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The Making of *Tōjin* Construction of the Other in Early Modern Japan

Abstract

This article investigates the visual representation of foreigners in the Japanese popular art of *ukiyo-e* (woodblock prints) during the Edo Period. Foreigners found their niche in the Japanese folk cosmology even during the period of “national seclusion” (1639–1853), typically through the stereotype of *tōjin* (Tang Chinese). The popular imagery of *tōjin*, with its distinctive characteristics—nonsensical, superhuman or subhuman beings with distinctive outfits and behavior—formed a general category of foreigner that included both Westerners and non-Westerners, and served as travesties of human beings. *Tōjin* stresses inclusiveness, an *inter*-national combination of elements that enhances Otherness. Moreover, the *tōjin* being *inter*-national means that with their nationalities and national identities taken away, they are also stateless; in this way traits specific to different groups of Others were made interchangeable, or homogenized, in imagery. This visual discourse served as a valuable, unique way for the nonelite to organize or categorize the Japanese Self vis-à-vis foreigners.

Keywords: cultural anthropology—visual culture—Japanese history—cross-cultural encounters—symbolism

THIS article examines the kinds of worldviews and images of foreign Others the nonelite people of premodern Japan constructed, and how folk belief and knowledge contributed to this construction.¹ Recent scholarship on Japanese history has shown how open Japan was under the Tokugawa government's foreign policy of "national seclusion" (*sakoku*), which was in effect from 1639 to 1854.² While Japan's international relations were certainly limited, this does not mean that the government stopped using the world outside, especially East Asia, for ideological purposes. That is, by treating the foreign countries of Korea, Ryukyu, Holland, and Ezo (Ainu) as tributaries, the Tokugawa government tried to establish, or rather fabricate, Japanese centrality—a practice that produced a Japan-centered world order that scholars have examined from the perspectives of state diplomacy and state policy toward foreign Others.³

What has been overlooked in scholarly examinations of these elite attitudes toward foreign Others are the popular narratives of the world and its people. It seems taken for granted that the nonelite followed the lead of the elite, that there was either a hegemony controlling the experiences and conceptions of nonelite Japanese, or that the nonelite were completely disconnected from state affairs. Although there is no question that the seclusion policy severely limited the nonelite from firsthand information about foreign countries and peoples for more than two hundred years, this does not justify scholars treating them as if they stopped imaging and imagining the outside. Instead, we need to examine how nonelite Japanese understood the foreigners who were absent from their everyday lives, and consider what the imagining and imaging, including visualization and visual experiences, tell us about the Japanese of this period.

These are some of the questions I will pursue through an investigation of the visual representations of foreigners in the popular art of *ukiyo-e* (woodblock prints) in the Edo Period (1603–1868). By focusing on specific imagery, I will argue that foreigners found their niche in the Japanese cosmology even during the period of national seclusion, typically through the stereotype of *tōjin* (唐人, "Tang Chinese"). The popular imagery of *tōjin*, with its distinctive and extensive

characteristics, formed a general category of foreigner that included both Westerners and non-Westerners, and served as travesties of human beings. In other words, while distinguishing various foreigners, people who bought *ukiyo-e*, most of whom were commoners living in urban environments, understood foreigners by means of the general category of the foreign Other, and represented that category through the homogenized identity of *tōjin*.

Tōjin in this sense is part of the popular *imaginary*, a discursive invention. Ronald Toby has already drawn attention to the importance of the concept of *tōjin* for the Japanese cosmological and epistemological order. He extensively investigates premodern visual representations of foreigners, examining how Japan's Other(s) changed historically and discussing what this tells us about the construction of Japanese identity (cf. TOBY 1986, 1994, 2001). While I share a great deal of research interest with him, my focus here is more specific: popular discourse on foreign subjects in the Edo Period, for which I concentrate on *ukiyo-e*. By so doing, I will demonstrate how extensive and complex were the *tōjin*-related representations and tropes that Japanese commoners created. An extensive study of the characters that the townspeople imagined and constructed for the foreign Other as well as for themselves tells us how thorough the townspeople's cultural production of the Other could become even without opportunities to establish contact with actual foreigners.

FROM "KARA" TO "TŌ" BUT NOT TO "SHIN"

Tōjin is a rather colloquial, and sometimes a pejorative, term that literally means "Tang Chinese" but also refers to foreigners in general, including Westerners in the Edo Period. Not originally contained in the term, the latter meaning was attached centuries after the term was first introduced into Japan. It is worth considering why foreigners of any kind were called *tōjin* (using the Sino-Japanese reading of the Chinese characters), rather than *karabito* (the Japanese reading of the same Chinese characters).⁴ While both *kara* and *tō* were used interchangeably to some extent until the end of the Edo Period, a gradual shift occurred from the former to the latter; for example, import shops (*karamono-ya*) came to be called *tōbutsu-ya* in the late Edo Period (IWASAKI 1996a, 35). This shift carries important implications for the ways in which the Japanese categorized the foreign. Since ancient Japan had its first foreign contacts with Kara (加羅, Kor: Kaya), a small country on the southern tip of the Korean peninsula that had been absorbed by the kingdom of Shiragi (新羅, Kor: Silla) by the sixth century CE, the Japanese had used *kara* to refer to whatever foreign country they had the most frequent contacts with at the time. Thus *kara*, a Japanese reading, was applied to Han 韓 (Korea) in ancient times, and Tang 唐 (Tang dynasty China, 618–907) in the Heian Period (794–1192), when the Imperial Court sent envoys

