# Encounter as Process: England and Japan in the Late Sixteenth Century[[1]](#endnote-1)

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*Taking a cue from a fleeting reference to Japan in a remarkably idiosyncratic sixteenth-century language manual, this essay explores the knowledge about Japan that circulated in England before first formal contact took place between the two nations in 1613–14. The cumulative record of fleeting intersections and near-forgotten moments when the two nations came into each other’s circuit demands a reassessment of current conceptualizations of the travel encounter, juxtaposing the traditional view of encounter as a singular significant event, with one that acknowledges the encounter’s rootedness in long-running processes of knowledge making and circulation.*

INTRODUCTION

Two nations made first formal contact in 1613–14. One of them was England under James I, still laboring to establish its global trade links and emerge from the Virgilian image of an insular nation, “Britons, wholly divided from the rest of the world.”[[2]](#endnote-2) The other was Japan, a nation that actively embraced its *shima-guni* (island nation) identity and would soon adopt *sakoku*, a policy of limited contact with the outer world, which would continue for the next 200 years. The first English ship to arrive at Hirado in the summer of 1613 was *The Clove*, one of the three vessels comprising the Eighth Voyage of the East India Company. It carried introductory letters and gifts from James I addressed to the emperor of Japan. Presented by its commander, John Saris (ca. 1580–1643), to the shogun Tokugawa Hidetada and his retired father, Tokugawa Ieyasu, they were intended to demonstrate England’s goodwill as well as its access to desirable goods of trade, from the recently invented telescope, to napkins, quilts, and English wool. As Cynthia Klekar has noted, “The English were trying to find a market and attempting to present themselves as reliable and friendly traders who were more civil than the Portuguese and at least as civil as the Dutch.”[[3]](#endnote-3)

It has become something of a commonplace to note that while this may have been the first formal contact between the two nations, it was not the first time that Englishmen had set foot in Japan. Anglo-Japanese contact on Japanese soil had been initiated arguably more than a decade earlier, when William Adams, an English pilot, had reached Japan in 1600 on the Dutch ship the *Liefde*, and had risen to become a vassal and informal advisor to Ieyasu. In any case, the generous gifts that the Eighth Voyage received from the shogun and, more importantly, the granting of the shuinjo — the imperial permit bearing a vermilion seal that gave the English permission to live and trade throughout Japan — marked the beginning of formal diplomatic relations between the English nation and the Tokugawa shogunate. The subsequent fortunes of the English East India Company’s factories in Japan (1613–23) would be short-lived and troubled by internal and external conflicts. However, it is largely accepted that the information and artifacts that were gathered during this period in the early seventeenth century constituted the first substantial body of knowledge to be collected by the English about Japan, even though James I is known to have announced his deep suspicion of its veracity, declaring it to be “the loudest lies.”[[4]](#endnote-4)

Historiography, unlike James I, tends to privilege such encounters. A voyage is amenable to linear narration. It suggests a beginning and an end, a point of origin and a point of return. The knowledge that such actual crosscultural encounters generate is empirical and capable of being rendered explicit: in the case of the Eighth Voyage, its records are left, as Anthony Farrington’s work on the English factory amply demonstrates, in the thick accumulation of accounts, journals, and correspondence of agents such as John Saris and Richard Cocks, among others.[[5]](#endnote-5) But a voyage like the Eighth of the East India Company that reached Japan begins long before it sets off. And the origins of that beginning can be traced back to fleeting connections that emerged in multiple places and at multiple times.

The initial purpose of this essay was to reexamine assumptions about the extent to which knowledge about Japan was available in England in the late sixteenth century, before the actual arrival of the English in Japan. Yet, in the process, a bigger question emerged, as overlooked intersections and near-forgotten moments came to light, when travelers from the two nations came into each other’s circuit before these celebrated and much-discussed events of encounter transpired. What is meant by *encounter*? A term that features frequently in attempts to explore and understand contact between and among cultures in the early modern period, its usage tends to privilege an understanding of *encounter* as an individual event, or at least a series of closely connected events that represent a significant moment of actual physical contact between two cultures through representative agents. In recent scholarship on New World encounters of the likes of Walter Raleigh or John Smith, or the Old World negotiations of William Biddulph, Henry Blount, or Thomas Roe in the Middle East or Mughal India, close attention to these moments have yielded a wealth of material, where the focus on individual agents and events stand in for the wider “encounter of cultures.”[[6]](#endnote-6) However, if the exercise undertaken in this essay serves a purpose beyond its obvious focus on a reevaluation of early modern English knowledge about Japan, its aim would be to demand a reassessment of this particular conceptualization of the travel encounter as a singular significant event.

England’s contact with Japan, as this essay hopes to show, emerged through the accumulation of connections made and connections missed. The cumulative evidence highlights the patchy and episodic nature of the development. Within it, certain narratives and perceptions reveal a propensity to circulate. Others illuminate the extent to which repetition, contradiction, and conflation framed any available knowledge. Much of this fragmentary knowledge was evidently secondhand, borrowed, or translated; some was misconstrued or mistransposed. Yet collectively, they form a part of the encounter as much as the actual momentous meeting of the traveler and the host nation. It is inevitable that what Mary Fuller has termed “scenes of cultural encounter” form the focus of many present inquiries in the field.[[7]](#endnote-7) However, what often gets subsumed in the current attention paid to such scenes is the understanding that encounters usually did not occur in a vacuum: to privilege a definition of *encounter* as event runs the risk of losing sight of or devaluing the cumulative and collective means through which actual physical encounters were often made possible throughout this period.

Writing in a different context, Sanjay Subrahmanyam has argued that “encounters do not occur in a state of nature; they do not simply happen, but are necessarily made.”[[8]](#endnote-8) The focus of Subhrahmanyam’s statement is on the way in which an encounter is made by the traveler or author finding, or failing to find, what he terms “empirical equivalents” in describing the structure of a foreign society and “in each seeking out the equivalent of a set of categories he had in mind: a king and kingdom (*rei* and *reino*), a nobility (*nobreza* or *fidalguia*), a court (*corte*), temples (*templos*), merchants (*mercadores*), peasants (*lavradores*), and so on.”[[9]](#endnote-9) However, that framework or epistemological vocabulary of empirical equivalence, whether explicitly formulated or emergent from tacit communal knowledge slowly accreted over a period, often took shape long before the actual point of contact. Understanding crosscultural encounter demands acknowledgement of that negotiation of knowledge, memory, texts, and preconceptions that often begins long before the actual moment of encounter “made” by the traveler. Such negotiations resist cohesive narration because of their scattered, fragmentary nature, yet their cumulative weight is undeniable. The case of English knowledge of Japan explored here demonstrates precisely this phenomenon: conceptualizing encounter not as a moment or occurrence, but as a process, opens up access to a perspective on Anglo-Japanese contact that challenges and redraws the boundaries of current knowledge.

