

Chapter VIII

Siamese Products in the Japanese Market during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

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Introduction

In the early modern period, Japanese society required huge amounts of both forestry and fishery products from Siam (present-day Thailand). In the early seventeenth century, the Siamese trade was conducted not only by foreign traders, but also by Japanese traders with permission from the Tokugawa government as attested to by his seal of *shōgun* (the chief of the Tokugawa regime) or former *shōgun* (hence, they were known as *shuinsen* [the red seal ship] traders). Even after the maritime ban by the Tokugawa Shogunate prohibited Japanese people from going abroad for overseas trade, Siamese products continued to be imported into Japan. After Japan enforced in full the *sakoku* (seclusion) policy in the 1630s and 1640s, Siamese products were still available in Japan through the import trade by Chinese and/or Siamese traders as well as by the Dutch East India Company.

Deerhides and rayskins are good examples of such Siamese commodities. During the seventeenth century, the Siamese crown trade with Japan was an important financial resource for the Siamese kings. In the case of the Dutch East India Company, the trade from Siam to Japan formed a significant trading route in its triangular trade between India, Siam, and Japan. While the Dutch trade between Siam and Japan flourished in the seventeenth century, it is generally said that the trade with Siam by the VOC declined in the course of the eighteenth century.

This article aims to provide fundamental information on the Japanese import trade and domestic market as regards Siamese products in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Much attention will be paid to the change in demand and consumption patterns in the eighteenth century. After an introductory survey of the Siamese trade in Nagasaki, the article will present a detailed analysis of the Japanese import trade and consumption of major Siamese commodities such as deerhides, cowhides, rayskins, sappanwood, and others. The research will be done by consulting several Japanese “encyclopedias” of that period such as *Wakan sansai*

zue (1712) and *Honzō kōmoku keimō* (1803), and will provide information from important previous research that used Japanese and/or Dutch records.

The Overview

During the period of the *sakoku* policy, the Siam trade was accomplished by two trading parties. One was the traders classified as “*tōsen*” trader in Nagasaki. Although the Japanese word of “*tōsen*” originally meant the Chinese ship, the Asian trading ships used in the Siamese trade were customarily categorized into “*tōsen*.” In the seventeenth century, junks from Siam were operated by overseas Chinese traders who were residents in Ayutthaya. These junks, however, had a couple of Siamese supercargoes on board. This is because the Siamese king and his family as well as high-ranking officers of the Siamese court invested their money in the trade with Japan, making use of these Chinese-operated junks. Indeed, for such non-Chinese traders from Ayutthaya special Japanese interpreters were stationed in Nagasaki. Interpreters for Siamese language were appointed from 1644, and even interpreters for Moorish (Persian) language were employed from 1672 as Moorish traders occasionally came to Nagasaki on board ship from Ayutthaya. The interpreters for these foreign languages officially continued to function until the nineteenth century.¹

The other trading party was the Dutch East India Company. The VOC established its trading post in Ayutthaya in 1608. Although the Dutch trading post in Ayutthaya was closed twice between 1622 and 1633, the trade by the VOC continued there.² In Japan, the Dutch Company was forced to change the location of its trading post to Nagasaki from Hirado in 1641.³ From that year onwards, the VOC was engaged in the intra-Asian trade between Ayutthaya and Nagasaki, sometimes via its establishment in Taiwan.

The trade between Siam and Japan formed an indispensable part of its intra-Asian trade. The VOC was so unique among European trading bodies in Asia that it

¹ Egawa Kunpei, “Yakushi tōfu [The record of the appointments of Chinese interpreters],” in *Nagasakienshi: Shiryōhen* [The history of the prefecture of Nagasaki: Volumes of historical sources], ed. Nagasakienshi Hensan Iinkai, vol. 4 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1965), 755–757; Nagashima Hiromu, “Yakushi chōtanwa no Mouru go nitsuite: Kinsei Nihon niokeru Indo ninshiki no ichisokumen [On the ‘Mouru’ language in the *Yakushi chōtanwa*: An aspect of Japanese knowledge on India in the Tokugawa era],” *Nagasaki kenritsu kokusai daigaku ronshū* 19, no. 4 (1986): 133–135, 164–165.

² Han ten Brummelhuis, *Merchant, Courtier and Diplomat: A History of the Contacts between the Netherlands and Thailand* (Lochem: De Tijdstroom, 1987), 10–21.

³ L. M. Cullen, *A History of Japan, 1582–1941: Internal and External Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 36.

could establish the largest intra-Asian trading network, which stretched from Japan to Persia in the seventeenth century. In this network, Japan was expected to export silver, gold, and copper, mainly to India. Japanese precious metals and copper were sent by Dutch vessels to the Indian subcontinent, while Japanese metals were exchanged for Indian textiles. Indian cotton textiles were in turn shipped from several Indian ports located near cotton-producing and weaving regions in India such as Gujarat, Coromandel, and Bengal. Southeast Asia was an important market for Indian cotton textiles. A part of the cotton textiles exported by the VOC was sent to Mainland Southeast Asia, particularly to Ayutthaya. The VOC sold Indian textiles there and was then able to procure Siamese products suitable for the Japanese market. Forest and fishery products from Ayutthaya were necessities for the VOC in facilitating exports of precious metals and copper from Japan and to smooth its triangular trade. Profits from the intra-Asian trade were reinvested in the Indonesian archipelago in the form of silver or Indian cotton textiles. These items were exchanged there for pepper and spices for the European market.⁴