to China to acquire advanced Chinese civilization. Since then, *kara* (Tang) or *karakuni* (Tang country) came to mean foreign countries with advanced civilizations, especially China (NAKAMURA, OKAMI, and SAKAKURA 1982, 889 and 893). Used as a prefix for clothing and other material culture, *kara* suggested sophistication, value, and the highest quality, followed by Korean goods of lower quality and copied domestic Japanese products at the bottom of the ranking (TANI 1983). In fact, there is a passage in *Uji shūi monogatari* [A collection of tales from Uji], an anthology of short fiction edited in the early thirteenth century, saying that Chinese silk textiles with a twill weave (*kara-aya*) cost five times as much as the best domestic silk from the region of Mino (MORI 1948, 194).

Unlike *kara*, *tōjin* was used as a derogatory term applied to anyone, including a Japanese, who was impervious to reason and common sense, and who talked nonsense—a meaning never implied by *karabito*. The derogatory meaning is most obvious in the term *tōjin baka* (stupid or foolish *tōjin*), whereas there was no equivalent *karabito baka*. Likewise, the Edo-Period term *ke-tōjin* (hairy *tōjin*), used to denigrate foreigners—first the Chinese and later Westerners—was formed because Edo-Period Japanese represented them with mustaches and beards while representing themselves as clean-shaven, unlike during the Nanban era (from the mid-sixteenth century to the early seventeenth century), when facial hair was fashionable in Japan.⁵

Another way to consider the term *tōjin* is to question why more up-to-date *dai-shinjin* (Great Qing Chinese) or *shinjin* (Qing Chinese) did not replace it at the popular level. The term (Great) Qing Chinese appeared in titles of *Nagasaki-e* prints, an offshoot of *ukiyo-e* produced in Nagasaki, the only international port during the national “seclusion.” While the prints depict contemporaneous Chinese men with queues, institutionalized in 1645 (NAKANO 1967; cf. ONO 1968, fig. 14), the term was not common in the context of Edo popular culture. Rather, it appears that *shinjin* was used to address contemporary Chinese, whereas *tōjin* was reserved for the more inclusive, general imagery of foreigners.

In short, changing the reading from *karabito* to *tōjin* combined both antique and new qualities. The Japanese decontextualized the term of ancient origin (*karabito*), stripping it of the glory of Chinese history and giving *tōjin* greater room to signify whatever they wished, including things rather opposite to what *karabito* implied. In his *The Past Is a Foreign Country* (1985), Lowenthal concludes: “By changing relics and records of former times, we change ourselves as well; the revised past in turn alters our own identity. The nature of that impact depends on the purpose and power of those who instigate the changes” (LOWENTHAL 1985, 411). Thus, this reading-change is a concrete example of Lowenthal’s thesis. Yet note that, in this case, the instigating Japanese were townspeople, and that they were manipulating Chinese history, not their own. This decontextualization also means that, with the term *tōjin* they consciously or unconsciously avoided

facing the reality of the world outside, represented by the term *shinjin*. With these discursive manipulations, therefore, the Japanese tried to ignore or downplay the formidable presence of China, both past and present, and to reflexively redefine themselves as superior to it and the rest of the world, as indicated by the term *tōjin*.

TŌJIN TALK AND WRITING

According to popular thinking at the time, if *tōjin* are impervious to reason and common sense, they must be talking nonsense or cannot speak Japanese. True to this logic, *tōjin kotoba* (*tōjin* talk) and *tōjin no negoto* (*tōjin*'s talking in his sleep) mean "nonsense." Popular understanding of *tōjin* talk in the Edo Period can be seen in *Kokusen'ya kassen* [The battles of Coxinga], a 1715 puppet play by Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653–1724). The most popular play of this prolific writer, later adapted to the kabuki theater, *Kokusen'ya kassen* is based on the historical figure Zheng Chenggong (1624–1662, J: Tei Seikō or Kokusen'ya; Ch: Kouhsinghye; known in the West as Coxinga) who had a Chinese father and a Japanese mother and went off to China to restore the Ming dynasty after its overthrow by the Manchus.⁶ In the story there is a scene in which Princess Sendan, a refugee and sister of the last Ming emperor, drifts to the Japanese shore and meets Coxinga and his wife Komatsu for the first time. The scene appears as follows:

Sendan: Japanese! Japanese! *Na mu kya ra chon nō to ra ya a a!*

Narrator: Komatsu burst out laughing.

Komatsu: What sutra is that?

(After some communication between Sendan and Coxinga, Komatsu becomes jealous.)

Komatsu: See here, you. I don't want to hear any more of your Chinese talk....

(KEENE 1951, 117–18)

Keene notes that Sendan's words have "no meaning, and merely represent Chinese sounds as they seem to a Japanese. They are derived, however, from a Buddhist sutra the *Senjū[sic]-darani-kyō*, or 'Sutra of the Thousand-Armed Dharani.' The sounds in the original are *Na mu ka ra tan nō tō ra ya ya a a ri ya...*" (KEENE 1951, 184, n. 69). It should be noted that sutras in Japan, when chanted, do not convey any meanings to laymen, since they are Chinese, Sanskrit, or Pali texts and have not been translated into comprehensible Japanese. That is the reason for Komatsu's remark. Moreover, "Chinese talk" in Komatsu's remark is a translation of *tōjin kotoba* (CHIKAMATSU 1959, 246). In *The Battles of Coxinga* there are more than a few places in which the Chinese as *tōjin* talk nonsense (as in this scene) for comical effect, demonstrating the underlying ethnocentric idea that if one cannot speak Japanese correctly, one does not deserve to be respected.

