

Susanna Burghartz

Mr Kateki and *Love* – the History of a Global Object

Key Words: Kateki Sama; Erasmus of Rotterdam; Material Culture; Early Dutch-Japanese Relations; Global History and Global Hybrids

Susanna Burghartz is Professor of Early Modern History at the Department of History and at the Institute for European Global Studies of the University of Basel. Her research focuses mainly on early globalization, the history of urban societies and consumption, material culture and gender history. Among her forthcoming publications are a co-edited volume on *Materialized Identities: Objects–Affects–Effects in Early Modern Culture, 1450–1750* (AUP, 2021) and the co-authored book *Building Paradise. A Basel Manor House and its Residents in a Global Perspective* (CMV, 2021).

I am not sure how many people are familiar with Mr Kateki, although he has been present for 415 years, namely in the Ryūkōin temple in Tochigi Prefecture. Kateki Sama (or Katekisama), as he is reverently called in Japanese, landed at the bay of Usuki on Kyushu on 19 April 1600. That was the beginning of a long relationship between the Netherlands and Japan¹

Together with the ships *Blyde Bootschap (The Gospel)*, *Hoope (Hope)*, *T'geloove (Faith)*, *Trouwe (Loyalty)*, Kateki Sama set sail from Rotterdam on *De Liefde (the Love)* on 27 June 1598 to circumnavigate the globe and trade in spices in southeast Asia.² With the permission of the Estates General and the states of Holland, the ship owners Johan van der Veken and Pieter van der Haegen had capitalized and equipped the fleet for half a million guilders for the perilous voyage through the Straits of Magellan to Japan. This was no easy undertaking, since Dutch ships were engaged at this time in a veritable race to Asia. Three other expeditions with a total of thirteen ships had set sail at the same time as the *Liefde*. And although the *Liefde*'s dangerous route had been kept secret before it left port, the recruitment of a crew had proved difficult, and the crew was correspondingly motley. The pilots Dirck Gerritszoon Pomp and Jan Outgherszoon, both natives of Enkhuizen, worked together with the Englishmen Timothy Shatton and William Adams. Shatton was, by the way, the only one with any experience of the Straits, about whose complicated geography reliable information was scarce. The fleet carried a total of 107 cannon and pieces of artillery, and 200 of the 507 crew members had military training.³

The voyage proved extremely difficult from the outset. Fierce military engagements with the Portuguese were already fought on the Cape Verde Islands and the coast of Guinea; in their desperate search for provisions, the Dutch made a disturbing acquaintance with the locals, who could not solve their food problems. Nevertheless, this was just a foretaste of the nearly insurmountable difficulties and anxieties that would accompany them on the onward voyage through the Straits of Magellan and beyond. Of the five ships, only the *Liefde* succeeded in landing in Japan after 662 days of travail and desperation. Five months before, it had set sail for the Pacific

1 Marike Klos and Leon Derksen, *Shared Cultural heritage of Japan and the Netherlands* (Amersfoort: Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed/Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands, 2016).

2 William de Lange, *Pars Japonica: The First Dutch Expedition to Reach the Shores of Japan* (Warren, CT: Floating World Editions, 2006). De Lange provides also ample information on sources and further literature. J. W. Ijzerman, ed., *De reis om de wereld door Olivier van Noort 1598 – 1601, Linschoten Vereniging Werken, vols. 27, 28* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1926); Tadashi Makino, *The Blue-Eyed Samurai William Adams* (Ito: Ito Tourist Association, 1983); Charles R. Boxer, *Jan Compagnie in Japan, 1600 – 1817. Anglo-Dutch Rivalry in Japan and Formosa* (Tokyo/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968); Charles R. Boxer, *Portuguese Merchants and Missionaries in Feudal Japan, 1543 – 1640*, Collected Studies Series, vol. 232 (London: Variorum Reprints, 1986).