While Japan's trade with Siam was carried out by junk traders and Dutch traders, these traders had items of specialization in trading commodities. According to a survey by Kurihara Fukuya, three Chinese junks from Ayutthaya imported the following commodities into Japan in 1690: 142 pieces of deerhides, 15,030 piculs of sappanwood (1 picul = ca. 60 kg), 1,560 pieces of rayskins, 694 piculs of black lac, 30 pieces of goathides, 30 catties of eaglewood (1 catty = ca. 0.6 kg), 815 piculs of tin, 225 piculs of elephant tusk, 59 piculs of wax, 4,150 pieces of buffalo horn, 1,176 piculs of sugar, 325 piculs of medicine, and other miscellaneous goods.⁵

On the other hand, the VOC brought the following items from Siam to Japan between 1664 and 1694, based on the research by George Vinal Smith: 1,453,000 pieces of deerhides, 17,839 piculs of sappanwood, 500 pieces of rayskins, 181 piculs of black lac, 116,000 pieces of cowhide and buffalo hide, 100 piculs of elephant tusk, 79 piculs of wax, 808 piculs of buffalo horn, and 20 piculs of re-exported silk. In terms of value, deerhides constituted 80.7 percent of the total values and cowhide and buffalo hides, 11.4 percent.⁶ It is obvious that the Dutch Company had the advantage in the trade of several sorts of hides while the other trading party was engaged in the trade of a wide range of commodities produced in Siam.

⁴ Shimada Ryūto, *The Intra-Asian Trade in Japanese Copper by the Dutch East India Company during the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden and Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2006), 5–7, 17–21.

⁵ Kurihara Fukuya, “17, 18 seiki no Nihon Shamu bōeki nitsuite [On the trade between Japan and Siam in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries],” *Tokyo joshi daigaku shakaigakkai kiyō: Keizai to shakai* 22 (1994): 16.

⁶ George Vinal Smith, *The Dutch in Seventeenth-Century Thailand* (De Kalb: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Northern Illinois University, 1977), 20.

Previous studies suggest that the trading pattern between Japan and Siam largely changed in the early eighteenth century because of changed circumstances on the Japanese side. For example, Remco Raben and Dhiravat na Pombejra reason that the deathblow to Siamese international trade was the loss of the Japanese market for Siamese deerhides. Since the latter third of the seventeenth century, Japan restricted the outflow of precious metals and copper. This changing Japanese financial policy resulted in closing the door on the once thriving and profitable deerhides trade. Thus, the Japanese market for Siamese goods fell away and the Siamese trade with Japan went into decline.⁷

More precisely, there were several reasons for the decline of the Siamese trade with Japan around the turn of the century. First, as addressed by Raben and Na Pombejra, the restriction on foreign trade by the Shogunate government was one of the most important factors. As the major products exported from Japan were silver, gold, and copper, the prohibition and restriction of these metal exports hastened the decline of the overseas trade. In 1668, the Japanese authorities forbade the VOC from exporting silver from Japan, and in 1695 Japan effected the depreciation of *koban* (the gold currency) not just for domestic use but also for export. Furthermore, the Japanese government introduced the *Shōtoku shinrei* trading reform act of 1715, which was intended to further restrict the trade in Nagasaki.

Second, we may consider the first reason from the opposite point of view. While the Tokugawa Shogunate reduced its exports of precious metals and copper, Japan became independent in terms of production. In other words, Japan attempted and partly succeeded in the substitute production of overseas products. In the case of Sino-Japanese trade, for example, raw silk was the major products in the import trade into Japan in the seventeenth century. In the trade between these countries, Chinese raw silk was exchanged for Japanese silver. Alongside the decline in silver exports from Nagasaki in the latter third of the seventeenth century, imports of Chinese raw silk decreased. In place of the Nagasaki trade, the Korean trade conducted by the domain of Tsushima became important in Chinese raw silk import trade in the first half of the eighteenth century. The trading route from Tsushima via Korea to China became a substitute for the Nagasaki trade. Although this substitute trade prospered over several decades, the decline in exports of Japanese silver for the Tsushima trade resulted in the end of raw silk imports into Japan. On the other hand, from the 1730s onward, Japan succeeded in substituting domestic production of raw silk and this domestic production met the demand of Japanese consumers.

⁷ Remco Raben and Dhiravat na Pombejra, eds., *In the King's Trail: An 18th Century Dutch Journey to the Buddha's Footprint* (Bangkok: The Royal Netherlands Embassy, 1997), 64.

As a result, Japan did not need any more Chinese silk.⁸ This story of the Japanese substitute domestic production of raw silk might be applied to the Siamese trade with Japan. It is certain that Japan reduced imports of Siamese goods during the same period that it reduced those of Chinese raw silk. Therefore, the decline in the Siamese trade might be connected to the change in domestic production and consumption in Japan, which is a hypothesis of this article as it has never before been examined in detail.