The nonsensicality of foreign languages was perceived not just onomatopoeically but visually as well. The Japanese, familiar with Chinese characters for over a millennium, reacted negatively to the Dutch written language, or more generally the Roman alphabet. On one hand, many took an alphabet written horizontally as a sign of barbarian status. On the other hand, except for a small number of Dutch studies scholars, people made fun of the nonsensical alphabet or saw it as a collection of exotic and fascinating designs.

Many *ukiyo-e* from the turn of the nineteenth century, for example, have borders of Roman letters and quasi-letters, some of which are decipherable as Japanese (IWASAKI 1996b, 13–14; see also TABAKO TO SHIO NO HAKUBUTSUKAN 1996, figs. 201–204), thus playfully challenging Dutch-enthusiastic readers. Besides this technique, in the early nineteenth century Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849) wrote the print title of *Kudan ushigafuchi* [Kudan Ushigafuchi pool] in cursive script *kana* (the Japanese syllabary) such that, when turned sideways, the title resembles Roman letters in cursive script. The print itself reflects his serious study of Western landscape painting as he depicts mass and three dimensions with coloring and shading rather than lines.

Santō Kyōden (1761–1816), author of popular novels and a famous *ukiyo-e* artist, was the one who championed this trend. In 1784 he published *Komon-zai* [Scraps of small patterns], a parody of textile samples, in which one can find a fictitious textile pattern entitled “Ushi no yodare” [Cow’s drool] a metaphor for being fine but long- or ever-lasting. The pattern is quasi-letter doodles that, at a glance, look like Roman letters in cursive script. The attached text states, “Dutch letters as I thought.” Kyōden explains this in the revised book *Komon gawa* (FIGURE 1), playfully saying that “the Dutch make sense out of letters written in cow’s drool...” (IWASAKI 1996b, 13). An important point is that Kyōden makes fun of not only Roman letters but also the letters of India and China. He mentions: “In Tenjiku [India], letters were inspired by wood shavings.... It has been said that Sōketsu [Cang Xie] of Tang created letters from the tracks of the bird” (TAMAMUSHI 2002, 250).

THE SUPERNATURAL POWER OF *TŌJIN*

The perceived nonsensicality and foreignness of *tōjin* did not stop the Japanese from thinking about them. In fact, suspicious about their lack of common sense and normality, they often associated *tōjin* with supernatural or magical powers. This association is most obvious in the case of the Dutch, the newest *tōjin*, although it was also said that whenever Ryukyuan came to Japan, they brought influenza with them, thus an outbreak on such occasions was called Ryukyuan or Satsuma flu (YOKOYAMA 1987, 154, quoting from ODAGIRI 1823).⁷ The fact that the Dutch were Christians must have made their presence even



FIGURE 1. Santō Kyōden, Ushi no yodare ["Cow's drool"] from *Komon gawa* [Elegant talk on small patterns], 1790, Collection of Tabako to Shio no Hakubutsukan (IWASAKI 1996b, 13).

more mysterious and ambiguous, the notion of Christianity as a wicked religion having been firmly established long before their arrival when Iberians brought Catholicism to Japan. Even in the late sixteenth century the Toyotomi government put a ban on magic, associating it with "wicked" Christianity (NOBUHIRO 1976, 13). Moreover, when it was discovered that some sacrilegious pranks had been committed in 1830, they were attributed to either *kakure kirishitan* (Hidden Christians) or *tengu* (mountain goblins) (YASUMARU 1970, 356).

An important point is that "Christian magic" was not monopolized by the Dutch; it was also associated with other *tōjin* and foreign-related characters. For example, puppet and kabuki plays incorporated wicked "Christian magic" to illustrate how diabolical Tenjiku Tokubei was. In reality, Tokubei (1612–?) was a Japanese sailor who had been to Siam and other Southeast Asian countries before the seclusion was enforced, and that was the reason for his nickname Tenjiku, meaning India. After coming back to Japan, he wrote his memoirs. Although inspired by his life story, playwrights drastically changed his character to one that plots a rebellion against Japan (cf. TSURUYA 1969, premiered in 1804). To make his evilness more formidable, they embellished his stage character by ascribing to him various traits that are associated with foreigners.

For example, the plays identify Tokubei as the son of a Korean official who came to Japan to seek revenge for Toyotomi Hideyoshi's Korean invasions in the late sixteenth century. As Japanese were aware of how brutal the invasions were, they could readily believe that Tokubei would be ferociously anti-Japanese. Moreover, he is described as having learned "Christian magic" from his Korean father. Using magic spells sprinkled with Portuguese words such as *Santa Maria* and *paraiso* in fully Japanized pronunciation, he conjures up a giant frog that shoots out fire (TSURUYA 1969, 19 and 22). Although he is supposed to be

coming back from Southeast Asia, he appears in an *attush*, which usually means an Ainu robe made of bark cloth, but in kabuki means robes with *Ezo moyō* or distinctive Ainu motifs (GUNJI 1991, 244). Moreover, his hair is reddish, and his pate unshaven, unusual in a society in which the government tightly regulated the physical appearance of the people (TOITA 1969, 6). It does not seem to matter that the combination of various foreign traits does not make any sense—the more foreign features that were combined, the more terrifying and fascinating Tokubei appeared to the audience. “Christian magic,” being of Korean descent, and sporting a rebellious mind all made this picaresque character very convincing, and this image provided the Japanese with escapism as well as exoticism.