3 *Ibid.*, esp. chap. 3; Thomas Rundall, ed., *Memorials of the Empire of Japan in the 16th and 17th Centuries*, Hakluyt Society Works, series 1, vol. 8 (London: Hakluyt Society, 1850).

from Santa Maria on the Chilean coast, allegedly because the crew believed they could sell woolen cloth better in Japan than in the Moluccas, which after all lay in the torrid zone.⁴

On the sixth day of the third month of the fifth year of the Keichō period, that is, 19 April 1600, the ship reached the Japanese coast at Kyushu with an utterly exhausted, decimated crew of just 24 men. Curious local people came on board and carried away everything that was not nailed down. Japanese officials soon took over the ship and its crew, detained the pilots and provided them with food and water. A short while later the men received a visit from the Jesuit provincial Padre Joao Rodríguez, who informed them that they had landed in the province of Bungo.⁵

Kateki Sama (fig. 1), the one-meter-high wooden figure dressed in the robe and cap of a learned cleric, was taken off the ship and some 14 years later installed at the temple of Ryūkōin as a gift of the son of the temple's founder Shigesato Makino. At first apparently venerated as a Chinese inventor of shipbuilding, Mr Kateki, kept in a dark corner of the temple intended for the Buddhist goddess of compassion, later mutated into Kateki Baba, Old Kateki, an obscure bogeywoman used to frighten disobedient village children.⁶

After landing in Japan, the fortunes of the *Liefde's* crew also proved changeable: Because Captain Quaeckernaeck was gravely ill, the second officer William Adams was brought to Tokugawa Ieayasu in Osaka for questioning in the presence of a Portuguese interpreter. There the shogun was mainly interested in why the *Liefde*, purportedly a merchant vessel, carried an extensive cargo of weapons. After six weeks in captivity, which Adams spent in a state of great uncertainty, he was allowed to return to his crew. A few crew members then served Tokugawa Ieayasu well as military instructors, especially for the artillery in inner-Japanese conflicts, and integrated into Japanese feudal society. Adams himself initially transported goods with the *Liefde*. After the ship had to be scrapped in 1603, the ruler commissioned Adams to build the first European-style ship on Japanese soil. That year he succeeded in gaining the shogun's trust, eventually earning him the position of *hatamoto*, or standard bearer, at court and making him the first European landowner in feudal Japan.⁷

4 Frederick, C. Wieder, *De reis van Mahu en de Cordes door de Straat van Magalhaes naar Zuid-Amerika en Japan 1598–1600*, Linschoten Vereniging Werken, vols. 21, 22 (The Hague: Martin Nijhoff, 1924).

5 See de Lange, *Pars Japonica*, chap. 10.

6 Senkichirō Katsuma, *Gleams from Japan*, Routledge Revivals (Abingdon/New York: Routledge, 2011) (first published in 1937), 318–326.

7 William Corr, *Adams the Pilot: The Life and Times of Captain William Adams, 1564–1620* (Folkestone: Japan Library, 1995), esp. chap. 13.

After his recovery, the Dutch captain Jakob Quaeckernaeck also conducted inner-Japanese transport voyages for several years with William Adams and a Japanese crew. In 1604, the shogun even granted him permission to sail to the Dutch settlement of Patani in Malaysia to boost trade between the Dutch and the Japanese. He left Japan in the autumn of 1605 with a red-sealed Japanese trade privilege for the Dutch and reached Patani in December with a bundle of letters from the survivors of the *Liefde* to their relatives at home. More than half a year later, in August 1606, before Malacca, Quaeckernaeck met his cousin Matelieff, who had been besieging the Portuguese there since May. With the aid of his cousin he took over command of the *Erasmus*, a Dutch ship, which had lost its captain shortly before during the siege. In doing so Quaeckernaeck returned to a ship that bore the same name as the one that had brought him to Japan, since the *Liefde* had originally been called *Erasmus* before its name was changed for its circumnavigation of the globe. But this time, too, the *Erasmus* would prove unlucky for the Dutchman. Quaeckernaeck, captain of the first Dutch ship to reach Japan, died of a head wound incurred in the fierce naval battle of 22 October 1606 in the Straits of Malacca, in which the Dutch vanquished the Portuguese.⁸

