

Christian-Muslim Relations A Bibliographical History

Volume 12. Asia, Africa and the Americas
(1700-1800)

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Arai Hakuseki

Kinmi, Kimiyoshi, Kageyu, Yogorō, Denzō

DATE OF BIRTH 24 March 1657
PLACE OF BIRTH Edo (present-day Tokyo)
DATE OF DEATH 29 June 1725
PLACE OF DEATH Edo

BIOGRAPHY

Arai Hakuseki was the pen name of Arai Kinmi, a prominent neo-Confucian scholar and administrator in late 17th- and early 18th-century Japan. Born into a Samurai family in Edo on 24 March 1657, he rose to prominence within the Tokugawa establishment after working in several prominent domains. He studied and wrote on a number of topics, including neo-Confucianism, history, geography and literature, and he spearheaded economic reform in the country. He died in Edo on 29 June 1725.

Hakuseki (his first name) was neither a Christian nor a Muslim. However, conversations with the imprisoned Jesuit Giovanni Battista Sidotti (1668-1714) formed the backbone of some of his works, in which these conversations or material from them are recorded. Sidotti, a member of the Jesuit Order, was born in Sicily in 1668, and entered Japan in 1708, despite the ban on Catholicism. Shortly afterwards, he was captured and imprisoned in the Kirishitan Yashiki (a prison for Christians) in Edo. Here, he and Hakuseki developed what might be termed a friendship, with their conversations forming the basis of Hakuseki's works *Seiyō kibun* and *Sairan igen*.

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WORKS ON CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS

Sairan igen, 'Varying words observed'

'Strange stories acquired'

'Collection of strange things'

'Listening to other languages'

DATE Written 1713, published 1802

ORIGINAL LANGUAGE Japanese

DESCRIPTION

Sairan igen is a five-volume geography based to some extent on Hakuseki's conversations with Sidotti and the Dutch, and his interaction with Dutch maps and Matteo Ricci's *Kunyu Wanguo Quantu*. Its connection to European, and more specifically, Jesuit knowledge should therefore be evident. Each volume covers a different continent, and is structured so as to focus on individual geographies or nations. The second volume deals with Africa and the third with Asia, and it is here that references to Islam are found. The 1820 publication of the text, which includes all the volumes in a single edition, is 180 pages long. A 12-volume expanded and revised version of the text entitled *Teisei zōyaku sairān igen* by Yamamura Saisuke (1770-1807) was published in 1802. The original was completed around 1713, but was not published or made widely available until the 19th century, although 18th-century versions also exist. Shintaro Ayusawa notes that, whilst the work appeared in 1713, it is said to have been completed only a few days before Hakuseki's death. However, no such 1725 manuscript has been discovered, and versions used today are based on the 1713 original ('Geography and Japanese knowledge', p. 285). The first major publication of the text is Yamamura's 1802 version, with frequent reprints of both this and Hakuseki's original appearing from that time. Ayusawa claims that there was no official publication of the text during the Edo Period (1603-1868) owing to its relation to Christianity and the West, but that it was circulated and copied by scholars in secret. Fabio Rambelli also notes that the text circulated in a copied form, arguing that it had a significant influence on Japanese geographical thought ('Muhammad learning the Dao', p. 301, n. 20). Here the 1820, single-bound version is used.

Both *Sairan igen* and the later *Seiyō kibun* contain material based on conversations between Hakuseki and Sidotti. The former is said to be a more professional and better organised work, perhaps due to its composition in classical Chinese (the literary and legal language of the period). Joshua A. Fogel notes that there is debate regarding the language used by Hakuseki and Sidotti to communicate. Fogel favours the possibility that Latin was used by Sidotti and translated by Dutch interpreters ('New thoughts', p. 12, n. 15). Nevertheless, although Hakuseki notes in *Seiyō kibun* the presence of translators, he also refers to conversations in Japanese and praises Sidotti's Japanese skills (trans. Ōkami and Isagai, p. 61). As noted, information found in the text is not only derived from conversations with Sidotti, but also from other texts and sources available to Hakuseki at the time of composition. It is therefore difficult to link all

of Hakuseki's comments on Islam to Christian sources. Indeed, Rambelli notes the influence of Chinese and Japanese language texts such as Li Xian and Wan An's *Da Ming yi tong ji* (1461), Fei Xin's *Xincha shenglan* (1436), and Terashima Ryōan's *Wakan sansei zue* (1712) ('Muhammad learning the Dao', pp. 301-2).