SPEAKING “IN PASSING”: JOHN ELIOT’S *ORTHO-EPIA GALLICA*

A dual-language textbook that proposes to teach its readers how to challenge a cardsharp or discuss someone’s serve at tennis in French may appear to be an unlikely place to begin such an inquiry, yet John Eliot’s *Ortho-epia Gallica* (1593) provides an intriguing starting point.[[10]](#endnote-10) Eliot’s exceptional text has attracted surprisingly little attention from scholars, aside from Frances Yates’s early demonstration of its close and witty mimicry of John Florio’s highly influential pair of language manuals, the *First fruits, which yield familiar speech, merry proverbs, witty sentences, and golden sayings* (1587) and the Second fruits . . . *of divers but delightsome tastes to the tongues of Italian and English men* (1591).[[11]](#endnote-11) As Eliot’s double prefatory letters “To the learned professors of the French tongue, in the famous citie of London” and “To the Gentlemen Readers, students of the French tongue” amply demonstrate, his book was intended in part to be a thorough mocking of such immigrant language teachers in London as Florio, whom he saw as his competitors and whose claims of high moral and rhetorical seriousness formed the target of his sharp and supremely irreverent Rabelaisian humor. At the same time, the *Ortho-epia Gallica* is an eminently usable and practical French language manual. Its facing-page dual-language dialogues on various topics with additional instruction on pronunciation was certainly read as much for instruction as for entertainment by a reader like Gabriel Harvey, whose signed and dated personal copy from the year of publication, now at the Huntington Library, is full of marks, underscorings, and marginal annotations.

The first part of Eliot’s book consists of three dialogues, the second of which is entitled “Of the dignitie of Orators, and excellencie of tongues.” Here a prospective student of languages asks a teacher about the “most famous and renowned tongues in the world.”[[12]](#endnote-12) The teacher recommends eight: Hebrew and Syrian for their biblical associations, Arabian because “by it a man passeth well over the third part of the world,” Greek and Latin for the learning of the ancients, and Italian, Spanish, and French for the moderns.[[13]](#endnote-13) So far, with the exception of Eliot’s references to the practical uses of the Arabic language, the recommendations are fairly conventional. Even a century later, the poet John Milton’s nephew would record how, over the years of his blindness, Milton’s daughters were “condemn’d to the performance of Reading” to him in a variety of languages, “viz. The Hebrew (and I think the Syriac), the Greek, the Latin, the Italian, Spanish and French.”[[14]](#endnote-14) It is what follows after this in Eliot’s dialogue that demands attention. “Among these tongues is there not some which are farre more noble and glorious then other some?” asks the student, and on being told that Hebrew and Italian are the best among the ancient and modern languages, he exclaims: “I am of opinion truly that there is no tongue in the world more heroicall then that.”[[15]](#endnote-15) The teacher, however, is rather more reserved:

“I will not be of your mind therein.”

“Why so?”

“Haue you never in your life heard a Mexican; a Moscovite, a Tartare; a Iapanois or one of China speake his language?”

“Neuer in my life.”

“In the yeare eightie-foure or five *Xistus quintus* being Pope of Rome; there were foure yong princes or kings, or sonnes of the kings of Japan, which came from these countries of the Orient to Rome with the Jesuist *Mesquite* an Italian who had conuerted them, and brought them thether to do homage and to take the oth of obedience to the Pope. I heard them speake in passing along thorow the streetes: their words are almost all of one sillable, their speech princely, thundering, proud, glorious, and marvellous loftie.”[[16]](#endnote-16)

The sudden specificity of that last anecdote identifies a historical event. Eliot’s unnamed language teacher, it seems, is claiming to have been one of the hundreds who witnessed the delegates of the Tenshō embassy parading the streets of Rome. The naming of the pope places his supposed sighting after the death of Pope Gregory XIII on 10 April 1585 and the election of Pope Sixtus V on 24 April 1585, possibly following the coronation Mass of the new pope at St. Peter’s basilica on 1 May, at which the members of the first Japanese embassy to Rome and to the Catholic princes of Europe had played a prominent role. The Tenshō embassy (1582–90) consisted of four boys from noble Japanese families who were converted to Christianity by the Jesuits. Mancio Itō, Michael (Miguel) Chijiwa, Martin Hara, and Julian (Julião) Nakaura were between thirteen and fifteen years old and selected and supported by three powerful *daimyos* (feudal lords) for the long and arduous journey. The inspiration for their visit, however, was European rather than Japanese in its origins. It had been masterminded by Alessandro Valignano (1539–1606), the Society of Jesus visitor to the East Indies, who had authority over all Jesuit missions from the Cape of Good Hope to Japan.[[17]](#endnote-17) As Valignano wrote in a letter of instructions to Friar Nuno Rodrigues, who accompanied the boys, “In sending the boys to Portugal and Rome our intention is twofold. Firstly it is to seek the help, both temporal and spiritual, which we need in Japan. Secondly it is to make the Japanese aware of the glory and greatness of Christianity, and of the majesty of the princes and lords who profess it, and of the greatness and wealth of our kingdoms and cities, and of the honour in which our religion is held and the power it possesses in them.”[[18]](#endnote-18)

In addition to seeking to obtain financial aid for Jesuit endeavors from Catholic monarchs such as Philip II and from the papacy, and impressing the Japanese themselves with the proper credit and authority due to the Jesuit mission, there was a more covert aim. This lay in Valignano’s plans to use the visit to garner support for a Jesuit monopoly on the Christianizing mission in Japan. Both Valignano and the Jesuit superior-general, fellow Neapolitan Claudio Acquaviva (1543–1615), therefore understandably wanted the embassy to keep a relatively low public profile. Their instincts were proven right, since the boys were not formally accredited representatives of the state, and as such the legitimacy of the embassy, and even the authenticity of their identities, was subject to challenges from the very beginning. Thirty years later, those accusations were still being circulated by figures such as the head of the English factory in Japan, Richard Cocks (1566–1624), who wrote to Robert Cecil on 10 December 1614:

I know not whether it came to your Lor’ notice heretofore or no, . . . that in anno 1584 the Jesuistes carried 3 Japans from hence w’th them into Spaine, geving it out they were sonns or nephews unto 3 kinges, viz. of Bongo, Arima and Umbra. Whereupon the King of Spaine gave them the order of knighthood w’th many rich presentes, as other princes in Spaine and Italie did the lyke, amongst whome the Pope was not behindhand. But the truth is that these 3 Japans were neither kinges’ sonns nor yet nobly borne, but of base parentage only sett on (or subborned) by the foresaid Jesuistes, whoe received all the gifts and presentes w’ch were geven them for their owne private benefite or use. But the Franciscan frires, ariveing here afterwards, learned out the truth of the matter and advised the Pope thereof, whoe (as it is said) made the Jesuistes to make hym large restetution.[[19]](#endnote-19)

Despite such suspicions, the boys attracted a great deal of largely positive attention in Catholic Europe as ambassadors, and were widely celebrated as the “sonns” of the emperor of Japan. England was a notable absent presence in these events. When the ailing Gregory XIII insisted on receiving his Japanese visitors with public fanfare at the Vatican in March 1585, “in honour of the ambassadors, and for the glory of the Holy See, the conversion of the Gentiles, and the confusion of heretics,” the identity of the heretics that he had in mind was made fairly clear in the very first formal Latin oration made by the Portuguese Jesuit scholar Gaspar Gonçalves.[[20]](#endnote-20) The familiar description of “The island of England and the Britons separated from all the world” was cited as an explicit contrast and parallel to the island nation of Japan.[[21]](#endnote-21) As an account printed much later by Samuel Purchas and written by Luís Fróis, Gonçalves’s fellow Portuguese scholar and Jesuit missionary, notes, Gonçalves’s oration presented the demonstration of faith represented by the Japanese boys as the Roman Church’s triumphant reclamation of what it had lost through England’s break from the Catholic faith, “comparing and preferring this Embassage with that of . . . the conuersion of Britaine by the first Gregorie.”[[22]](#endnote-22) It has been long assumed that Protestant England displayed a characteristic and acute lack of interest in this embassy, as it did toward Japan as a whole, and that fleeting references to it emerged only in the wake of the Saris voyage in 1613–14. Its appearance in this French-language manual printed in England in 1593, however, overlooked, hints at a different story.