The groundwork for the Japanese to accept Europeans’ “Christian magic” or a *tōjin*’s supernatural power in general was established long before. The story motif that strangers have supernatural power has a long history in Japanese folktales, myths, and legends. However, while Chinese *tōjin* were typically the ones endowed with such power throughout medieval times, by Early Modern times some of them were replaced by Dutchmen (OKADA 1955, 151–57). As an example, Okada introduces a story motif whose prototype can be seen in the above-mentioned *Uji shūi monogatari*, edited in the early thirteenth century (FUJII et al., 1915, 404–410). As the story goes, a Dutchman in Nagasaki finds a stone in a Japanese house, begging the house owner to sell it at a high price. The stone happens to be a magical one with a fish living inside for as long as the stone remains unbroken. Because a single glance at the fish gives people longevity, people seek the stone feverishly, polishing it so that the fish swimming inside can be seen. If successful, they are rewarded by kings (OKADA 1955, 155–56).⁸ The point is that the Dutch are the only ones to know the secret of the stone, but Japan is the only country to produce the stone.

Still, for many Japanese, an ancient proverb rang true that “things far away from home are valued, whereas people far away from home are devalued” (ITŌ 1975, 361). While the Japanese had at best ambivalent feelings towards the *tōjin*, especially the Dutch, they seemed to welcome Dutch imports enthusiastically. Interestingly, when Dutch-imported animals and “creatures” (and this might be said of any animal) went on traveling exhibitions from Nagasaki, they easily acquired supernatural power or “beneficial effects” that are not found in earlier *Nagasaki-e* prints of animals. In other words, while people in Nagasaki accepted these creatures rather matter-of-factly, the farther away they traveled, the stronger were people’s preconceptions of what exotic creatures were supposed to be.

For example, when a pair of single-humped camels imported by the Dutch in 1821 came to Edo in 1824, they became a huge sensation. At least three *Nagasaki-e* prints depict the animals matter-of-factly, describing their size and habits (although the size of the camels is exaggerated compared to that of accompanying Dutchmen and Javanese servants, and one print mentions that

the camels make an affectionate couple; TABAKO TO SHIO NO HAKUBUTSUKAN 1996, figs. 16–17; VAN OPSTALL 1986, fig. 48). However, by the time they reached Osaka, then Edo, printed posters depicting these camels suggest that they have acquired “beneficial effects.” One poster for the show in Edo wrongly depicts two-humped camels rather than single-humped ones, with five *tōjin*. An attached text mentions that “camels’ urine heals poor circulation, scabies, and swellings, and their hair works as a charm against smallpox and talismans. As both camels have a gentle nature and make an affectionate couple, with one glance at them one can catch the same affectionate nature. With their gentle nature, they are not intimidated even by tens of thousands of people in front of them. They are truly the rarest animals of all times” (NOBUHIRO 1976, fig. 26).

TŌJIN ENTERTAINERS AND ACROBATS

Another trope the Japanese constructed out of foreigners was *tōjin* as acrobats and entertainers, which is understandable when one thinks that their supernatural power must derive from their extraordinary bodies. The idea may also be related to the historical fact that various kinds of juggling, or *zatsugei* (miscellaneous entertainments), were originally introduced from the Asian continent, and that Chinese and Korean magicians still came to entertain the Japanese in the early seventeenth century before the seclusion started (MORITA 1994, 205 and 213). At any rate, during the seclusion many Japanese, even Dutch studies scholars, suspected that foreigners, especially Westerners, were physically different from “regular” humans; they were curious about the ways in which foreigners carried themselves, and eager to see their “performance.” When officials of the Dutch East Indian Company (*Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie*, or VOC) visited the shogun, their “performance” was routinized as part of the ceremony (SAITŌ 1910). As one official mentions:

He [the shogun] had us [officials] take off our *kappa*, or ceremonial robes, and sit upright so that he could inspect us; had us now stand up and walk, now pay compliments to each other, then again dance, jump, pretend to be drunk, speak Japanese, read Dutch, draw, sing, put on our coats, then take them off again. During the process I broke into the following song: ... At the demand of the shogun we had to put up with providing such amusements and perform innumerable other monkey tricks.

(KAEMPFER 1999, 364–65)

This is what Thomson calls *staring*: “the cultural work of staring is to normalize the viewer by abnormalizing—indeed, spectacularizing—the body on view, fixing it in a position of difference” (THOMSON 1999, 82).

