

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

Mizutani, Yumiko
Professor, Yamauchi Prefectural University

1. Introduction

The term of "Nanban Costume" is rather conventionally used. Examining in the costumes which are called Nanban Costume, we actually realize the term connotes various conceptions. Prof. Kaoru Tanno, in her pioneer work *Nanban Fukushoku no Kenkyu---Seiyou Fukushoku no Nihon Ifuku Bunka ni ataeta Eikyou---*(A Study on the Nanban Costume---Influence of European costumes on Japanese costume culture), Yuuzankaku 1993, minutely investigated the Japanese westernized costumes of old age, making a comparative study of the costume-images painted in the Nanban folding screens, the costumes worn by Europeans, and the westernized costumes worn by Japanese of the same time. Generally "Nanban Costume" means the costume worn by Europeans, so that it is nothing but the European costume. But it can be applied to Western-style costumes made in Japan under influence of Europe, too. Here in this paper, in which I deal with the period from the latter half of the 16th century to the early 17th century, I use the term both to the European(Western) costume and the Japanese Western-style costume. However, in the case that discrimination is needed, I use the words "Western costume" and "Western-style costume": the former is what was worn by the missionaries of the Society of Jesus and Portuguese, the latter the westernized costume made in Japan.

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

2. Aim of the study

The word "Nanban" was originally used to indicate the southern regions adjacent to China by ancient Chinese who thought their nation to be situated in the center of the world. In Japan, the word appeared in the same meaning first in the paragraph of October 1st, the third year of the Chotoku era (A.D.997), of the *Nippon Kiryaku* (see Kiichi Matsuda, *Daikoukaijidai to Nihon*(The Period of Great Voyage and Japan), *Sougoukouza:Nihon no Shakaibunkasi* 4, Kodansha 1973). In

the Muromachi period (A.D.1392~A.D.1573), "Nanban" was often used only to mean southern directions. Still in the latter half of the 16th century, Japanese, though they saw European who reached Japan, probably had to recognize them simply as those who came somewhere from southern directions, for they then had no precise knowledge of European yet.

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

On the other hand, the letters of the missionaries tell us that the common Japanese, in the various places, often crowded round the churches of the society of Jesus as rites were performed, in order to see the beautiful decorations of the altars, the costumes of the priests, and the procession of the gaily dressed believers. However, most of Portuguese merchants lived and worked only in port towns such as Sakai and Nagasaki. Therefore, a few Japanese could see their costumes. The Western costume which many common Japanese could see is what the priests and the people related to the churches worn, and what the missionaries offered to the lord or provincial rulers, except those which were painted in the Nanban folding screens.

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

3. Method of the study

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

The following are the materials which I use:-

*A collection of all of letters written by St. Francisco de Xavier, Vol. I - IV.

*Alejandro Valignano , Sumario de las cosas de Japon.

*A complete Japanese translation of Frois's Japanese History Vol.1- 12.

*Correspondences from Jesuits about Japan, Vol.1-2, A Series of Shin-Ikoku.

*A collection of reports from the Society of Jesus, Vol.1-15.

*A document of the Japanese mission to European Countries in Tenshou era, written by De Sande

Specially the last one is important in knowing how the Japanese boys experienced Western costumes in Europe and how Europeans saw Japanese dress. I will take notice of it as a case with which we can compare acceptance of the Nanban costume in Japan. Moreover, the Japanese mission in Tenshou era is important in the sense that it became a cause to trigger the boom of the Nanban costume in Japan, after it came back. The mission is mentioned in detail in other documents too, which I will refer to in this paper.

The reason that so many letters as mentioned above are remained is that Ignatius de Loyola, First President of the Society of Jesus, established a system of correspondence in order to strengthen and unify the Society, and to make sure of his leadership. Accordingly, the missionaries, such as Xavier and those who came to Japan after him, sent many letters to the members who stayed in Europe and in India. However, some letters were made open to the public, the other were not. The letters which I use as materials of this study are the former, so that it is probable that they may contain retouch and exaggeration, as Valignano tells in his work. So I will carefully read the letters, observing conformity and unconformity between their informations.