TEXTUAL TRAFFIC: JAPAN IN ENGLISH PRINT

Eliot’s idiosyncratic reference aside, evidence of English knowledge about Japan in this period is admittedly elusive. Printed sources are few and far between. As Donald Lach notes, “apart from some very brief notices in Dutch accounts, no substantial description of Japan by a non-Catholic Northern European appeared before the publication of Samuel Purchas’s *Pilgrimes* in 1625.”[[23]](#endnote-23) It is evident, for instance, that prior to the 1600s, English activity in Asia was limited, and, consequently, so was the knowledge that such activity would have produced. There are four major sources in print from this early period identified by Lach and Massarella, among others.[[24]](#endnote-24) The earliest among these is Richard Willes’s significantly expanded revision of Richard Eden’s *Decades of the new world* (1555). Printed in 1577 as *The history of trauayle in the West and East Indies*, Willes’s text presents Japan as a country where “people [are] tractable, ciuile, wyttye, courteous, without deceyte, in vertue and honest conuersation exceedyng all other nations lately discouered.”[[25]](#endnote-25) An Oxford-educated Jesuit who had renounced Catholicism after his return to England in 1572, Willes created his account of “the noble Iland Giapan” out of a rough synthesis of the Jesuit accounts with which he was familiar.[[26]](#endnote-26) These included letters by Francis Xavier and Luís Fróis, some of which he acknowledges to have received from his “old acquainted friend,” the Italian Jesuit scholar Giovanni Pietro Maffei.[[27]](#endnote-27)

Almost a decade later, in 1588, when Thomas Cavendish returned from his circumnavigation of the world with much fanfare, the next substantial text was dedicated to him. Robert Parke’s translation of Juan González de Mendoza’s account in his *Historie of the great and mightie kingdom of China* (1588) urged Cavendish to make use of the knowledge of the “two other young fellowes of good capacitie, borne in the mightie Iland of Iapon, (which hereafter may serue as our interpretors in our first traficke thither).”[[28]](#endnote-28) The reference here is one of the few contemporary textual references that survive of a significant arrival: two Japanese ship’s boys, Christopher (Cristóbal) and Cosmas (Cosme), had been captured by Cavendish during his immensely successful attack on the *Santa Ana*, one of the largest and richest galleons of the Manila trade, and brought back to England.[[29]](#endnote-29) In the dedicatory letter to Sir Francis Walsingham prefacing his monumental *Principall navigations, voyages and discoveries of the English nation* (1589), Richard Hakluyt (ca. 1552–1616) would also mention the momentous recent arrival of “the borne naturalles of Japan.” “Is it not as strange,” Hakluyt wrote, that they were “here to be seen, agreeing with our climate, speaking our language, and informing us of the state of their eastern habitations?”[[30]](#endnote-30) Francis Pretty’s account of Cavendish’s first voyage in the second, much-expanded edition of Hakluyt’s compendium, *The p*rincipal navigations, voyages, traffiques, and discoveries of the English nation(1598–1600), mentions them as “two yong lads borne in Iapon, which could both wright and reade their owne language, the eldest being about 20 yeers olde was named Christopher, the other was called Cosmus, about 17 yeeres of age, both of very good capacitie.”[[31]](#endnote-31) It is possible that the widespread use of the term “Indian” to denote people of Asian origin may conceal the presence of other such Japanese mariners in English historical documents, but the references to Christopher and Cosmas are the very first printed reports in English of Japanese people to have reached England. They are believed to have died along with Cavendish during his disastrous second voyage in 1591–92.

Hakluyt, whose interest in Japan had been a long-standing part of his attempts to encourage the English trade of woolen cloth in Asia, would add a scattered but careful collection of other recent accounts to the fleeting glimpse of these elusive figures that his preface provided. It is evident that he was already gathering information in 1584. A letter he wrote in Paris to Sir Francis Walsingham in January 1584 records, “One Sinior Andreas borne in Savoy is nowe heare in Paris, which hath bin lately in the Island of Japan, with whom by meanes of Mr. Doctor Pena, I shal have conference within a day or twoe.”[[32]](#endnote-32) By the end of the sixteenth century, the resources that he could offer the readers of the *Principal navigations* included, among others, Cesare Federici’s account of the voyage to Japan from Macao, Ralph Fitch’s reference to Japan in his account of the first English voyage to India, more letters by Luís Fróis about Toyotomi Hideyoshi’s intentions to conquer “the mighty kingdom of Coray” (Korea), and “A briefe note concerning the extreme Northern province of Japan called Zuegara.” At the same time, Hakluyt also encouraged the translator William Phillip and the printer John Wolfe to produce an English translation of the Dutch traveler Jan Huygen van Linschoten’s *Itinerario* (1596) as *Iohn Huighen van Linschoten, his discours of voyages into ye Easte & West Indies* (1598). Crucially for English mariners, this contained a number of descriptions derived from Portuguese *roteiro* (rutters) of the routes of voyages that had sailed to Japan — explicit data essential for the English endeavors that followed.

While the information offered by Willes, Parke, Hakluyt, and Linschoten may be the best known and most widely circulated, it is possible to add to them a significant number of scattered instances elsewhere, both textual and cartographic, that challenge the existing view of English understanding of Japan before 1613 as being limited either to cursory specialist knowledge or general indifference. Roughly around the time of Willes’s text, William Bourne’s *Treasure for traueilers* (1578) gave the latitude and longitude of “the Ilande of Iapan neare the coast of China.”[[33]](#endnote-33) The next year, Marco Polo’s passing reference to Zipangu would find its way into print as the “Ilande named Ciampagu” in the first English translation of Polo’s voyages (1579), as would Garcia de Escalante’s reference to the silver mining of Japan, through John Frampton’s translation.[[34]](#endnote-34) There are standard encyclopedic texts: Stephan Batman’s *Batman uppon Bartholome* (1582), used by countless contemporaries, including poets like Edmund Spenser and William Shakespeare, contains a description of Japan under the general heading of “India”; the equally popular *Briefe description of the whole world* (1599) by George Abbot, master of University College at Oxford and later archbishop of Canterbury, describes the islands in the “seas adjoyning to the East Indies,” including “a greate Iland called Iapona or Iapan: the people whereof, are much of the same nature with the men of China. This countrey was first discouered by the Iesuites, who in a blinde zeale haue trauailed vnto the farthest partes of the worlde, to winne men to their religion; this Ilande is thought to bee very rich.”[[35]](#endnote-35) Richness is a focal point also in the anonymous translation of António Galvão’s account, published with Hakluyt’s encouragement, with its reference to the “gold, silver, and other riches” of Japan.[[36]](#endnote-36) This was available in print in 1601, at the same time as Robert Johnson’s translation of Giovanni Botero’s account in the *Relationi Universali* (1591–96) as the *Trauellers breuiat*, in which Johnson augmented Botero’s older dependence on Giovanni Pietro Maffei’s *Historiarum Indicarum Libri XVI* (1588) with a collection of new information from Willes’s *History of trauayle*, the letters of Luís Fróis, and elsewhere.