Third, the decline in the trade between Siam and Japan was due to the growing prosperity of the Chinese maritime trade on the China Sea in East Asia and Southeast Asia during the eighteenth century. A Chinese junk trading network was established not only along the Chinese coast but also on the South China Sea. In 1684, Qing 清 China ceased its maritime ban on the trade with Japan because of the surrender of the Zheng 鄭 Family based in Taiwan in 1683. Because of this, the annual number of Chinese junks calling in Nagasaki rose considerably in 1685: twenty-four junks called there in 1684 and ninety-five junks arrived in 1685.⁹ Although the Chinese central government officially prohibited Chinese traders from going to Southeast Asia between 1717 and 1727, this order was not that effective, and the Chinese trade with Southeast Asia did not decline.¹⁰ For instance, according to a survey by Leonard Blussé, the Chinese junk trade in Batavia was developed thanks to a number of junks calling, even in the period from the 1710s to the 1720s, though there were no arrivals of Chinese junks in 1718 and 1721.¹¹ In addition, in the eighteenth century the domestic maritime trading network along the Chinese coast was also developed, as Matsuura Akira has made clear.¹² As a result, Siamese products became available from Chinese junks coming from ports

⁸ Tashiro Kazui, "Exports of Japan's Silver to China via Korea and Changes in the Tokugawa Monetary System during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," in *Precious Metals, Coinages and the Changes of Monetary Structures in Latin America, Europe and Asia*, ed. Eddy H. G. van Cauwenberghe (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1989), 102–107; Tashiro Kazui, "17, 18 seiki Higashi Ajia ikinai kōeki niokeru Nihongin [Japanese silver in the intra-trade in East Asia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries]," in *Ajia kōekiken to Nihon kōgyōka 1500–1900* [The Asian trading zone and the Japanese industrialization, 1500–1900], ed. Hamashita Takeshi and Kawakatsu Heita (Tokyo: Riburopōto, 1991), 131–155.

⁹ Niwa Kankichi, *Nagasaki jitsuroku taisei seihen* [The first volume of the compilation of veritable records of Nagasaki] (Nagasaki: Nagasaki Bunkensha, 1973), 258–259.

¹⁰ Kishimoto Mio, *Shindai Chūgoku no bukka to keizai hendō* [The prices and economic movement in the Qing China] (Tokyo: Kenbun Shuppan, 1997), 199–200.

¹¹ Leonard Blussé, *Strange Company: Chinese Settlers, Mestizo Women and the Dutch in VOC Batavia* (Dordrecht and Riverton: Foris Publication, 1986), 123.

¹² Matsuura Akira, *Shindai Shanhai sasen kōungyōshi no kenkyū* [Study on the history of the coastal junk trade from Shanghai in the Qing period] (Osaka: Kansai University Press, 2004).

in the Yangzi 揚子(江) Delta, where products from Southeast Asia were supplied by Chinese traders engaged in the maritime trade with Southeast Asia. That produced a situation wherein Japan enjoyed the supply of Siamese goods from Chinese junk traders from the Yangzi Delta.¹³ Hence, taking into consideration the fact that the VOC abandoned the direct trade from Ayutthaya to Nagasaki in 1715 when the Japanese authorities limited the annual number of Dutch vessels for the Japanese trade and the VOC began to bring Siamese products to Japan via Batavia,¹⁴ we can conclude that the direct trading links between Japan and Siam by both traders disappeared in the eighteenth century.

Animal Hides

Animal hides were the most significant products brought from Siam in the seventeenth century. Huge volumes of deerhides, *shikagawa* in Japanese, in particular were imported into Japan. Not only Siam produced deerhides but other countries also, such as Cambodia, the Philippines, and Taiwan. In fact, deerhide was brought from Manila to Japan from the late fifteenth century onward. Spanish as well as Portuguese, Chinese, and Japanese traders were engaged in this commerce. The island of Luzon was the major production region where native people hunted a large number of deer to produce deerhides for the Japanese market. Although deer meat was eaten by Spanish people on the island, the number of hunted deer exceeded the demand for consumption as food.¹⁵ Yet, because of the Japanese decision to cut off friendship with Catholic nations in the first half of the seventeenth century, the trade with Manila in deerhides came to an end. Moreover, a Dutch document recorded in 1642 that the Dutch import of deerhides from Manila was prohibited.¹⁶

In place of the Luzon Island, Taiwan became an important supplier of deerhides to Japan. In the early 1620s, Chinese merchants brought 200,000 pieces of deerhides per annum.¹⁷ Native people on the island hunted and processed deer.

¹³ Shimada Ryūto, “Tōsen raikō rūto no henka to kinsei Nihon no kokusan daitaika: Suō, benibana o jirei toshite [The influence of change in junk trading routes upon production in early modern Japan: The case of sappanwood and safflower],” *Waseda keizaigaku kenkyū* 49 (1999): 63–65; Shimada, *The Intra-Asian Trade in Japanese Copper*, 25–27.

¹⁴ Shimada, *The Intra-Asian Trade in Japanese Copper*, 18–19.

¹⁵ Okada Akio, “Kinsei niokeru shikagawa no yunyū nikansuru kenkyū [A study of the importation of deer-hide in the early modern age in Japan],” pt. 1, *Shakai keizai shigaku* 7, no. 6 (1937): 60–65.

¹⁶ Okada Akio, “Kinsei shoki niokeru shuyōnaru yunyū busshi nitsuite [Major imported commodities in the early years of the early modern period],” in *Tōzai kōshōshiron* [Historical studies of the East and the West], ed. Shigakkai (Tokyo: Fuzambō, 1939), vol. 1, 582.

¹⁷ Okada, “Kinsei shoki niokeru shuyōnaru yunyū busshi nitsuite,” 583.

