank]”, 35 “mangocas” (Mogami Yoshitoshi, daimyo of Yamagata).

“Yechew Dono, King of Cocora”, 34 “mangocas” (*Etchu-dono*¹⁸⁵, Hosokawa Tadatoshi of Kokura, daimyo of Buzen).

“Catto Samma Dono, King of I.O.”, 30 “mangocas” (Katō Samanosuke Yoshiaki, daimyo of Iyo).

“Nancobo Dono, High Priest or Bonse [bonze, *bōzu*, Buddhist priest] of Edo and second to the Daire¹⁸⁶ in church matters, and tutor to this Emperour Shongo Samma”, 1 “mangoco” (Nankōbō Tenkai, Ieyasu’s spiritual adviser).

¹⁸³ For biographies, cf. e.g. *The Cambridge history of Japan*, Vol.4, *Early Modern Japan*.

¹⁸⁴ *Mikawa-no-kami* is an honorary title meaning “defender of Mikawa”.

¹⁸⁵ Tadatoshi was called *Etchu-no-kami*, “defender of Etchu”.

¹⁸⁶ The actual emperor of Japan. He was known to the Europeans as *Dairi*, which meant the court of the emperor but was “a respectful mode of speaking of the ... emperor” (*OED*). The Europeans categorically mistook him to be the pontiff of the native “church”.

“Codsque Dono, Secretarie to Ogosho Samma when you were in Japon, then had 3 mangocas”, advanced by Hidetada to 15 “mangocas” (Honda Masazumi, *Kōzuke-no-suke*; see above footnote 169).

Then Cocks goes on to explain that a “mangoca is 10,000 gocas and each goca is 100 gantas of rice”, and each ganta is about 3 English ale pints¹⁸⁷. Cocks continues that the “King (or Tono) of Firando hath but six mangocas [...] yet is esteemed as much as the greatest earledome in England”, with 4,000 “souldiers or men at armes”, half for his “owne countrey” and half for the “Emperour”, but with the ability to raise thousands more at need.

Cocks also writes of “Calsa Samma, this Emperour’s second brother, (who is married to Massamoneda’s daughter)” (*Kazusa-no-suke*, Matsudaira Tadateru) being disinherited upon suspicion and “shaven a pagan bonse [*bōzu*] or monke, and confined into a pagan monasterie, with guards set about him”, waiting for the “Emperour his brother” to command him to “cut his belly”.

Cocks finishes by saying how Japan is “much altered from that it was at your being heere”. He writes that Edmund Sayers is gone to Edo, as is one of the Dutch, “to carry presents to the Emperour”.

6.6.5.1 Knowledge of Japan in Cocks’s letters for 1622

The last remaining letter of Richard Cocks is appropriately full of information on Japan, especially so as it consists nearly solely of new and detailed knowledge about the major daimyo of Japan. Having spent nine and a half years in Japan, Cocks would have been well acquainted with most of the names (mostly titles) in the list of daimyo and their revenues.

Incidental information about these people is colourful. Matsudaira Tadanao, *Mikawa no kami*, was in fact disinherited and banished due to leading “a dissolute life” (Farrington 1991: 1562). Nankōbō Tenkai, as Ieyasu’s (and Hidetada’s) spiritual adviser, would have held one of the highest religious offices in Japan, as Cocks’s

¹⁸⁷ A *koku* was considered to be the amount of rice a person consumed in a year, which came to about 5 bushels (although Cocks says 4 above in *EFIJ* 85), or 180 litres. A “mangoca” was a *man-goku*, or 10,000 *koku*. Daimyo had an income of at least one *man-goku*.

reference to him as “High Priest” indicates. But none of this information would have meant much to John Saris any more than other Englishmen.

Although most are encountered for the first time, the names of provinces in the list pass uncommented. It is interesting that Mogami Yoshitoshi’s “kingdom” is unnamed. In all names there are spelling errors by Purchas (as a comparison to forms in Cocks’s autograph letters reveals); “Figen” may be one, “Xaxica” for ? “Xaxma” is definitely one. The estimation of two million *koku* being near two million pounds sterling makes Maeda Toshitsune outrageously wealthy indeed. The wealth and might of Shimazu Tadatsune come across well; his importance as a great daimyo and a neighbour of Hirado is also clear from references to him in the previous letters. The later explanation of *koku* and “mangoca” is exceptionally descriptive of the might of Japan, especially as the low daimyo of Hirado is seen to be as powerful as the greatest earl in England. It is fitting that the last letter home in the *EFIJ* corpus would describe a Japan as rich and powerful as the one that the EIC set out to find.