Hakluyt’s prefatory address to Sir Robert Cecil in the translation of Galvão also flags another significant development. Adopting a standard humanist practice, Hakluyt urged Cecil to plot the exploits of the Portuguese and Spanish visually on a map in order to understand the enormousness of the space they encompassed. His letter asked Cecil to “take a sea card or a mappe of the world” at his “convenient leisure,” “and carie your eie upon the coast of Africa from Cape de Non, lying on the mayne in 29. degrees of northerly latitude, and follow the shore about the Cape of Buona Sperança till you come to the mouth of The Redde Sea, and passing thence along by the countrey of Arabia crosse over to India, and doubling Cape Comory compasse the gulfe of Bengala, & shooting by the citie of Malacca through The streite of Cincapura, coast al the south of Asia to the northeast part of China, and comprehend in this view all the Islands from The Açores and Madera in the West, to The Malucoes, The Philippinas, and Japan in the East.”[[37]](#endnote-37)

The recommendation of the use of a map is timely. The island of Cipangu had appeared in different incarnations in numerous cartographic representations and maps since the fourteenth century. Its presence is noted in the 1375 Catalan Atlas and Fra Mauro’s world map (ca. 1450), for instance, as well as Martin Waldseemuller’s *Tabula Superiorus Indiae & Tarteriae Maiorus* (1522); but contemporary cartographic data about the coastlines of South Asia and the Far East was closely guarded by the Portuguese. From 1584, however, Abraham Ortelius, with whom Hakluyt was in close contact, had begun to include more details on these regions in the successive editions of his monumental *Theatrum Orbis Terrarium*. In the 1595 edition, he had included his first individual map of Japan. Based on the work of the Portuguese Jesuit cartographer Luís Teixeira, “Iaponiae insulae descriptio” correctly located the Japanese islands between 30 degrees and 40 degrees north latitude. By the time Hakluyt wrote his epistle to Robert Cecil in the translation of Galvão in 1601, the Teixeira-Ortelius map had become the model for most contemporary European maps that followed. Along with the map of the Far East that Linschoten had compiled in his *Itinerario* (1596; English trans. 1598) from the most up-to-date charts of cartographers like Pieter Plancius, Fernão Vaz Dourado, and Bartolomeu Lasso, it offered readers like Cecil the possibility of a significantly more accurate visual grasp of a region that had long seemed beyond their reach.

It is evident from this gradual accumulation of textual and visual material, fragmented as it may be, that by 1604 Japan and its political relationships with its neighboring states were certainly not as unknown to English readers as one may assume simply on the basis of extant major printed sources. They were familiar enough, for instance, to serve the historian and scholar Sir John Hayward as a telling example of how political neighbors should not behave. Arguing in *A treatise of union of the two realmes of England and Scotland* that “in transitorie matters wee separate not from the custome of those, with whom wee live,” Hayward notes, “Our late travailers doe report, that the inhabitants of the Iland *Japan* hold immortall and mercilesse variance with the people of *China*: and the rather to manifest the same, they differ from them in all the ceremonies of their behaviour.”[[38]](#endnote-38)

The quality of information that such texts as Hayward’s provided was admittedly uneven, and the sources of such information were indirect and often obscure. Yet they contributed to a textual and cultural environment in which the English, despite their much-lamented inertia and belatedness in the domain of global enterprise, would have grown familiar with the idea of Japan as a major entity, with its own complex structures of power and governance, rich in resources, and open to trade. With time, as English mercantile initiative in the East gained urgency, that perception became a part of the collective knowledge behind the shaping of both state and trade policy. English geographers had long argued that since Spain and Portugal had essentially split access to the lucrative Eastern trade between themselves through the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494, England would necessarily have to carve out an alternative northern route, either by a Northwest Passage through the Canadian arctic, or by a yet more arduous and near-impossible Northeast Passage along the Russian arctic coast. It is evident that Cathay (China) featured predominantly in the attempts that geographers and scholars like Hakluyt and John Dee made to offer the matter and justification for ventures such as Martin Frobisher’s multiple endeavors in the northwest and Arthur Pet and Charles Jackman’s venture in the northeast. But the presence of Japan is noticeable, recurrently and explicitly acknowledged, even if overshadowed or conflated with the space that China occupied in the European imagination.

MANUSCRIPT DISCOVERIES

That place accorded to Japan in English geographical understanding of the world becomes even clearer when one looks at the cumulative evidence of contemporary manuscript records. Around 1576–80, John Dee’s careful formulation of a historically validated argument regarding the right and viability of English imperialist ambitions had begun with the *General and rare memorials pertayning to the perfect arte of navigation* (1576, printed 1577), followed by “Of Famous and Rich Discoveries” (1577) and “A brief Remembraunce of Sondrye foreyne Regions, discovered, inhabited, and partlie conquereed by the Subjects of this Brytish Monarchie” (ca. 1580). At the same time, Dee also embarked on a project to prepare a cluster of manuscript texts expressly for Elizabeth I and her senior advisors on the same subject, which was later turned into a manuscript compilation entitled *Brytanici Imperii Limites* (MSS ca. 1576–78, compilation ca. 1593). While Dee had mentioned Japan in passing in his previous treatises as a site of trade and exploration on which English enterprise could focus, one text within this later manuscript compilation contains a significant spatial visualization of the country.[[39]](#endnote-39) Revising the projections of Ortelius and Mercator of the region around Cathay, Dee’s text “Concerning this Example of Geographical Reform” refers to a now-lost “Diagram,” or map. The textual description of this image, as William Sherman has observed, is strikingly reminiscent of the Ditchley portrait of the queen standing on a map of England, or the Armada portrait, which shows her hand triumphantly resting on a globe.[[40]](#endnote-40)

Dee’s description suggests that the “Diagram” depicted Elizabeth I literally embodying the potential expanse of her imperial power, from “Cambalu, the capital of Cathay” on the “left-hand side of your majesty’s throne,” to “the coast of Atlantis” on the right, and the “Strait of Anian” at her feet. It conflates Japan with the legendary island of silver mentioned by Pliny and places it at the central point as the jewel in the crown of incipient British imperial ambition, albeit “concealed”: “Under your crown, the most glorious in the whole world (almost in the middle of it), is concealed an island, once known as Chryse, but now commonly called Japan (but incredibly, spoken of by the great M. Paulus Venetus as Zipangu), the object of easily the first voyages of this century, undertaken on the initiative of the princes of Castile.”[[41]](#endnote-41) Though the ambition of British imperial control of Japan would not be explored in the years that followed, its very centrality in Dee’s conceptualization of imperial Britain’s remapping of the world is telling. In the reign of Elizabeth’s successor, it was this gathering interest that would finally send an embassy from Britain to Japan and lead to the establishment of the English factory.

