

Japan as Mirror: The conglomerate features of Swedish monarchy from the view of Swedish experience in Japan

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When we think about the early modern connection between Japan and Europe, "three academicians of Deshima", Engelbert Kaempfer (1651-1716), Carl Peter Thunberg (1743-1828) and Franz von Siebold (1796-1866), played important role as "intermediator" between Japanese intellectuals and European academicians. All of them were hired as doctor by the VOC, but they were not originated to Netherlands. Kaempfer and Siebold were from Germany, and Thunberg from Sweden. In the age before the concept of "nationality" spread, it is natural that the VOC hired them based on high evaluations about their professional abilities. However, it is remarkable that the professional abilities of two of them, Kaempfer and Thunberg, were trained at Uppsala University of Sweden.

In this paper, I focus on the Swedish characters of their academic way, which the VOC hoped for, to make clear the historical role of "academicians of Deshima" as "intermediators" between Japan and Europe in the early modern times. In order to make close to the Swedish characters, I would like to touch on some travelogues by Swedes who visited early modern Japan. It is certain that travelogues are a genre of literary to make consciousness of "different culture". But their records were so important to find out social usefulness of natural resources from the perspective of the Swedish way of natural history.

When we examine contents of some travelogues about Japan, we can confirm that their recognitions about political orders reflected the image of "Dominium maris baltici (Baltic Sea dominion)". The Swedish way of natural history was originated to the Swedish experiences as the composite monarchy. For example, the discourse to legitimize the rule by the Swedish monarch, like Goticism, created the way to describe the "ancient traces" by expeditions to investigate local societies. Kaempfer's descriptions about Japan were based on such way to make clear historical and cultural characteristics. Such way to describe local societies was one of basis of the Linnean way of natural history which was developed in the second part of 18th century. One of characteristics of the Linnean way was to find out social usefulness of natural resources by investigating the local way to utilize resources. We can find such feature from detailed descriptions about Japan by Thunberg's travelogue. As a result, such Linnean way was considered the most suitable method to find out social usefulness of natural resources among European countries in the age of "Great Divergence".