Taiwanese hides were exported to Japan, while dried meat of deer was sent to the mainland of China. In addition to Chinese merchants, Japanese traders also handled Taiwanese deerhides in the early 1620s. In the second half of that decade, however, the Dutch East India Company constructed the Fort of Zeelandia and strengthened its power on the island; then the production and export of deerhides fell into the hands of the VOC.¹⁸ Imports of deerhides from Taiwan by the VOC rose after the mid-1620s. Between 1624 and 1660, the Dutch imports were extremely large in volume, usually amounting to more than 100,000 pieces per year; the year 1659 saw a peak when the VOC imported 195,574 pieces of Taiwanese deerhides into Japan. In 1661, the VOC lost its base on the island, and the Company could no longer bring deerhides from Taiwan. Afterward, it imported deerhides from Cambodia for several years, and from 1667 onward, it dealt with Siamese deerhides only.¹⁹ On the other hand, the new authorities in Taiwan, namely the troop under the Zheng Family, were engaged in the deerhide export from Taiwan to Japan until it lost the island in 1684.²⁰

In Siam, deer was hunted in the hinterland along the Chao Phraya River and the Mekong River. During the rainy season, native people hunted deer by making dogs drive the animals into hills surrounded by river water. They dried deer skins and the product was collected in villages and carried to Ayutthaya. In Ayutthaya, inspectors carefully checked the quality of the deerhides and classified them. For the most part, expatriate Japanese were engaged in this business as they had the best knowledge of the Japanese consumer tastes.²¹

The VOC obtained monopoly rights from the Siamese king to export deerhides in 1647. This privilege was revoked in 1652, but the VOC succeeded in obtaining its renewal in 1664.²² Though the Dutch Company had the monopoly rights, these rights were often infringed upon by Chinese and Siamese traders as well as by the Siamese kings. Furthermore, Chinese traders also imported deerhides into Japan from Taiwan and Cambodia. Thus, there was a competition between the VOC and Chinese and/or Siamese traders, and foreign deerhides were oversupplied to Japan. In fact, the VOC sold out more than 100,000 pieces of Siamese deerhides at low prices in 1689 and 1690 because it was greatly overstocked with deerhides in Ayutthaya.²³ The trade in deerhides was not as profitable to the VOC in the late seventeenth century, but it was not until the early eighteenth century that the Dutch

¹⁸ Okada, "Kinsei niokeru shikagawa," pt. 1, 65–67.

¹⁹ Yamawaki Teijirō, *Nagasaki no Oranda shōkan: Sekai no nakano sakoku Nippon* [The Dutch trading post in Nagasaki: Secluded Japan in the world] (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1980), 79.

²⁰ Okada, "Kinsei niokeru shikagawa," pt. 1, 68.

²¹ Okada, "Kinsei niokeru shikagawa," pt. 1, 69–70.

²² Smith, 78.

²³ Yamawaki, *Nagasaki no Oranda shōkan*, 80.

Company still could make up its mind to put the deerhide trade to an end. This is because selling deerhides was an important source of revenue for the Siamese kings. The VOC was afraid that if it ceased to procure deerhides from the Siamese kings, they would be angry and would take measures to halt the Dutch trade in Siam, the export trade in tin and sappanwood, in particular. Yamawaki Teijirō concludes that the year 1717 was the final year when the VOC imported deerhides into Japan. In that year, the VOC sold 28,525 pieces of deerhides in Nagasaki at a very low price.²⁴

In the eighteenth century, the deerhide trade was also recognized as non-profitable by junk traders. Judging from the import data available from Dutch records, their imports were small in volume. In 1740, for instance, Chinese junk traders brought only 590 pieces of deerhides to Japan by one junk and another three junks also brought a quite limited number of deerhides. Although Chinese traders imported 860 pieces by a junk in 1750, the imports were zero in 1760, 3 pieces in 1770, and again zero in 1780 and 1790.²⁵ By and large, it is obvious that there was almost no demand in Japan for deerhides from Siam in the eighteenth century.

Deerhide was used in Japan as medicine as most materials had such utility in pre-modern society in East Asia. Yet, its most important use was in the production of military equipment. As deerhides are pliable and tough, they were used to decorate Japanese armor, bows, swords, and so forth. The production of these military goods led to high demand for deerhides in the Japanese market, even in the beginning decades of the Tokugawa era, as full peace was not yet established. Of course, such military use declined over time alongside the establishment of the so-called *Pax-Tokugawana* in Japan. In addition to the production of military items, after the opening of the Tokugawa Shogunate, deerhides were consumed for other purposes as well. Japanese people made luxurious clothes from imported deerhides such as *haori* (Japanese short overgarments) to wear over Japanese armors, *hakama* (pleated loose trousers), and *tabi* (socks). Sacks made from deerhides were also popular items in Japan.²⁶

The domestic distribution of deerhides differed from that of cowhides. The VOC, as well as junk traders, brought diverse sorts of wild animal hides that were similar to deer called *kobito*, *kujika*, and *jamauma*, in Japanese,²⁷ which were largely

²⁴ Yamawaki, *Nagasaki no Oranda shōkan*, 80.

²⁵ Nagazumi Yōko, *Tōsen yushutsunyūhin sūryō ichiran 1637–1833 nen: Fukugen tōsen kamotsu aratamechō, kihan nimotsu kaiwatashichō* [Chinese junks cargo lists 1637–1833: Reproduction of lists of Chinese importing merchandise and lists of exporting merchandise] (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1987), 105–198.

²⁶ Okada Akio, “Kinsei niokeru shikagawa no yunyū nikansuru kenkyū [A study of the importation of deer-hide in the early modern age in Japan],” pt. 2, *Shakai keizai shigaku* 7, no. 7 (1937): 119–121.