7. From Marco Polo to Richard Cocks: a Conclusion

*Esta isla es Tarsis, es Cethia, es Ophir y Ophaz y Çipanga,
y nós le habemos llamado Española.*¹⁸⁸

Christopher Columbus to Pope Alexander VI, 1502.

It was not immediately clear that the land those Portuguese traders stumbled upon in 1543 was the same as Polo’s “Chipangu”¹⁸⁹. It took a while for semi-legendary locations to find their correlations in actual geography, a process delayed by the slow advancement of cartographical accuracy before the problem of longitude was solved in the eighteenth century. Thus not only do Early Modern maps locate Japan (or Chipangu) anywhere off the coast of China (or Cathay) or – for a while – America (as seen from the quotation above) – but geographical texts display this confusion too, at least during the sixteenth century.

¹⁸⁸ “This island is Tarsis, it is Cythia, it is Ophir and Ophaz and Cipangu, and we have named it Española” (Columbus 2002).

¹⁸⁹ There are countless spelling variations, from “Ciampagu” and “Chipangu” to “Zipangu” and “Zipangri”, and finally Iapon, Japon and Japan.

In a “newly corrected, enlarged and amended” edition of John Trevisa’s translation of Anglicus Bartholomaeus’s *De proprietatibus rerum*, Stephen Batman identified the two, placing Japan in the East Indies (Bartholomaeus 1582: 252):

First of all, therein is Iapan, which is called of Marcus Paulus the Uenetian, Zipangri: which for that fewe yeares past, it was not knowen of manye, I thinke good in this place to speake some-what of it.

However, in a book published the next year, George Peckham could still distinguish Japan from Chipangu (Peckham 1583, n.p.):

[...] and so East, amongst the coasts of Cataia, to the Ports of China, Zayton, and Quinsay, and to the Islandes of Zipango, and Iapan, situate in the East [...]

It is strange to find a reference to Japan derived from Polo in a later source. But having said that, it is worth repeating what Polo said about Japan:

This island of Japan is a great lande and lieth to the northward in lattitude of 48 deg’, in the so’ in 35 degrees, no’ and so’, and then it lyeth e’ by no’ and w’ by so’ or w’so’west in length a 220 English leagues; the people of the lande good of nature, curteous out of measure, and valliant in warres; justice is severely executed upon the traungressor of the lawe w’thout partiallety; governed in great civillity, I mean not a lande better governed in the worlde by civil pollecy. The people be very superstitious in their religeon, being divers in oppynion. Ther be many Christians by reason of the Jesuites, w’ch be many in this lande, and Fraunciscanons, havinge many churches in the lande &c.

..no, my apologies, that was what William Adams wrote in his letter to his wife in 1611 (*EFIJ* 6: 73). However, the passage *is* remarkably similar to what Polo said¹⁹⁰ (Yule 1903: II, 253):

Chipangu is an Island towards the east in the high seas, 1500 miles distant from the continent; and a very great Island it is. The people are white, civilised, and well-favoured. They are Idolaters, and are dependent on nobody. And I can tell you the quantity of gold they have is endless; for they find it in their own Islands, [and the King does not allow it to be exported. Moreover] few merchants visit the country because it is so far from the main land, and thus it comes to pass that their gold is abundant beyond all measure.

If we further add a previous passage of Adams's letter to the above (*EFIJ* 6: 72):

Yow shall understand that the Hollanders have here an Indies of monney, for out of Holland is noe need of silver to come into th'Est Indies, for in Japan is much silver and gold to serve for the Hollanders to handell wher they will in th'Est Indies allwaies provided for their commodeties, viz. rawe silk and pepper, w'th other commodetyes, and to excuse the reason best, lead, and such like is in Japan marchaundiz allwaies redy money.

we find that the two descriptions are incredibly close, nearly verbatim in places. One is tempted to draw conclusions on the continuity of a European tradition of comprehensive ethnography, especially of consistent thematic typologies of the Other. At the very least, the above comparison supports arguments for the existence of implicit ethnographies.

As can be seen from the previous chapters, the first two types of ethnography given by Hymes (see above pp. 9–10) are what we find in the *EFIJ* letters. Most of the letters describe Japan from a commercial viewpoint, and can thus be described as topic-oriented ethnography (although rather limited in scope). While similarly classifiable as topic-oriented, the topic of Cocks's extensively descriptive letters to

¹⁹⁰ I have compared the text of the Yule edition of Polo's *Travels* (Yule 1903) to the first English translation of (Polo 1579), and found differences to be negligible in relation to this argument.