Yet for the commoners, who did not have a chance to see the Dutch “performance,” *tōjin* often meant acrobatic “Blacks.” This notion must have something to do with the “Blacks”—that is, Africans and South and Southeast Asians brought by the Iberians before the seclusion—performing acrobatic jobs in the ships’ rigging and acting as lookouts high in the masts. These European two- or three-masted vessels for ocean navigation were much larger than Japanese ones, so they must have impressed the Japanese, as did the masterly skills of “Black” sailors. An important point, however, is that Korean sailors and stunt riders started assuming the same role as “Blacks” in the Japanese imagery. For example, *Chōsenjin tokai fune no zu* [A picture of a Korean ship crossing the sea] is a cheap monochrome print (artist unknown), made in 1811 when the last Korean embassy proceeded as far as Tsushima, not all the way to Edo (FIGURE 2). Made in Tsushima, but widely sold in Edo, the print depicts acrobatic figures in the halcyards with envoys and musicians in *tōjin* attire on a ship. The way the figures hang upside down from the halcyards demonstrates that the artist’s intention was to show them as entertainers rather than as genuine sailors.

Korean stunt riders who accompanied the envoys must have enforced the image of *tōjin* being acrobatic and entertaining as well. Besides elite samurai, Edo commoners could also see, if they were lucky, such riding performances, which some *ukiyo-e* and guidebooks captured (NAKAO 1992). That one guidebook includes supplements illustrating various stunt-riding poses indicates that Korean stunt riding must have been a major attraction of the foreign procession for commoners (GIFU-SHI REKISHI HAKUBUTSUKAN 1992, fig. 52; see also FAULKNER et al., 1999, plates 3–4).

Still, the image of “Black acrobat as *tōjin*” persisted throughout the Edo



FIGURE 2. Artist unknown, *Chōsenjin tokai fune no zu* [A picture of a Korean ship crossing the sea], 1811, 30 x 60 cm, Collection of Osaka Museum of History (GIFU-SHI REKISHI HAKUBUTSUKAN 1992, fig. 49).

Period. *Wakan sansai zue* [Japanese-Chinese illustrations of the three forces], published in 1713, mentions that “*kuronbō* (Blacks)” on Dutch ships were acrobatic, running on masts (TERASHIMA 1986a, 342). In the section on Entertainment in the same book, the author compares their skills to that of Japanese highwire acrobats at that time (TERASHIMA 1986b, 174–75).⁹

The image of “acrobatic Blacks” is also apparent in a monochrome print that illustrates a *Bidoro saiku Oranda-sen* [glass-crafted Dutch ship] on display in Edo in 1819. The ship was two *jō* (about twenty feet) long, with two VOC flags flying over it, and a Western male figurehead with a brimmed hat, beard, mustache, and long curly hair at the stem. Aboard were four crew members whose features also show a mixture of Dutch and *tōjin* elements: one was a lookout, another a trumpeter, and two “Blacks” appear in the main mast. According to ASAKURA (1928, 243), these last two were mechanical dolls, which climbed up the mast, stood upside down, walked the halyards, and finally fired a cannon. Because of its unprecedented size and exquisite workmanship, the ship was a big success.

The notion of Black acrobatic sailors seemed to take a firm hold on the Japanese imagination. Sugawara Genpachi notes in 1869:

Although parrots can speak like a human, they are still birds. Likewise, orangutans can also speak and look like a human, but they are still beasts. *Kuronbō* [“Black” in a derogatory term] can swim better than a fish and climb better than a monkey. Hence, each Dutch or other barbarian ship employs a couple of them. Despite their speaking ability, they must be beasts. (SUGAWARA 1943, 458)

This is more interesting when one compares this fixed notion to the visual images that *Nagasaki-e* offered in the second half of the Edo Period, in which not “Blacks” but Dutchmen were carrying out acrobatic jobs high in the masts (see TABAKO TO SHIO NO HAKUBUTSUKAN 1996, figs. 6, 8, and 12). Obviously Nagasaki and the rest of Japan did not share the same racial stereotypes and imagery, as the example of the transformation of the camels also shows. In short, the *tōjin* was a historically, regionally, and socially specific, product.

A *TŌJIN*'S PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: COSTUME AND BODIES

In the Edo Period, the Japanese came to standardize the costume of *tōjin* to the degree that it is disputable whether some pictures depict processions of real foreigners or processions of Japanese disguised as *tōjin*, “plume-hatted, bearded, frill-collared, booted, shod, trousered, and all” (TOBY 1994, 343). For example, KOBAYASHI (1985) considers *Chōsenjin raichō zu* [Picture of Koreans coming to our country] by Okumura Masanobu (1686–1764) to be based on a Korean

procession in 1748,¹⁰ whereas TOBY and KURODA (1994) argue that it depicts Japanese disguised as *tōjin* at a festival.¹¹

Through the Edo Period, various combinations of the above-mentioned *tōjin* features appear to represent the foreigner. For example, *Tōkaidō gojūsan-tsugi no uchi Hara* [Hara: Among the fifty-three stations of the Tōkaidō highway], a print (date unknown) by Katsushika Hokusai, shows Korean envoys with frilled collars and sleeves, plumed hats, beards, trousers, and high-topped boots (FIGURE 3). Since Hokusai was five years old in 1764 when Korean envoys passed along the highway for the last time, he obviously did not draw the print from actual observation. Still, abundant information on this subject must have been available to him. Given that Korean official robes did not have frilled collars and sleeves, the artist's addition of frills to the robes reveals how prevalent the conventionalized *tōjin* costume was. To convince the reader of the Koreans' foreignness, Hokusai had to employ the convention to fit the Koreans into the Japanese image of *tōjin*—once again, imagination prevailed over reality.