²⁷ Terashima Ryōan, *Wakan sansai zue* [Japanese-Chinese illustrated assemblage of the

categorized as deerhides. On the other hand, foreign traders were also engaged in the import trade in cowhide into Japan. Cowhide imports followed a very similar trend to those of deerhides: the imports peaked in the mid-seventeenth century and then declined.²⁸ Once animal hides were brought to Nagasaki, they were sold to domestic merchants who were entitled to deal with foreign hides. In general, deerhides were distributed and processed by relatively higher class merchants, while cowhides were traded and processed by lower class and disadvantaged people (*eta*, or *kawata*, in particular), who were engaged in the cow leather industry.²⁹

While Japanese demand for deerhides declined over time as it was processed into military goods, cowhides continued to be in great demand even when the imports declined from the mid-seventeenth century. This is because cowhides were used for producing everyday items used by ordinary people, such as *setta*, that was a Japanese *zōri* sandal covered with hides on the bottom for walking on snow.³⁰ This use of cowhides became popular throughout the eighteenth century when the Japanese economy developed. So, faced with the decline in the import trade in cowhides from Siam and with growing demand for them in the Japanese society, Japan attempted substitute production of cowhides and in the late eighteenth century began to import large volumes of cowhides from Korea. Indeed, in the latter half of the Tokugawa period, cowhide was one of the major products handled in the Korean trade by the domain of Tsushima.³¹

three components of the universe], trans. and annot. Shimada Isao, Takeshima Atsuo, and Higuchi Motomi, vol. 6 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1987), 80.

²⁸ Anan Shigeyuki, “Edo jidai zenhan no gyūhi yunyū: ‘Kawata’ ‘kawayā’ no yakuwari ni kanren shite [The import of cowhide during the first half of the Edo period: In relation to the role (duty, function) of ‘kawata’ and ‘kawayā’],” *Saga buraku kaihō kenkyūjo kiyō* 18 (2001): 10–11.

²⁹ Anan Shigeyuki, “Nagasaki no kaigai bōeki to hikaku [Hides in the overseas trade in Nagasaki],” *Buraku kaihōshi Fukuoka* 83 (1996): 33–36; Anan, “Edo jidai zenhan no gyūhi yunyū,” 11–15.

³⁰ Tsukada Takashi, “Ajia niokeru ryō to sen: Gyūhi ryūtsū o tegakari toshite [The good and humble in Asia: From the case of the distribution of cowhides],” in *Ajia no nakano Nihonshi* [Japanese history in Asia], vol. 1, *Ajia to Nihon* [Asia and Japan], ed. Arano Yasunori, Ishii Masatoshi, and Murai Shōsuke (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1992), 256–260.

³¹ Tashiro Kazui, “Bakumatsuki Nicchō shībōeki to wakan bōeki shōnin: Yunyū yonhinmoku no torihiki o chūshinni [The private trade between Japan and Korea in the late Tokugawa period and trading merchants in the Japanese settlement in Pusan],” in *Tokugawa shakai karano tenbō: Hatten, kōzō, kokusai kankei* [Perspective from the Tokugawa society: Development, structure and international relations], ed. Hayami Akira, Saitō Osamu, and Sugiyama Shin’ya (Tokyo: Dōbunkan Shuppan, 1989), 304–308; Kim Dongchul, “19 seiki no gyūhi bōeki to tonne shōnin [The cow skin and Tonne merchant in the 19th century],” *Nippon bunri daigaku shōkei gakkai shi* 23, no. 2 (2005): 73–78.

Rayskins

Large volumes of rayskins were also imported into Japan from Siam. In Japan, dried skins of ray and shark were used for the production of decorative hilts and sheaths of Japanese swords. Skins of ray and shark have several protuberances on its surface, and these protuberances make them suitable for the covers of hilts and sheaths, as they prevent swords from slipping down. Therefore, skins with well-ordered protuberances were greatly preferred for the production of hilts of Japanese swords.³² Such favored skins were usually imported from abroad and were more highly valued.³³ It is certain that many of imported rayskins were processed into covers, although we cannot distinguish which sorts of skins were used, whether rays or sharks.³⁴

In addition to the covering of sword hilts and sheaths, rayskins were used for decorating other materials. For example, some *kōgai* (a sort of hairpin for traditional Japanese female hairstyles), small boxes for tobacco, and *inrō* (a case for holding small objects) were decorated by rayskins and a part of them was exported even to Europe. Moreover, luxurious furniture decorated by rayskins was exported by the VOC.³⁵

In general, imported rayskins were regarded as luxury goods. Rayskins of the best quality were first delivered to the *shōgun* after the quality inspection in Nagasaki.³⁶ Though it was a luxury commodity, the demand for it was more stable than that for animal hides, because the swords were carried daily by Japanese *samurais* (military gentry). Thus, it is noteworthy that the demand for foreign rayskins continued over time while the demand for deerhides declined after the establishment of the peace realized by the Tokugawa Shogunate in the seventeenth century. In other words, rayskins were still imported into Japan in the eighteenth century even if the volumes became smaller than in the previous century.

Rays were collected generally in Southeast Asia and South Asia. *Wakan sansai zue* referred to the production areas such as Macao, Champa, Cochin China,

³² Yano Ken'ichi, *Same* [Shark] (Tokyo: Hosei University Press, 1979), 147.

³³ Terashima, *Wakan sansai zue*, vol. 7, 219.