Wilson, on the other hand, is traveller's tales (*EFIJ* 86, 227, 318; as mentioned above pp. 10–11). Only one letter, that of William Adams given above, contains an example of comprehensive ethnography – yet even that is hardly comprehensive in length¹⁹¹.

This is unfortunate, for as Rubiés observes, the main requirement for good ethnography was experience – it produced “the surprising capacity to describe empirically a functioning social and political system with its hidden rules and agendas, without necessarily passing judgement” (Rubiés 2002: 251). If something was gained by the English factory members in Japan, experience was it. The absence of more examples of comprehensive ethnography can be explained by the fact that the writers are merchants. Commerce is international by nature, and for EIC merchants, living in international communities was normal: the commercial sector of London was one, and all the cities in the East Indies where the EIC founded factories were so (Massarella 1990: 241–242; Farrington and Massarella 2000: 2-6). In this cosmopolitan environment, and given their utilitarian background, merchants very quickly stopped being curious of their surroundings and dedicated themselves to the task of making money. Or so it seems, for this is the picture, definitely self-serving, which emerges from merchant letters: hard-working and dedicated “poor servants” with “poor prospects” for themselves, drudging away their lives in the service of the Company (see e.g. *EFIJ* 234 and 349). That is was not exactly so is as evident from the letters of Richard Cocks, whose fondness for description let such passages seep into some of his business letters, as it is from the personal fortunes amassed by the likes of Richard Wickham.

Yet most merchants perhaps did not care for descriptions of the Other (Massarella 1990: 241; Rubiés 2002: 248). The EIC's careless treatment and downright ignorance of the contents of the letters sent to it by its great network of factors in the East Indies is revealing enough. Massarella's investigation of early English knowledge of Japan has revealed that not only were the EIC's letters kept in heaps at the back of storehouses, but their contents were quickly forgotten, as shown by the amount of misinformation surrounding considerations of returning to Japan (Massarella 1987). The public, too, had a short memory, worsened by the deteriorating value of descriptions of Japan in seventeenth-century collections of

¹⁹¹ One reappearing phrase in the *EFIJ* letters is an apology for not writing in more detail. Excuses ran from having been ill to not being competent, and at least Eaton and Osterwick refer the recipient to the letters of Cocks, saying they know he “will write you at large of all matters” (cf. *EFIJ* doc. no. 263). At least Osterwick, as was seen above, was reprimanded for this by the EIC (see Massarella 2001).

travel literature¹⁹². Massarella concludes that “there was a yawning gap between what was known and what could have been known, and between what could have been known and what the mentalité of the people permitted them to know” (1987: 68).

What, then, could have been known? One issue of debate concerning representation of the Other is whether it is at all possible to describe the Other, or are all texts merely representative of the writer (Schwartz 1994: 1-4). This study has shown that although the *EFIJ* letters contain very little comprehensive ethnology – proper general descriptions of Japan – they nonetheless indisputably contain a vast amount of information on Japan. The letters are, as said, examples of implicit topical ethnography. Their focus is on business, and while the amount of information on Japan in them ranges from nil to relatively detailed descriptions of certain features of Japan, most of them are full of a range of facts concerning Japan. Especially revealing is the extent to which the Hirado factory merchants adopted Japanese terminology – a fact which should not merely be taken to imply the absence of suitable words in English, for much of the terminology had perfectly suitable counterparts in English.

It is worth remembering that the Hirado factory was only one among a great number of factories spread across the East Indies, each of which sent letters home – letters which probably contained like amounts of local terminology and information. The presentation of the information in the *EFIJ* letters suggests that the writers took for granted that the recipients – the EIC – had a great degree of familiarity with the facts related (mostly names). As far as the East India Company was concerned, the information relayed by its factors did not consist of lies, despite what the king might think. However, the Company was not an intelligence-gathering organization, and its short-term focus during the early seventeenth century made it view most of the information it acquired from its factors as needless indeed.

¹⁹² For a succinct account, see Huissen 1973; also Massarella 1987 and 1990, esp. pp. 329–334.

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Appendix I: List of letters used in this study.