Although the standardized *tōjin* costume may have been based on that of Iberians, Koreans, and Ryukyuan (whom the Japanese actually could see), it served to identify other foreigners as well. *Watōnai sankan no zu: Ukie ikoku no keiseki* [Picture of Watōnai's visit to the palace, from the series Perspective prints of foreign lands, FIGURE 4], a print by Utagawa Toyoharu (1735–1814) from the 1770s, depicts the hero and his Chinese retinue in procession; the latter wear so-called *tōjin* beards, plumed hats, long jackets, and shoes, and carry trumpets, drums, and banners—all standardized *tōjin* paraphernalia. The print also captures a Japanese-style masted-vessel, a sedan chair (used by Korean and Ryukyuan envoys), and a tiger as a mount for the hero (for the Japanese, an animal that was typical of East Asia, especially Korea). A supposed Chinese palace in the background shows a conflation of Chinese and Western architectural elements with a Dutch national flag flying overhead. Furthermore, in *Wakan sansai zue* (TERASHIMA 1986a), frilled collars or sleeves are used to depict the Ezo (Ainu), as well as peoples of Pagan (now Burma), Srivijaya (now Sumatra), and a few other places.

The standardized *tōjin* outfit was also applied to non-Asians. Utagawa Kuninaga (fl. 1801–1830) made five serialized prints based on the Seven Wonders of the World, in *uki-e* (floating picture) style with its emphasis on Western one-point linear perspective (TABAKO TO SHIO NO HAKUBUTSUKAN 1996, figs. 189–93; see also OKA 1996). The prints depict the supposed wonders in the Mediterranean world, but people in all the prints look alike, with plumed hats, *tōjin* beards and mustaches, button-front coats with frilled collars and sleeves, trousers, and shoes. With no women depicted in the prints, all the men's faces look the same, like the face of the deity Ebisu.



FIGURE 3. Katsushika Hokusai, *Tōkaidō gojūsan-tsugi no uchi Hara* [Hara: Among the fifty-three stations of the Tōkaidō highway], 23.0 x 17.1 cm, Collection of Nagoya City Museum (GIFU-SHI REKISHI HAKUBUTSUKAN 1992, fig. 53).



FIGURE 4. Utagawa Toyoharu, 1735–1814, *Watōnai sankan no zu: Ukie ikoku no keiseki* [Picture of Watōnai's visit to the palace, from the series Perspective prints of foreign lands], 1770–1780, color woodcut, ōban, 239 x 361 mm, Collection of Chazen Museum of Art, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Bequest of John H. Van Vleck.



FIGURE 5. Katsushika Hokusai, *Nana yūjo* [Seven courtesans]: *Nagasaki, Maruyama*, 1806, 132 x 179 mm, Collection of the Gemeentemuseum Den Haag.

Although covered by their clothing, *tōjin* bodies could not escape Japanese speculation. The major focus was on Westerners, who were perceived as being strikingly different from the Japanese. It was generally believed that the Dutch were different from “ordinary people,” lacking ankles or incapable of bending their knees (OKADA 1970, 11). In a way, this sounds almost logical—if *tōjin* speak nonsense and act strangely, they must also have physical anomalies. A description in *Wakan sansai zue* presents a typical example, saying that “Dutch people have white skin, red hair, a prominent nose, and round eyes with stars in them; they urinate like dogs, putting their legs up” (TERASHIMA 1986a, 402).

A similar description is found even in *Kaika no iriguchi* [An entrance to the Enlightenment], a novel Yokokawa Shūtō published in 1874–1875. In the novel, a man called Gudayū 愚太夫, meaning “fool,” makes “unenlightened” remarks, saying, “Look at the hair color of Westerners. It is like that of red horses. Their eyes are unclear and acorn-colored, and their noses are attached above their eyebrows. Besides, their legs are not flexible enough to sit straight. That is why they always sit on a chair. It is also said that they cannot excrete and urinate at the same time. All of that means they are closer to beasts and much inferior to humans” (YOKOKAWA 1993, 55). The “enlightened” opponent criticizes him, saying that his opinion of “beast-like foreigners” is fifty years out-of-date. Yet, in a way, the latter’s criticism confirms that many did believe in “beast-like foreigners” in the late Edo Period.

Interestingly enough, as far as *ukiyo-e* is concerned, a Western *tōjin*’s appearances are hardly marked by any specific anomaly or bestialization. The most distinguishable physical features of *tōjin* are beards and mustaches, which are regarded as almost sine qua non for them. The style of beard that typifies them is called a *tōjin* beard, which is sometimes applied to Westerners’ faces as illustrated in the above-mentioned Mediterranean prints. *Ukiyo-e* artists like Hokusai and Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1797–1861) also applied Western-style shading to the faces of foreigners and those who were symbolically categorized as the equivalents—people with anomalies, strangers, superhuman people, *sumō* wrestlers, villains, and sometimes ghosts and fiends, according to SAKAMOTO and TOEDA (1993, 72–73), who also mention that these artists depict heroes in *Suikoden* (Ch: *Shui hu zhuan*, Outlaws of the Marsh), and other characters in Chinese folktales and legends, with beards, mustaches, or reddish faces using kabuki-style excessive shading.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

It should be clear by now that the *tōjin* tropes and representations Japanese commoners created were extensive and enormously complex. The commoners’ vivid imaginations and attention to detail not only supplemented the scarce

information on foreigners available to them, but also enabled them to construct *tōjin* as a discourse of Otherness, and made *tōjin* existence as believable as real foreigners, like other fantastic and mythical creatures in their folk society. Note that, while evincing some traces of real foreigners, information about whom the commoners acquired from foreign processions and other sources, the representations and tropes emphasize the *tōjin*'s inclusive, non-Japanese nature, more ambivalent and fantastic than real foreigners and fully embedded in the folkloric cosmos. In this sense, the *tōjin* construction is folk-centric, reflecting more input from folkloric knowledge than from the outside and the elite, and developing such knowledge on the commoners' own terms.