But this was by no means the end of the story of Mr Kateki and *De Liefde*. More than three centuries later, Gempachi Maruyama discovered the wooden figure and saw in it a Christian missionary. A few years later, Kateki Sama was finally recognized as Desiderius Erasmus, who had circumnavigated the globe as the figurehead of *De Liefde*, carved in the style of Holbein. Not long afterwards, a photo of the wooden Erasmus was displayed as part of an exhibition on missionary propaganda in Rome, organized by the Japanese education ministry. Dutch visitors to the exhibition then demanded the return of the figure as a precious relic of early Dutch overseas trade activities. But this soon aroused protest in Japan.⁹ And so the original Kateki Sama can still be admired to this day as an important part of the national cultural heritage in Tokyo's National Museum, while a plastic replica is on display at the Dutch Royal Library.¹⁰ The reconstruction of the convoluted history of Kateki Sama can be read in the 1937 book *Gleams from Japan*. In itself a truly interesting project of transcultural efforts, it merges cosmopolitan and patriotic perspectives by showing tourists from abroad a specific selection of things Japanese and their cultural meaning. There, the text on Kateki Sama is found right next to the Buddhist temple bell from Ariana Park in Geneva, another global object that was the target of national heritage and restitution issues at the time. As the book shows, such global objects were the subject of intense patriotic efforts as early as 1937, at a time when, on the eve of the Second World War, the heyday

⁸ De Lange, *Pars Japonica*, 190–194.

⁹ Katsuma, *Gleams from Japan*.

¹⁰ Klos and Derksen, *Shared Cultural heritage*, 19.

of cosmopolitan enthusiasm for the establishment and expansion of international organizations was clearly cooling down despite growing globalization. It is this tension between cosmopolitanism and a patriotic or even national construction of identity that bothers global history today once more in the form of restitution debates.



Fig. 1. Katekisama-Statue: *Erasmus*. Collection of Ryūkōin Temple, Tokyo National Museum. Image: TNM Image Archives.

Bibliography

- Boxer, Charles Ralph. *Jan Compagnie in Japan, 1600–1817. Anglo-Dutch Rivalry in Japan and Formosa*. Tokyo/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968.
- Boxer, Charles Ralph. Portuguese Merchants and Missionaries in Feudal Japan, 1543–1640. Collected Studies Series, vol. 232. London: Variorum Reprints, 1986.
- Corr, William. *Adams the Pilot. The Life and Times of Captain William Adams, 1564–1620*. Folkestone: Japan Library, 1995.
- Ijzerman, Jan Willem, ed. *De Reis Om de Wereld Door Olivier van Noort 1598 – 1601*. Linschoten Vereniging Werken, vol. 27, 28. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1926.
- Katsuma, Senkichirō. *Gleams from Japan*. First published in 1937. Routledge Revivals. Abingdon/New York: Routledge, 2011.
- Klos, Marike, and Leon Derksen. *Shared Cultural heritage of Japan and the Netherlands*. Amersfoort: Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed/Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands, 2016.
- Lange, William de. *Pars Japonica. The First Dutch Expedition to Reach the Shores of Japan*. Warren, CT: Floating World Editions, 2006.
- Makino, Tadashi. *The Blue-Eyed Samurai William Adams*. Ito: Ito Tourist Association, 1983.
- Rundall, Thomas, ed. *Memorials of the Empire of Japan in the 16th and 17th Centuries*. Hakluyt Society Works, series 1, vol. 8. London: Hakluyt Society, 1850.
- Wieder, Frederick C. *De Reis van Mahu En de Cordes Door de Straat van Magalhaes Naar Zuid-Amerika En Japan 1598 – 1600*, Linschoten Vereniging Werken, vol. 21, 22. The Hague: Martin Nijhoff, 1924.