³⁴ Morinaka Kanako, "Samegawa no sōshokuteki shiyō niokeru rekishiteki tenkai [A history of the ray and shark skin as the decorative materials]," *Bunkazaigaku zasshi* 1 (2005): 1; Morinaka Kanako, "Samegawa no seishitsu to Nihon samegawa kōgei no rekishi [Property of ray and shark skin and its history in Japanese decorative arts]," *Hikaku kagaku* 52, no. 1 (2006): 1.

³⁵ Morinaka, "Samegawa no sōshokuteki shiyō," 2; Henri L. Joly and Inada Hogitaro, *Arai Hakuseki: The Sword Book in Honchō Gunkikō and the Book of Samé, Kō Hi Sei Gi of Inaba Tsūriō* (London: Holland Press, 1979), 3.

³⁶ Morinaka Kanako, "Samegawa kōgei no rekishi to denpa [History and expansion of ray and shark skin in decorative arts]," *Kaiyō* 45 (2006): 194.

Cambodia, Siam, Patani, Batavia, and St. Thomas near Madras. Among them, rayskins produced in St. Thomas, Patani, and Champa were the best in quality.³⁷ Both Dutch and Chinese traders brought Siamese rayskins to Nagasaki. Siam was the most important supplier that could afford to provide huge numbers of rayskins to Japan. Yet, in the year 1691, the areas from which the Dutch sourced rayskins for Japan changed. Before then, they were largely imported from Siam, but from that year onward, they were brought from South Asia, especially from ports on the Coromandel Coast in the southeastern Indian subcontinent. In fact, the VOC imported 8,100 pieces of *roggevelen* (rayskins) from Ceylon and 10,050 pieces of rayskins from Coromandel in 1691.³⁸

With regard to the Chinese trade between Japan and Siam, Chinese junk traders re-exported this luxury merchandise to Japan from Siam. Japan imported rayskins brought by Chinese junks from ports in the central coastal regions such as Zhapu 乍浦 and Ningbo 寧波. In 1750, 236 pieces of rayskins were imported.³⁹ From the mid-1750s to the early 1760s, very few rayskins were brought by Chinese junks; after 1765, however, these Siamese luxury goods were imported constantly into Japan, although the volumes were smaller than in the seventeenth century due to the decline in Japanese demand for foreign luxury commodities. During the 1760s, such Siamese products were brought by Chinese merchants sailing to Japan from China, having purchased Siamese products there. It was done thanks to the formation of a Chinese maritime trading network around the China Sea.

Sappanwood

Together with sugar from China and Java, sappanwood was a main commodity for import in the eighteenth century and in the first half of the nineteenth century in terms of volume, and this merchandise served as ballast for trading ships.⁴⁰ During the early modern period sappanwood was collected in Siam, Manila, and Bima, which is an island in the Indonesian archipelago. Japan imported this wood chiefly from Siam through the hands of junk traders and Dutch traders. After the collapse of the Ayutthayan kingdom in 1767 and the subsequent discontinuation of the Dutch trade with Siam, the VOC was engaged in the sappanwood trade between Bima and

³⁷ Terashima, *Wakan sansai zue*, vol. 7, 219.

³⁸ NA: NFJ 875.

³⁹ Nagazumi, 122–123.

⁴⁰ With regard to the Siamese sappanwood import, this article is mostly based on my previous works: Shimada Ryūto, “Siamese Trade in Agricultural Products with Japan and China in the Eighteenth Century,” in *Intra-Asian Trade and Industrialization: Essays in Memory of Yasukichi Yasuba*, ed. A. J. H. Latham and Kawakatsu Heita (London: Routledge, forthcoming) as well as Shimada, “Tōsen raikō rūto no henka,” 59–70.

Japan, while Chinese traders continued to import Siamese sappanwood.

In the seventeenth century, huge amounts of sappanwood were imported on junks and Dutch vessels as shown before, but this situation changed in the early decades of the eighteenth century. As direct junk trade between Ayutthaya and Nagasaki ended, imports of Siamese sappanwood by junk traders declined. On the other hand, the VOC attempted its best to supply Japan with Siamese sappanwood in place of junk traders. Though the VOC was also engaged in the trade in sappanwood from Manila and Bima, the VOC simply sent the Siamese product to Japan since Siamese sappanwood was the best in quality and could yield the best profits when sold in Japan. The VOC imported annually around five hundred thousand Dutch pounds (1 Dutch pound = ca. 0.494 kg) of sappanwood in the peak years of the 1750s, while it imported less than two hundred thousand Dutch pounds per annum in the early decades of the eighteenth century.

The import trade by junks made a partial recovery in the late eighteenth century. It was thanks to the establishment of a well-organized Chinese junk trading network on the China seas in East Asia and Southeast Asia in the course of the eighteenth century, especially after 1727 when Qing China officially permitted Chinese merchants to go abroad to conduct trade in Southeast Asia. Through this junk trading network, Siamese sappanwood was first exported from Ayutthaya to China. Then it was sent to ports in the Yangzi Delta to re-export to Nagasaki. Actually, there were no imports in 1750 and 1760 by Chinese junk traders but they imported 1,215 *kins* (= catties) in 1770 and 135,823 *kins* in 1780. Sappanwood was a dye for red. In Japan, this dye was mainly used for the dyeing of silk. Japan's demand for sappanwood rose along with the development of the Japanese textile industry. However, the emergence of the domestic production of safflower in Japan as well as the decline of its direct import by junks had an impact on the growing Japanese demand for sappanwood. During the eighteenth century, the Mogami region in north Japan succeeded in the large cultivation of safflower, and growing volumes of red dyes from safflower were supplied to Osaka, the commercial center in Japan. Despite this domestic production, sappanwood continued to be imported into Japan, since sappanwood was regarded as a low-quality substitute for safflower as it was supplied at lower prices, which suited people in the lower class.