Visual presentations of these features show that *tōjin* discourse was not narrowly defined within a strict formula. Rather, as Martin Jay defines discourse, it was "an often unsystematic, sometimes internally contradictory texture of statements, associations, and metaphors that never fully cohere in a rigorous way. No single figure expresses all of its dimensions and none would be likely to accept them all, even if they were explicitly posed as positive arguments" (JAY 1993, 16). Nevertheless, it showed flexibility and creativity, and the only absolute rule was to somehow show foreignness or Otherness. This often allowed many foreign elements to intertwine in the construction of a *tōjin* feature. A good example is the conical oboe called *charumera*, the most representative instrument used for *tōjin*-related music scenes and often referred to as *tōjin-bue* (flute). It first impressed the Japanese as an Iberian import, since the name itself was derived from the Portuguese word *charamela*. Yet more widely used was the Chinese relative of the *charamela*, the *sona*, whose image as a *tōjin* instrument was solidified in Korean and Ryukyuan processions.

As for the combinations of these features, although the *tōjin*'s Otherness is often associated with what the Japanese regarded as Chinese and/or Korean features, it was certainly not exclusively so. In fact, what makes the *tōjin* the most *tōjin*-like is the crossover of features from various origins. Therefore, the Chinese and Koreans appear embellished with ruffles and frills, a legacy of Iberian fashion. Camels, imported by the Dutch, are displayed with *tōjin*-as-Chinese figures and musicians. This point is clearer when these depictions are compared with *Nagasaki-e* that, as artworks based on actual experiences of foreigners, did not homogenize visual traits specific to Dutchmen and Chinese into a single image.

If I may add one more example to stress this point, consider a print Hokusai made in 1806, *Nana yūjo* [Seven courtesans]: *Nagasaki, Maruyama*, a *surimono* (a print privately issued by poets) (FIGURE 5). A satirical or comic poem (*kyōka*) appearing in the print refers to *karabito*, that is, *tōjin*, and indeed the print depicts a Dutchman with a courtesan. Yet, in addition to Western features (his curly long hair, and a book or score with horizontal writing), he demonstrates generic *tōjin* features (a frilled collar, a brimmed hat, boots), a Chinese

feature (the chair on which he is sitting has a distinctive *raimon*, or “lightning pattern,” design that is a Japanese expression of Sinophilia), and a Ryukyuan feature (*sanshin*, a kind of shamisen with the body covered by snakeskin, which the Japanese strongly associated with Ryukyu because it came to Japan from the Continent via Ryukyu).¹² Hence, as a whole, the features represent what TOBY calls “an omnium-gatherum for foreigners in Japanese discourse” (1994, 335–36), or a chimera of various foreign elements still recognizable as such. It is true that Dutchmen in Nagasaki must have used Asian objects, but *Nagasaki-e* does not represent them in this combination; the prints distinguish and concentrate on each foreign feature separately. *Tōjin* imagery, on the other hand, stresses inclusiveness, an *inter*-national combination of elements that enhances Otherness.

However, the *tōjin* being *inter*-national means that with their nationalities and national identities taken away, they are also stateless, and thus interchangeable or homogenized. This is shown by the history of a series of plays inspired by a 1764 murder of a Korean official by a Tsushima interpreter—the incident and the plays known as *Tōjin goroshi* [Murder of a *tōjin*].¹³ IKEYUCHI (1999) explains how the incident was processed and became a popular subject of both fiction and nonfiction. Because of the government’s censorship, kabuki plays changed the murder victim from a “real” *tōjin*, in this case a Korean, to either another less censorship-sensitive *tōjin* or a Japanese man disguised as a *tōjin*. For example, the title of a play on this subject in 1767 was quickly changed to *Imaori Ezo nishiki* [Ezo Brocade in modern fashion], in which the *tōjin* was changed to Ezo (Ainu) (GUNJI 1991, 314).¹⁴ Kabuki titles also include *Nagasaki Maruyama saikenzu* [A detailed picture of Maruyama, Nagasaki] and *Kanjin kanmon tekuda no hajimari* 漢人韓文手管始 [The Han Chinese and Korean letters, the beginning of their tricks] in the Edo Period, and *Nagasaki miyage tōjin banashi* [The Nagasaki souvenir, a *tōjin* story] in the Taishō Period (TOITA 1970). Thus, under the general category of *tōjin*, various Others were freely exchanged.

A similar thing can be seen in Chikamatsu’s puppet play *Keisei Shimabara kairu* [*kaeru*] *gassen* [A battle of frogs in Shimabara, premiered in 1719]. In the story, a son of Fujiwara no Hidehira, a descendant of the Ainu, uses Christian magic to conjure up frogs. He eventually changes his name to Nanakusa Shirō, indicating Amakusa Shirō, the leader of the last and biggest Christian uprising in Shimabara (1637–1638) (HINO 1991, 280–81). Thus, as various foreign variables (Others) are freely combined within the *tōjin* as the foreign Other category, one Otherness (the Ainu) is easily exchangeable with another (Japanese Christians), both marginalized by the central government.