Year	Name of sender	EFIJ doc. no.	Name of recipient	Source	word count	date
1620	Adams, Robert	331	Smythe, Sir Thomas and the EIC	ms.	1,689	6 December
1621	Adams, Robert	350	Smythe, Sir Thomas and the EIC	ms.	975	27 September
c.1605	Adams, William	1	Adams, Mary (wife of William Adams)	PP	2,400	no date
* 1611	Adams, William	6	his "unknown friends and countrymen"	ms.	4,400	23 October
1613	Adams, William	19	The East India Company	ms.	3,334	1 December
1617	Adams, William	230	Smythe, Sir Thomas	ms.	1,454	14 January
1613	Cocks, Richard	18	Smythe, Sir Thomas and the EIC	ms.	3,337	30 November
* 1614	Cocks, Richard	75	The East India Company	ms.	2,333	25 November
1614	Cocks, Richard	83	The Merchant Adventurers of England	ms.	592	10 December
1614	Cocks, Richard	84	Saris, John	PP	1,400	10 December
1614	Cocks, Richard	85	Sir Robert Cecil, Lord Salisbury	ms.	2,377	10 December
1614	Cocks, Richard	86	Wilson, Thomas	ms.	2,071	10 December
1616	Cocks, Richard	149	The East India Company	ms.	5,274	25 February
* 1617	Cocks, Richard	227	Wilson, Sir Thomas	ms.	3,262	1 January
1617	Cocks, Richard	228	Saris, John	PP	350	5 January
1617	Cocks, Richard	229	The East India Company	ms.	9,760	1 & 14 January
1617	Cocks, Richard	237	The East India Company	ms.	1,853	16 & 27 January
1617	Cocks, Richard	238	The East India Company	ms.	538	31 January
1618	Cocks, Richard	267	Smythe, Sir Thomas and the EIC	ms.	9,681	15 February
1618	Cocks, Richard	268	Saris, John	PP	900	15 February
1618	Cocks, Richard	271	Smythe, Sir Thomas and the EIC	ms.	521	17 February
1618	Cocks, Richard	273	Smythe, Sir Thomas	ms.	458	22 February
1620	Cocks, Richard	317	The Company of Cloth-workers	ms.	692	10 March
1620	Cocks, Richard	318	Wilson, Sir Thomas	ms.	2,201	10 March
1620	Cocks, Richard	319	Smythe, Sir Thomas and the EIC	ms.	6,000	10 March
1620	Cocks, Richard	335	Smythe, Sir Thomas and the EIC	ms.	2,866	13-14 December
1620	Cocks, Richard	337	Smythe, Sir Thomas and the EIC	ms.	186	16 December
1621	Cocks, Richard	339	Smythe, Sir Thomas and the EIC	ms.	398	20 January
1621	Cocks, Richard	340	Smythe, Sir Thomas and the EIC	ms.	471	31 January
1621	Cocks, Richard	342	Smythe, Sir Thomas and the EIC	ms.	414	10 February
1621	Cocks, Richard	351	Smythe, Sir Thomas and the EIC	ms.	4,081	30 September
1621	Cocks, Richard	353	Smythe, Sir Thomas and the EIC	ms.	549	4 October
1622	Cocks, Richard	366	Smythe, Sir Thomas and the EIC	ms.	2,748	7 Sept. & 14 Nov.
1622	Cocks, Richard	372	Smythe, Sir Thomas and the EIC	ms.	285	14 November
1622	Cocks, Richard	374	Smythe, Sir Thomas and the EIC	ms.	100	23 November
1622	Cocks, Richard	375	Smythe, Sir Thomas and the EIC	ms.	605	3 December
1622	Cocks, Richard	377	Saris, John	PP	600	31 December
1616	Eaton, William	224	Smythe, Sir Thomas	ms.	1,601	18 December
1617	Eaton, William	263	Smythe, Sir Thomas	ms.	2,158	20 December
1620	Eaton, William	316	Smythe, Sir Thomas and the EIC	ms.	1,533	10 March
1620	Eaton, William	334	Smythe, Sir Thomas and the EIC	ms.	1,446	12 December
1621	Neeve, John	349	The East India Company	ms.	273	23 September
1617	Osterwick, John	236	The East India Company	ms.	800	20 January
1613	Peacock, Tempest	21	The East India Company	ms.	1,200	2 December
1615	Sayers, Edmund	132	Saris, John	PP	230	5 December
1616	Sayers, Edmund	222	Saris, John	PP	280	4 December
1618	Sayers, Edmund	270	Smythe, Sir Thomas	ms.	1,106	16 February
1621	Watts, Richard	348	Smythe, Sir Thomas and the EIC	ms.	575	22 September
* 1615	Wickham, Richard	125	Smythe, Sir Thomas and the EIC	ms.	1,611	23 October
1617	Wickham, Richard	233	The East India Company	ms.	2,863	15 January
1617	Wickham, Richard	234	Smythe, Sir Thomas	ms.	1,269	15 January

Key: ms. = manuscript; PP = Purchas his Pilgrimes. Asterisks mark case studies, bold figures are estimates.