Other Important Products

Black lac: Japan needed *urushi* (lacquer) in the Tokugawa period for the production of lacquer wares. Lacquer was produced in many places in Asia and Asian lacquer was largely divided into three sorts. One was that collected in East Asia, particularly in Japan, Korea, and China. This type of lacquer required chemical treatment by adding some iron to it in order to produce the black color. In Japan, lacquer was

produced all over the country, and Mutsu, Dewa in north Japan, Shimotsuke in Kantō, and Yoshino in mid-Japan were, in particular, famous production areas. Echizen was also a production area although its lacquer was lowest in quality.⁴¹

On the other hand, the other types of lacquer were produced in Southeast Asia and South Asia. One type of lacquer was produced in Vietnam, especially in Tonkin in the northern part of Vietnam.⁴² Yet, the most noteworthy was the one from other Southeast Asian regions and South Asia, for instance from Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, and India. This type of lacquer did not need chemical treatment as did Japanese lacquer. Sap of the Southeast Asian and South Asian lacquer tree was black in color and somewhat rubbery in quality; it was collected from larger black trees than the ones in East Asia.⁴³ This lacquer that was exported to Japan from Southeast Asia was especially called *kuro urushi* (black lac) in Japanese and *namrak* in Dutch.

Tokugawa Japan imported black lac from Siam and Cambodia.⁴⁴ Some black lac from Siam was re-exported via Ayutthaya from Pegu, and this black lac was the best in quality.⁴⁵ Throughout the sixteenth century, junk traders and the VOC brought Siamese lacquer to Japan. Its imports declined, however, in the eighteenth century. In response to this trend of declining imports, Japan came to rely on domestic production, while the domestic production of lacquer advanced from the first half of the eighteenth century.⁴⁶ It is obvious that lacquer was a successful example of Japanese substitution of domestic production over overseas production in the middle of the Tokugawa period.

Tin: Tin was also imported from Siam. The locations of major tin mines in Asia during the early modern period were on the Malay Peninsula and the island of Bangka, and thus Japan imported tin from Siam, Malacca, and Bangka. Siamese

⁴¹ Terashima, *Wakan sansai zue*, vol. 15, 93.

⁴² Ajia Kyōkai, ed., *Tōnan Ajia no urushi shigen* [Resources of *urushi* in Southeast Asia] (Tokyo: Ajia Kyōkai, 1960), 8–14.

⁴³ Matsuda Gonroku, *Urushi no hanashi* [Tales of *urushi*] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1964), 23–24.

⁴⁴ Kitano Nobuhiko, Kohiyama Kazushige, Ryōko Masahiko, Kōzuma Yōsei, and Miyakoshi Tetsuo, “Momoyama bunkaki niokeru yunyū urushi toryō no ryūtsū to shiyō nikansuru chōsa [Study of the *urushi* paints used in the Momoyama cultural period],” *Hozon kagaku* 47 (2008): 48.

⁴⁵ Nishikawa Joken, “Zōho kai tsūshō kō [An expanded study of the Chinese and Barbarian trade],” in *Nihon suido kō, suido kaiben, zōho kai tsūshō kō* [A geographical study of Japan, an explication of the geography of Japan, an expanded study of the Chinese and Barbarian trade] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1944), 129, 145. *Zōho kai tsūshō kō* was originally published in 1708.

⁴⁶ Kitano et al., “Momoyama bunkaki,” 48; Kitano Nobuhiko, *Kinsei shikki no sangyō gijutsu to kōzō* [The industrial technology and structure of lacquer ware in the early modern period] (Tokyo: Yūzankaku, 2005), 44, 98–99.

and Malaccan tin were produced in the same peninsula. Tin brought to ports in the northern part of the Malay Peninsula was regarded as Siamese tin and that collected in Malacca was called Malaccan tin. The tin production in the Bangka Island was introduced on a large scale in the first half of the eighteenth century⁴⁷; thus, Japan imported tin produced in the Malay Peninsula in the seventeenth century.

Tin was brought by junk traders as well as the Dutch vessels. These traders exported Siamese tin from Ligor (Nakhon Si Thammarat), Patani, and Ayutthaya. Ligor and Patani were located on the northern coast of the Malay Peninsula, and Ligor, in particular, was an important center to collect tin from the inland and export it.⁴⁸ Ayutthaya was a transit port that reshipped tin from the southern territory of Siam such as Ligor. Regarding the tin import by junk traders, import volumes were comparatively large in the early decades of the Tokugawa era, but went downwards as time went by. In 1653, for example, cargo lists of forty-nine junks arriving in Japan are available. Among these junks, three junks came from Patani and two from Ayutthaya.⁴⁹ Three junks from Patani brought 65 packs, 128 packs, and 600 *kins* respectively, while junks from Ayutthaya did not import tin in this year. Thirty-seven years later, as shown before, three junks from Ayutthaya imported 815 catties of tin in 1690.⁵⁰ Yet, in the early nineteenth century, there were no imports of Siamese tin by Chinese junk traders.⁵¹