Yet another, later reference offers evidence of the way in which Japan was finding its way into British geopolitical conceptualizations of the world. A two-part late Elizabethan treatise, the “Relations of Moderne states” in the Harleian MS 6249, offers a significant section on Japan, devoting a part, “Of the relations of Moderne States. The second booke. Asia,” to “The Kinge of Iaponia.”[[42]](#endnote-42) As Takau Shimada has noted, part of this appears to be an early or alternative version (composed around 1595–1601) of Richard Johnson’s translation of Botero, mentioned above.[[43]](#endnote-43) Like the accounts of Willes and Botero before it, the compilation offers a detailed geographical, social, and political description of Japan that highlights its civility. “For gravitie and curtesie they gyve not place to the Spaniardes,” it asserts, and a marginal note records that “they are verie neate and fine, and use forkes when they eate for cleanliness, as the[y] doe in Italy,” even while identifying differences: the bearded *ainu* people of the north of Japan, its political regimen that “dyfereth very far from all other forms of government which are vsed in Europe,” and the custom by which “they take great delighte in water mingled with a certeine powder which is very pretiouse, which they call *Chia* [tea].”[[44]](#endnote-44)

A final example, from a somewhat different genre, appears in Folger MS V.a.321. In 1596, a fleet under the command of Benjamin Wood set out for China bearing a letter of introduction addressed to the emperor of China from Elizabeth I; but the fleet was lost on the way. Four years later, when Hakluyt printed the royal letter in Latin from Elizabeth I and its English translation in the third volume of the *Principal Navigations* (1600), the accompanying headnote recorded that it had been “sent in the yere 1596 vnto the great Emperor of China by M. Richard Allot and M. Thomas Bromefield marchants of the citie of London,” but no response to it had been received “since the moneth of February next after their departure.”[[45]](#endnote-45) Elizabeth’s letter was addressed to “the most high and soueraigne Prince the most puissant Gouernour of the great kingdome of China, the chiefest Emperour in those parts of Asia and of the Ilands adioyning, and the great monarke of the orientall regions of the world.”[[46]](#endnote-46) In the Folger manuscript, a copy of a letter from 1600, written in Italian, claims to be the long-awaited response from China. It has been pointed out that, given Benjamin Wood never reached China in the first place, this response is most likely to be an elaborate joke, possibly inspired by the publication of Elizabeth’s letter in Hakluyt’s compendium.[[47]](#endnote-47) But even as it asserts that its sender is the emperor of China, Japan appears as an implicit presence in the Folger letter. The text repeats a confusion that had accompanied the actual documents of 1596, identifying the Chinese monarch as “the most Mighty and Victorious Prince Taicosama,” the established title for Toyotomi Hideyoshi in European accounts of the period.[[48]](#endnote-48)

Yet more references emerge when one examines the documents of the Calendar of State Papers, Foreign Series. It has been generally assumed, for instance, that the Tenshō embassy of the 1580s, which John Eliot so casually evoked in his language manual, was not known in England until significantly later, even though this delegation of the four Japanese boys was treated with full ambassadorial status throughout Portugal, Spain, and Italy, and generated a flurry of printed accounts in Continental Europe.[[49]](#endnote-49) Attending to the Elizabethan State Papers of the relevant months, however, clearly reveals the extent to which the Elizabethan government was equipped to follow the movement of the Japanese boys across Europe. Among the newsletters collected by the state, there are recorded reports of the boys’ reception in Madrid on 11 November 1584. “The four Japanese Indians, amongst whom are the two sons of the King of Japan,” it is reported, “are white and of very good intelligence, and when they return to their own land it is hoped they will be of much benefit to Christianity, because being Christians and such great men, they may easily convert all those Indies by the respect and authority they have amongst them.”[[50]](#endnote-50) Following the accounts stored in the State Papers over the next year, it is possible to track the boys in Rome, being presented with consecrated rose, sword, and hat by the pope and being created papal knights.[[51]](#endnote-51) There are reports of their visit to Loretto and to Venice, where they were “made much of by this Republic.”[[52]](#endnote-52) They were spotted enjoying the performance of a comedy along with their Jesuit mentors and, finally, were reported to have embarked on their voyage home in a newsletter dated August 1585.[[53]](#endnote-53)

Further explicit evidence that the Tenshō embassy had come to the attention of the Elizabethan state can be found in another remarkable manuscript compilation associated with Richard Hakluyt, which has also attracted very little scholarly attention. Hakluyt was in Paris from September 1583 until July 1584, where he served as chaplain to the English ambassador, Sir Edward Stafford. In the autumn of 1584, during a brief return to London, he prepared and presented Elizabeth I with a treatise supporting Walter Raleigh’s plans for colonizing Virginia, entitled *A particuler discourse concerninge the greate necessitie and manifolde commodyties that are like to growe to this realme of Englande by the westerne discoveries lately attempted*, now more commonly known as *The Discourse on Western Planting*.[[54]](#endnote-54) The *Discourse* has received ample attention as one of the best-known documents of English colonial ambitions in the Americas, but Asia is never far off from Hakluyt’s conjectures. Given that for Hakluyt, as for many of his contemporaries, both the attempts to carve out the Northeast and Northwest Passages were intrinsically linked to the prospect of opening up access to Eastern trade, it is not surprising that the seventeenth chapter of this treatise argues “that by these Colonies the Northwest passage to Cathaio and China may easely quickly and perfectly be searched oute aswell by river and overlande, as by sea, for proofe whereof here are quoted and alleaged divers rare Testymonies oute of the three volumes of voyadges gathered by Ramusius and other grave authors.”[[55]](#endnote-55) It is a connection between New World and Asian ventures that stem from the discourse’s very origins. After all, in the same letter to Walsingham written during his stay in Paris in 1584, mentioned above, Hakluyt’s reference to his consultation with the “Sinior Andreas [who] hath bin lately in the island of Japan” is immediately followed by the assurance that “diverse other intelligences tending toward the furtherance of our western planting and discoverie I looke for from sundrie places very shortly.”[[56]](#endnote-56)

The survival of a manuscript in the State Papers of the Elizabethan period that has attracted some attention from Hakluyt scholars is therefore particularly interesting.[[57]](#endnote-57) This manuscript contains the first twenty of the twenty-one main chapter headings of Hakluyt’s *Discourse*. As the accompanying unsigned note explains, “These xx severall tytles are the heades of the chapters contayned in the booke of S[i]r Wal[ter] Raighleyes voyage to the West Indies, w[hi]ch, because of the rareness of matter therein conteined, and also for that few or none (her Majesty excepte) hath seen, I thought it best to offer y[our] Worship my labor therein as one who best deserveth the same: and therefore have sent yow the titles to know whether yow lyke of the same or noe: This bearer and author of the foresaid worke, Mr Haklyuit, doth at this instant present the booke written all w[ith] my hand, to Mr Secretary who hath very earnestly often tymes wrytt for yt, and so hath the Earle of Leicester; but, as yet this is the first excription, and yf y[our] Worship please yow shall have the second, when I shall understand so.”[[58]](#endnote-58)

Archival evidence shows that multiple copies of the *Discourse* were produced. The first of these was presented to Queen Elizabeth in October 1584 (now lost), and a second copy to Walsingham around May 1585, when Hakluyt returned from Paris. It is likely, from the wording of the note, that this manuscript was produced around the same time.[[59]](#endnote-59) The timing is significant, because what makes the manuscript notable in the present context is a Latin text that immediately follows the above-mentioned note. Written in what appears to be the same hand, it contains a set of documents surrounding the papal reception of the Tenshō embassy that took place in March 1585 and was published in the same year in Rome. The documents are derived from the *Acta Consistorii Publice Exhibiti* (Acts of a publicly held assembly, 1585), which formed the chief source of information about the event and include the opening Latin oration delivered by Gaspar Gonçalves; the three letters from the *daimyos* Ōmura Sumitada Bartolomeu, Ōtomo Sōrin Francisco, and Arima Harunobu Protásio; and a short address on behalf of Pope Gregory XIII by Antonio Boccapaduli. It also includes Gonçalves’s pointed comparison of one island nation with another that was mentioned above, with its assertion that the loss of “divisos orbe Britan[n]os,” converted to Christianity under Gregory the Great, had been replaced now in the felicity of the Catholic Church by Japan under Gregory XIII, exchanging one island for many.[[60]](#endnote-60)