Commoners’ ideological use of such *inter*-national, stateless *tōjin* is obvious in the fact that they endowed the *tōjin* with such distinguishing features as nonsensicality, nonsense-talking, supernatural—thus suspicious—power, distinctive outfits, and acrobatic or extraordinary bodies. This means that the emphasis

was on marginalizing the *tōjin* or symbolically degrading them to such a degree that they often exhibit non-human characteristics. This reflexively shows what Japanese commoners, at the center of their cosmos, felt was required for a person to be fully Japanese: fluency in the Japanese language, (Japanese) common sense, a distinctive culture, and “normal” human bodies with “normal” capacities. Defining the *tōjin* as those who have too few or too many of these qualities, the commoners made *tōjin* a parody and a travesty. Thus, although visual representations of *tōjin* rather than *tōjin* themselves were the objects of their staring, the effect was the same: normalizing the viewer by abnormalizing the body on view (THOMSON 1999, 82). As the nonhuman and non-Japanese qualities specifically assigned to the *tōjin* include ones to be laughed at or disdained, nonelites’ construction of *tōjin* reveals ethnocentric value judgments as well as cosmological hierarchization.

In this sense, it did not matter whether *tōjin* representations conveyed the truth about foreigners. Rather, the primary concern of the commoners was whether the *tōjin* were sufficiently marginalized—in other words, whether the representations revealed what the Other was supposed to be. In this way, they could deal with *the* Other rather than *all* Others that included the Chinese as the superpower of their traditional world. This Other could be not only different but also inferior and less threatening, even though *tōjin*’s comical and cheerful features could not cover up the fearful (yet enticing) image of Christian magic. In short, popular imagery of *tōjin* demonstrates extensive and complex characterization of the Other, which served as a valuable, unique way for the nonelite to organize or categorize the Japanese Self vis-à-vis foreigners. Although premodern Japanese formed and shared a weaker sense of unified national identity than their modern descendants do, their reflexive marginalization of foreign peoples nevertheless helped establish and maintain boundaries of a collective identity that later proved valuable in the drive toward a modern nation state.

NOTES

1. I would like to thank members of the Chūbu Jinruigaku Danwakai and Dr. Richard Miller for their valuable comments and suggestions on earlier versions of this article.

2. See, for example, ARANO, ISHII, and MURAI 1992; EMORI 1990; KAMIYA 1990.

3. See ASAO 1970; BITŌ 1977; EMORI 1990; HOWELL 1994; MORRIS-SUZUKI 1998; NUMATA 1967; TOBY 1984, 1994.

4. In Japan Chinese characters are usually ascribed two or more readings, derived from Japanese, Chinese, and Korean. In this sense, Chinese characters represent a multivocal, multimeaning apparatus that is readily adaptable.

5. *Nihon kokugo daijiten*, first edition, s.v. “*ke-tōjin*.”

6. Coxinga was called Kokusen’ya (“Lord of the Imperial Surname”) because he had been given the name of the Ming imperial family. Coxinga had another name, Watōnai;

“wa” stands for Japan and “tō” for Tang, i.e., China. “The name may also be a kind of joke, where the characters are read *wakaranai*, meaning “I don’t know” (KEENE 1951, 161).

7. ODAGIRI’s page number is: Vol. 1–1, 12–2.

8. The story motif can be traced back to folktales in Tang-dynasty China in which the foreigners who find a treasure are usually Persians (ISHIDA 1967, 210–81, see also YANAGITA 1964, 102–103).

9. This highwire performance is called *kumo-mai* (spider dance). See GUNJI 1969, 73–83 for more detail.

10. See SHIN et al., 1985, fig. 10. Another title is *Chōsenjin uki-e* [Floating picture of Koreans].

11. In addition to this point, while KOBAYASHI (1985) sees Okumura’s print as a prototype that later artists, including Hanegawa Tōei, emulated, TOBY and KURODA (1994) argue that Hanegawa was the one who made the prototype.

12. Hokusai employs frilled collars and plumed hats to depict both Koreans and Dutch, and very similar-looking boots to depict Koreans, Dutch, and Chinese—or at least the famous Chinese demon-queller Zhong Kui (J: Shōki); see GIFU-SHI REKISHI HAKUBUTSUKAN 1992, fig. 53; GEMEENTEMUSEUM DEN HAAG 2000, fig. 18; SAKAMOTO and TOEDA 1993, fig. 115; TABAKO TO SHIO NO HAKUBUTSUKAN 1996, fig. 218. For implications of *raimon*, see IWASAKI 1996b, 14–15. The attached poem can be read: *Konokuni no fumi ya shitawan karahito mo yawaragu haru no yūshi gogen ni* (A foreigner who loves [a courtesan’s] letters of this country would calm down in the last night’s meeting of mellowing spring [=New Year]). I thank Fumiko Kobayashi and Laura Mueller for their help in analyzing this print (personal communication, 19 November 2002).

13. For a representative version of kabuki, see NAMIKI 1970. For visual images, see No. 100–7875 and 100–7877 in The Tsubouchi Memorial Theatre Museum, Waseda University.

14. TORITA uses *Imayō Ezo nishiki*, instead of *Imaori Ezo nishiki* (1970, 16).

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