The Dutch East India Company was engaged in the tin trade, yet did deal with quite a few volume of Siamese tin, since the VOC also imported tin into Japan from Malacca and Bangka. The Dutch Company in Nagasaki began to sell Malaccan tin in 1668. Afterward it was intermittently engaged in the tin import trade into Japan. According to Yamawaki Teijirō, the import trade in Siamese tin took place over a very limited number of years; it was done from 1694 to 1703 and in 1731, 1734, and 1742. After 1764, large volumes of tin were annually imported by the VOC from the island of Bangka. For instant, the VOC brought approximately one million *kins* of tin in total from Bangka to Nagasaki in the 1780s. The large import of tin from Bangka was connected with the production and circulation from 1767 of lesser-quality brass coins containing tin in place of copper cash.⁵²

Tusk and horn: Within the framework of the Nagasaki trade, Japan also

⁴⁷ Reinout Vos, *Gentle Janus, Merchant Prince: The VOC and the Tightrope of Diplomacy in the Malay World, 1740–1800* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1993), 7–8.

⁴⁸ Supaporn Ariyasajsiskul, “The So-called Tin Monopoly in Ligor: The Limits of VOC Power vis-à-vis a Southern Thai Trading Polity,” *Itinerario: International Journal of the History of European Expansion and Global Interaction* 28, no. 3 (2004): 91.

⁴⁹ Nagazumi, 52–58.

⁵⁰ Kurihara, 16.

⁵¹ Yamawaki Teijirō, *Nagasaki no tōjin bōeki* [Chinese trade in Nagasaki] (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1964), 242.

⁵² Yamawaki, *Nagasaki no Oranda shōkan*, 86–87, 139.

imported elephant tusk and buffalo horns. Import volumes were relatively small, as these products were luxury merchandise of sorts. These materials were used in Japan for the production of several items such as *inrō*, and *netsuke*, which is a sculpture used to attach a personal item like *inrō* to the *obi* (sash). On the other hand, rhinoceros horns were also imported into Japan from Siam but they were consumed as medicine.⁵³

Conclusions

This article has provided so far a survey of the Japanese import trade and the consumption in Japan of merchandise produced in Siam in the early modern period. The trade between Siam and Japan was conducted by Portuguese, Japanese, Dutch, Chinese/Siamese traders in the early seventeenth century. After the establishment of the so-called *sakoku* policy by the Tokugawa Shogunate in the 1630s and 1640s, this international trade was conducted only by the Dutch East India Company and Chinese/Siamese traders. The Siam trade with Japan by the VOC continued until the collapse of the kingdom of Ayutthaya in 1767. However, this Dutch trade had already declined since the late seventeenth century, although the VOC introduced a new major merchandise of sappanwood for the Japanese market in the first half of the eighteenth century and its import volumes reached a peak in the 1750s, while the trade by Chinese merchants went into recession during several decades in the mid-eighteenth century. With respect to Asian traders, Chinese junk traders under the patronage of the Siamese kings also were important carriers of Siamese products to Japan in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. This Siamese crown trade with Japan declined by the 1710s; despite this, in the second half of the eighteenth century, Chinese traders again brought Siamese products to Nagasaki, though the volumes were smaller than those in the seventeenth century. By this trade, Siamese products such as sappanwood that were brought from Ayutthaya to the mainland of China were re-exported to Japan in the ports in the Yangzi Delta.

In terms of each commodity, animal hides were the important commodities from Siam in the Japanese market. Among several sorts of animal hides, Japan needed deerhide in particular. This hide was a necessary item in Japan to produce luxury military equipment and mostly the VOC brought this merchandise to Nagasaki thanks to the monopoly privilege sometimes granted by the Siamese kings. It was used for decorating short Japanese overgarments, long pleated skirts

⁵³ Miyashita Saburō, *Nagasaki bōeki to Osaka: Yūnyū kara sōyaku e* [The Nagasaki trade and Osaka: From import to creation of medicine] (Osaka: Seibundō, 1997), 5–11; Ono Ranzan, *Honzō kōmoku keimō* [An enlightenment on the compendium of materia medica], vol. 1 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1992), 68.

and socks. Because of the domestic peace established by the Tokugawa Shogunate, demand for such military goods declined during the seventeenth century and indeed the import trade in animal hides from Siam came to an end in the early eighteenth century. On the other hand, cowhides experienced largely growing demand because of Japanese ordinary people throughout the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, such demand was met by the domestic production in Japan, and when the demands were greater than the domestic production, cowhides were imported from Korea and never again from Siam.

In addition to animal hides, other Siamese products were also imported into Japan such as rayskins, black lac, elephant tusk, sappanwood, tin, and so on. Rayskins were also luxury items and they were still imported into Japan in the eighteenth century despite import volumes being small in that century. Large volumes of black lac from Siam were consumed in Japan in the seventeenth century, however this imported item was substituted by the Japanese domestic product. Elephant tusks and buffalo horns were imported throughout the early modern period, although the volumes were not so large since the items were luxury products.

On the other hand, sappanwood and tin were representative commodities imported into Japan during the latter period of the Tokugawa era. Sappanwood was a dye to color textiles red. As the textile production in Japan advanced, particularly in the silk textile industry, sappanwood became a necessary material. Tin was also an important commodity for import in the eighteenth century, especially because the Japanese authorities introduced brass cash in the second half of the century and foreign tin was in great demand. Yet, it is true that imports of such products declined in the course of the eighteenth century, because Japan succeeded in the domestic production of safflower which was a substitute for sappanwood whereas tin came to be imported, not from Siam, but mostly from the island of Bangka by the VOC. Hence, the economic links between Japan and Siam became weaker throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

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