While this particular manuscript of the contents of Hakluyt’s *Discourse* provides striking proof of the speed with which knowledge about Japan reached the English state, other documents demonstrate the continued currency and range of circulation of that knowledge. Even a decade later, the memory of the embassy would continue to resonate among those involved in affairs of the state. Among the papers of Robert Cecil collected long after their departure, for instance, is a copy of a letter written in 1597 by the scholar Sir Henry Cuffe, secretary to Cecil’s rival and the soon-to-be-doomed Earl of Essex, addressed to his friend and mentor Sir Henry Savile.[[61]](#endnote-61) It reports, “The King of ‘Giapone,’ whose friendship of late years has been the chiefest securing of the ‘Isole Philippine,’ is now revolted from Christianity and professeth open hostility against him; and when the Jesuits presumptuously braved him with the power of Spain, in a fury he crucified seven of them, and seized a Spanish ship which lay in one of his ports, containing a million of treasure besides other merchandises. So that if any expedition were sent into those parts against Spain, men might assure themselves of safe landing, victualling, &c. from that King.”[[62]](#endnote-62) The reference is likely to be to the shipwreck in 1596 of the galleon San Felipe at Urado Bay in Tosa, en route from Manila to Acapulco. The ship and its cargo were confiscated by the Japanese, which led to considerable tension. The following year, Toyotomi Hideyoshi (i.e., “Taicosama”) ordered the crucifixion of six European Franciscans, three Japanese Jesuits, and seventeen Japanese Christian laymen in what would prove to be the beginnings of Japan’s restriction of foreign trade and political negotiations. At the same time, the document bears witness to the slow accretion of knowledge that this essay has been tracing so far. A note in the margin reminds the reader of the past connections represented by the Tenshō embassy: “His sons came to Rome anno [8]5 and were solemnly received by Gregory the 13th and after by Sextus quintus.”[[63]](#endnote-63)

In a recent article, Timon Screech has argued that the agents of the English East India Company played a significant role in instigating the expulsion of Catholic missionaries from early Edo Japan in the seventeenth century by actively stirring up Japanese anxieties about civic unrest. In particular, he notes the potential involvement of the head of the English factory, Richard Cocks, in Robert Cecil’s European informant network during a previous long sojourn in Bayonne. Screech argues that Cocks, whose letter to Cecil about the doubtful diplomatic status of the Tenshō embassy has been mentioned earlier in this essay, was “the first in Japan with an intensely close grasp of European politics and of the control of Catholicism,” and played a key role in presenting influential contacts at the court of Tokugawa Hidetada with an image of the Jesuits as troublemakers who specialized in “sturing vp the subjects to rebel against their naturall prince,” for which “they were all banished out of England.”[[64]](#endnote-64) Anti-Catholic texts and images deliberately included among the cargo sent to the English factory may have helped to support such accusations with material evidence.[[65]](#endnote-65) But if Screech’s contention is correct, then much of the understanding of Japan’s relationship with Catholicism and with the Jesuit missionaries in particular, which fueled such English anti-Jesuit endeavors, would have been the result of a process of slow accretion, one that is already discernible in these early accounts maintained in the State Papers.

ENCOUNTERS “IN PASSING”

Someone like John Eliot, the translator and language teacher with whose text this essay began, would not have access to such documents. Events, however, ensured Japan’s continued presence in the worldview of any English subject with an interest in foreign affairs and trade. Eliot was certainly one such figure. He had traveled widely through France, Italy, and possibly Spain, and like a number of his well-traveled contemporaries, he may have served as an agent and informant before returning to England to earn a living as a language teacher and in-house translator of French tracts for the publisher John Wolfe.

For Eliot and his contemporaries, the recurrent, if intermittent, reminders of the significant presence of Japan on the horizon of English explorations were likely to be a mingling of speculation and spectacle. There were two moments in particular, both associated with significant confirmations of growing English maritime confidence, that are of particular relevance. The first of these is the arrival of the Japanese boys taken from the *Santa Ana* by Cavendish in 1588, mentioned earlier, which occurred immediately after the defeat of the Spanish Armada. It was an event that attracted considerable public attention, given Cavendish’s hugely theatrical entry when he sailed into Greenwich and entertained the queen at a banquet on board his ship. According to one eyewitness report sent back to Spain in November 1588, “Every sailor had a gold chain round his neck, and the sails of the ship were of blue damask, the standard of cloth of gold and blue silk. It was as if Cleopatra had been resuscitated.”[[66]](#endnote-66)

The second moment occurred four years later, in 1592, the year before the printing of Eliot’s *Ortho-epia Gallica*, when the wealth of the Far East and particularly of Japan would have been brought to mind again by another highly publicized English maritime success. In the autumn of that year, ships financed by a syndicate that included Raleigh and the queen acquired the largest English prize to date — the Portuguese carrack *Madre de Dios*, captured at the Azores. The news of the treasure spread fast and wide as soon as the ship was brought to harbor at Dartmouth, since not only the locals, but a great influx of people from London and elsewhere gathered almost immediately for a spot of speculative entrepreneurial looting. Dispatched by his father William Cecil, Lord Burghley, to stem the madness, Robert Cecil wrote back, “I assure your Lordship I could smell them almost, such hath been the spoils of amber and musk amongst them.”[[67]](#endnote-67) Among the cargo on board the ship was a copy of *De Missione Legatorum Iaponensium ad Romanam Curiam* (A dialogue concerning the mission of the Japanese ambassadors to the Roman curia), a series of humanist dialogues offering an account of the Tenshō embassy and other associated documents, written by Alessandro Valignano and fellow Jesuit Eduardo de Sande. This is the text that Richard Hakluyt highlights in his dedicatory letter to Robert Cecil in the second edition of the *Principal Navigations*, printed in 1599:

And because our chiefe desire is to find out ample vent of our wollen cloth, the naturall comoditie of this our Realme, the fittest places, which in al my readings and obseruations I find for that purpose, are the manifold Islands of *Iapan*, & the Northern parts of *China* . . . and therefore I haue here inserted two speciall Treatises of the sayd Countries, [one of which] I hold to be the most exact of those parts that is yet come to light, which was printed in Latine in *Macao* a citie of *China*, in China-paper, in the yeere a thousand fiue hundred and ninetie, and was intercepted in the great Carack called *Madre de Dios* two yeeres after, inclosed in a case of sweete Cedar wood, and lapped vp almost an hundred fold in fine calicut-cloth, as though it had beene some incomparable iewell.[[68]](#endnote-68)

It is not unlikely that John Eliot would have caught something of the buzz of the capture of the *Madre de Dios*, from which Hakluyt had acquired his highly prized copy of *De Missione*. After all, Eliot worked for the printer John Wolfe, and had translated a number of French texts for Wolfe; the *Ortho-epia Gallica* itself was printed for Wolfe by Richard Field. As Sonia Massai has recently argued, Wolfe was very well connected with contemporary printers and print practices in Continental Europe.[[69]](#endnote-69) He was also closely connected to Hakluyt. It was Wolfe who, on Hakluyt’s recommendation and encouragement, printed Mendoza’s treatise on China, translated by Robert Parke as *The historie of the great and mightie kingdome of China* in 1588. Ten years later, in 1598, he printed William Phillip’s translation of Linschoten’s *Itinerario*, again with Hakluyt’s encouragement. It is also worth noting that while Eliot derives most of his dialogue on “the dignitie of Orators, and excellencie of tongues” in his language manual from Simon Gaulart’s commentaries on the “Babylon” section of the French poet Guillame du Bartas’s hugely influential unfinished epic *La Sepmaine*, the single substantial addition that he makes is that oddly immediate reference to “the foure yong princes or kings, or sonnes of the kings of Japan.” He may have had a personal interest in this Jesuit text: Frances Yates’s work on Eliot and John Florio suggests that the tensions between the two on the subject of foreign-language teaching in England may have had deeper political roots, since there is a possibility that Eliot may have been employed by the Jesuits.[[70]](#endnote-70) While it is fruitless to speculate whether the circulating news may have reminded him of an actual firsthand encounter “in passing” during his Continental sojourn, Eliot’s text is certainly the earliest report of an English view of the people and the language of Japan to be printed in England outside the context of geographical treatises.

MISSED CONNECTIONS

This essay has followed the traces — and they are often just that — of England’s encounters with Japan before the Eighth Voyage’s more formal endeavor in 1613–14. Like Eliot’s example, most of them are incidental, peripheral, and fragmentary. References “in passing” that nevertheless have left their textual mark, they resist being placed within a single narrative framework. I would like to attend to a final trace that illuminates a previously overlooked moment in history that posits an even greater challenge: a missed connection in this passage of people and texts, a silence rather than a narrative, that nevertheless demands attention.

The Tenshō embassy arrived in Portuguese-dominated Goa on the west coast of India on 28 November 1583. They were lodged at the Jesuit college of St. Paul and were formally presented to the Portuguese governor, Francisco de Mascarenhas, at the grand palace of the viceroy. Valignano had received orders from the superior-general, Claudio Acquaviva, that he was to stay in Goa as the superior of the Jesuit mission in India rather than accompanying the boys to Europe as he had planned. This meant alternative arrangements had to be made before the boys finally left Goa on 20 December 1583 for a brief stop at Cochin, and from there to Lisbon. Another party arrived in Goa hard on the heels of the Japanese embassy, albeit less enthusiastically welcomed by either the Jesuits or the ruling Portuguese. This was a small group of Englishmen led by the veteran traders John Newbery and Ralph Fitch, and funded by Sir Edward Osborne and Richard Staper, two leading London merchants at the forefront of the newly chartered Turkey Company’s interests in the lucrative Middle Eastern market. Their aim was to gather information on the India trade, which, seventeen years later, would contribute to the East India Company’s appeal to Elizabeth I for its royal charter, finally granted to the company in 1600.[[71]](#endnote-71)

Unsurprisingly, the Portuguese were suspicious of this group from the very beginning. They were accused of espionage and questioned early in their journey at Ormuz, before finding passage to Goa on the ship of the former advocate-general of Ormuz, who was returning to Goa after his tour of duty. It has been a puzzle for scholars of this voyage that no clear rationale has been found as to why the English were imprisoned again, for almost a month, immediately upon their arrival in Goa. All that one learns from Ralph Fitch’s account, later printed by Hakluyt, is that “at our comming we were cast into the prison, and examined before the Justice and demanded for letters, and were charged to be spies, but they could proove nothing by us.”[[72]](#endnote-72)

Part of the reason for that imprisonment becomes clearer if the dates of the Englishmen’s ordeal are juxtaposed with those of the Tenshō embassy’s sojourn in Goa. The Japanese visitors remained in Goa from 28 November to 20 December. During this time, Valignano set down instructions, apart from the explication of the twofold principal aim of the embassy mentioned earlier, in the letter dated 12 December 1583 for Nuno Rodrigues, who was to accompany the boys instead of him: these instructions included sheltering the boys from seeing or knowing anything that would provide a “conceito contrario” (“a contradictory impression”) of the intended glorification of the Jesuit mission and the Catholic Church.[[73]](#endnote-73) Given that the Jesuit mission was eager to present the Japanese with the impression of a powerful, unified Church, it is perhaps understandable that the small handful of problematic Protestant Englishmen — clear reminders of the split within the Church — would have been more than a passing embarrassment.

Fitch and his companions were imprisoned immediately upon their arrival on 29 November, the day after the Japanese contingent reached Goa. The English group then “continued in prison,” as Fitch notes, “untill the two and twentie of December, and then we were set at libertie, putting in sureties for two thousand duckats not to depart the towne,” two days after the departure of the embassy.[[74]](#endnote-74) Fitch never saw the Japanese, nor did he really understand the Portuguese decision to imprison them again so soon after the interrogation in Ormuz. Their paths, so very nearly overlapping, were kept separate by Portuguese intervention. In the only other external report of the English group’s troubles in Goa, the two groups also remain contiguous yet separate. Jan Huyghen van Linschoten, who was instrumental in acquiring the “sureties” for the Englishmen, gives the account of their adventures in his *Itinerario.* In the English translation of William Phillips, the paragraph that immediately follows, begins: “About the same time there came into *Goa* from the Iland of *Iapan*, certaine Iesuites and with them, thrée Princes, being the children of certaine Kings of that country.”[[75]](#endnote-75) That textual juxtaposition is the closest that the English come to the Japanese in this instance: the result obviously cannot be counted as an encounter. Yet that the presence of each subtly inflected the actions and the movement of the other despite their mutual ignorance of each other’s presence is undeniable. It provides a telling empty space, a backdrop against which Portuguese and Jesuit responses to the arrival of the English in Japan make significantly more sense.

CONCLUSION

Taking a cue from John Eliot’s fleeting and unexpected reference to Japanese voices heard “in passing along thorow the streetes” in his dual-language textbook, this essay has drawn attention to a collection of documents. Some of them, like the manuscript content list of Hakluyt’s *Discourse*, are familiar from other contexts; others, like Eliot’s language manual, less so. While these help to reassess current understanding of the knowledge about Japan that circulated “in passing” in England before the 1613 voyage, the larger issue it raises, as this essay suggested in the beginning, is about the understanding of *encounter* itself.

There has been much scholarship in recent years on crosscultural encounters that has revealed the immense significance of individual agents and events. Reinserting the instances of knowledge that circulate “in passing” into the received picture of early English contact with Japan highlights what may otherwise have been subsumed by equating encounter with event in the process of attending to such moments. Knowledge of foreign regions and crosscultural encounter was not always necessarily produced through direct physical and geographical displacement and contact. Awareness of other cultures flows often through complex and circuitous routes, marking out a space of knowledge that is collective, tacit, and cumulative, progressing as much through conflicting information and contradictions as through agreement.

The problems attending attempts to acknowledge, retrieve, and record such traces are clear. Following the route of that often diffuse development is difficult, precisely because its constituent elements by their very nature resist narration. Bare glimpses on occasion, marked silence on others, contribute as much as the fragments of texts and voices. Acknowledging their collective import needs also to preserve the multivocal quality of that accumulation — peripheral, tentative, a thing of shreds and patches as the elusive presence of Japan in English texts reveals it to be. It is an evolving task that poses a particular kind of challenge, but it is one that demands attention.

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1. I wish to thank Timon Screech and Derek Massarella for their guidance and encouragement. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Virgil, 1:8–9 (*Eclogue* 1.67): “penitus toto divisos orbe Britannos.” On the trope of England as a separate world, see Bennett; Knapp, 34, 64–69. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Klekar, 94. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. “[Sir Thos. Wilson] to the King. Transmits letters received from his correspondent in Japan, although His Majesty said that the last letters, giving an extravagant description of the riches, &c. of the Japanese Empire, ‘were the loudest lyes he had ever heard.’” The National Archives, London (hereafter NA), State Papers (hereafter SP) 14/111 fol. 201. Described in Green, 108. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. An extensive collection of documents related to the English trade in Japan is available in Farrington. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. See, for instance, Vaughan; Fuller; Barbour; Mitchell; MacLean. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Fuller, 92. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Subrahmanyam, 212. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Ibid., 213. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. For Eliot’s dialogues on card games and tennis, see Eliot, 54–57, 59–61. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Yates, 139–73. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Eliot, 16. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Ibid., 22. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Phillips, xlii. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Eliot, 36. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Ibid., 36–37. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. On Valignano’s life, see Üçerler. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Pinto and Bernard, 395–96: “O fim q̃ se pretende nesta yda dos meninos a Portugal y a Roma consiste em duas cousas. A pr[imeir]a he buscar o remedio q̃ no temporal y no espiritual he necessario em Japaõ. A 2a [sic] he fazer capaçes os Japoẽs da gloria y grandeza da ley Christiana, y da magestade dos Principes y Senhores q̃ abracaraõ esta ley, y da grandeza y riqueza dos nossos Reynos y Cidades, y da honra y poder q̃ tem entre elles a nossa religiõ.” For further details of the embassy, see Massarella; Cooper; Brown. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Farrington, 257. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Moran, 10. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. Oratio Nomine Legatorum Japoniae Habita in Publico Consistorio Romano*, XXIII*, sig. B1v: “*“*Angliae insulam, & toto, vt ait ille, diuisos orbe Brita[n]nos.” [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. Purchas, 3:322 (“Japonian embassage to the Pope”). The letters from the daimyos presented at the papal audience, as well as the speeches made, were printed as the *Acta Consistorii Publice Exhibiti a S. D. N. Gregorio Papa XIII*. For details of contemporary reprints and translations, see Boscaro. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. Lach, 1998, 1,848. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. See, for instance, Lach, 1965, 651–729; Massarella. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. Willes, fol. 252. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. Ibid., fol. 251v. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. Ibid., fol. 254. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. Parke, sig. ¶2v. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. They appear also in the account written by a survivor of Cavendish’s second voyage, Anthony Knivet. See Purchas, 4:1202 (“The admirable adventures and strange fortunes of Master Antonie Knivet, which went with Master Thomas Candish in his second voyage to the South Sea. 1591”). [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. Hakluyt,1589, sig. \*3r. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. Hakluyt, 1598–1600, 3:817 (“The prosperous voyage of M. Thomas Candish esquire into the South sea, and so round about the circumference of the whole earth, begun in the yere 1586. and finished 1588”). [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. Taylor, 1:207. [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. Bourne, sig. ffivr. [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. Frampton, sig. G2r. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. Abbot, sig. G3r. [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. Galvão, sig. A3r. [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. Hayward, sig. E2r. [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. On Dee’s references to Japan in “Of Famous and Rich Discoveries,” see Sherman, 180–81. On the scope and dating of the *Limites*, see ibid., 183–89; MacMillan. [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. Sherman, 192. [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. British Library (hereafter BL) Additional MS 59681, fol. 9. “Sub corona enim vestra famosissima totius Orbis (media penè) tegitur Insula: Olim Chryse, hodie verò vulgariterq[ue] Giapan vocitata: verum sub nomine Zipangu à nobili viro M: Paulo Veneto incredibiliter commendata, ad primas hocce saeculo longissimis Navigationis promovendas, castellanos incitavit Principes.” [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. BL Harleian MS 6249, fol. 56v, f106v–110r. [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. See Shimada, 187–91. [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. BL Harleian MS 6249, fol. 106v, 107v, 108r, 107r. [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. Hakluyt, 1598–1600, 3:852. [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. Ibid., 3:853. [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
47. On the Folger manuscript, see Braunmuller. For the “China” letter, see ibid., esp. 429–30. [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. As the *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, East Indies, China and Japan* notes, documents from July 1596 related to the voyage contain a document recording the “Title of the K[ing] of China. Emperor and Great Lord over all the famous kingdoms of China and the territories and islands adjoining unto the same; Dayri or Great King of Coray, Tambano, Bungo, Giamaco, Xumoto, Ciazzura, Mino, Voari, &c.” To this, “Taicosama” is added in another hand: Sainsbury, 97–98. [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
49. For the Continental European coverage of the embassy in print, see Boscaro. [↑](#endnote-ref-49)
50. Lomas, 137 (summary and translation of the Spanish original in National Archives [NA], SP 94/2 fol. 49): “Another account of the same ceremony, the oath taken to Prince Philip in Madrid at the church of St Jerome, Nov. 2/12 1584.” [↑](#endnote-ref-50)
51. Lomas, 493, 520 (summary and translation of the Italian original in NA, SP 101/95 fol. 35): “News from Divers Parts, May 22./June 1” and “News from Rome and Venice, June 1/11 1585.”  [↑](#endnote-ref-51)
52. Lomas, 529 (summary of the Italian original in NA, SP 101/72 fol. 33): “News from Rome and Venice, June 8, 1585”; Lomas, 560 (summary of original in NA, SP 101/72 fol. 37): “News from Rome, June 26./July 6.” [↑](#endnote-ref-52)
53. Lomas, 640, 657 (summary of the Italian original in NA, SP 101/72 fol. 45): “News from Italy, Jul. 31/Aug. 10 1585” and “News from Italy, Aug14/24 1585.” [↑](#endnote-ref-53)
54. For the text, see Hakluyt, 1993; Taylor, 2:211–326. [↑](#endnote-ref-54)
55. Taylor, 2:213. [↑](#endnote-ref-55)
56. Taylor, 1:207. [↑](#endnote-ref-56)
57. NA, SP 12/195 fol. 212. [↑](#endnote-ref-57)
58. Ibid., fol. 213. The authorship of the note is debated. The *Hakluyt Handbook* identifies this as Hakluyt’s own hand: Quinn and Quinn, 2:287. It has been suggested alternatively that the note is in the hand of Sir James Lancaster, who subsequently undertook two major voyages to the East Indies in 1591–94 and 1601: see Lemon, 377. The Japan-related documents are described as “Subjoined . . . particulars of the embassy from the King of Japan to Pope Gregory XIII., with the oration of the ambassador and the answer of the pontiff.” The manuscript is also discussed briefly in Woods, xxxvii–xli. [↑](#endnote-ref-58)
59. Quinn and Quinn, 2:287. [↑](#endnote-ref-59)
60. NA, SP 12/195 fols. 212, 217. [↑](#endnote-ref-60)
61. Roberts, 228–50. [↑](#endnote-ref-61)
62. Ibid., 234. [↑](#endnote-ref-62)
63. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-63)
64. Screech, 16. Cocks, 300, 398n22, cited in Screech, 29. [↑](#endnote-ref-64)
65. Screech, 26–28. [↑](#endnote-ref-65)
66. Hume, 474–92. [↑](#endnote-ref-66)
67. NA, SP 12/243 fol. 26. [↑](#endnote-ref-67)
68. Hakluyt, 1598–1600, 2:sig. \*4r. [↑](#endnote-ref-68)
69. See Massai. [↑](#endnote-ref-69)
70. Yates, 187. [↑](#endnote-ref-70)
71. I have written briefly about this episode before. See Das, 120–22. [↑](#endnote-ref-71)
72. Hakluyt, 1598–1600, 2:253. [↑](#endnote-ref-72)
73. Pinto and Bernard, 397. [↑](#endnote-ref-73)
74. Hakluyt, 1598–1600, 2:253. [↑](#endnote-ref-74)
75. Linschoten, 142. Hakluyt’s extract from Linschoten’s account in the second edition of the *Principal Navigations* stops with the English group’s escape: Hakluyt, 1598–1600, 2:268. [↑](#endnote-ref-75)