Hakuseki's discussion of Arabia (*Arabiya*) is particularly important for the topic of Christian-Muslim relations. In the main body of the text, he provides lengthy quotations from the Chinese works *Xincha shenglan* and *Da Ming yi tong ji* (Rambelli, 'Muhammad learning the Dao', pp. 301-2). On the whole, it therefore seems to lack Christian influence. However, in an appendix to the Arabian section, he relates more detailed information on Islam. Here, Hakuseki makes several observations, including the fact that Muslims do not eat pork, historical information about the Prophet, and so on (Hakuseki, *Sairan igen*: no page numbers given). Keiko Sakai notes that Hakuseki's historical observations share much with the Chinese version of the legend of Waqqas (Sakai, 'Islam, Muslims, neighbors in Asia?', p. 127). Nevertheless, references to Muslim dietary and other practices also bear similarities to texts from the Chinese mission field composed by Christians, such as Álvaro de Semedo's *Imperio de la China* (1642). Perhaps the most interesting statement that Hakuseki makes in this section is that Christianity (Catholicism) and Islam are of the same origin, and that they are separate sects of the same religion (Hakuseki, *Sairan igen*: no page numbers given). Rambelli notes that such a statement is congruent with contemporaneous Christian thought, which described the Prophet as a schismatic and Islam as a heresy. He also links the statement to conversations with Sidotti (Ramelli, 'Muhammad learning the Dao', p. 303).

A second passage of importance is Hakuseki's description of the Mughal (*Mogoru*) Empire. Here he devotes a large section to exploring Islam explicitly, linking the passage to Sidotti's testimony (Hakuseki, *Sairan igen*: no page numbers given). He notes the widespread presence of Islam in the region and the history of its arrival there, before describing the global geographical spread of religions with particular reference to Buddhism and Islam. It is particularly interesting to note that here he writes that Islam is different in origin from Buddhism, and dissimilar to Christianity. In a quotation attributed to Sidotti (here described only as the man from Rome), which ends the passage, Hakuseki writes that there are three types of religion, Christian (*Kirisuteyan*), heathen (*Heiden*) and Muslim (*Māgometan*). He continues to note the geographical distribution of these religions, writing that Islam is found throughout the Mughal

Empire, Asia and Turkey (*Toruka*). When this is compared to the appendix in the Arabia section, which describes Islam and Christianity as two sects of the same religion, it may appear that there is a contradiction here. Nevertheless, we may assume that, as Hakuseki found no contradiction when he composed the passages it posed no issue in his mind.

Hakuseki also mentions the widespread presence of Muslims in Ormuz (*Orumus*), Goa (*Goa*), Bengal (*Benkara*), Malacca (*Maroka*) and Java (*Yawa*), but such references are short and insignificant. Furthermore, in his exploration of Russia (*Mosukobiya*), he debates whether the area's inhabitants (who share common ancestry with the Mughals) are Muslim. Notably, he does not appear to refer to Islam or Muslims in his passages on Persia (*Harusha*) and Turkey (*Toruka*). Although some of this information was gained through interaction with Sidotti, the Dutch, and European maps, the influence of Christians is unclear.

Linguistically, the text mostly uses the Chinese term *Huihui jiao* (Japanese *Kaikaijyō*) to refer to Islam, and follows other Chinese literary conventions when referring to facets of Islam. However, in passages linked to Sidotti, the term *Māgometan* is used.

SIGNIFICANCE

Sairan igen had a strong influence on Japanese geographical scholarship, and the text is considered to be the origin of the world geographies written in the Edo period (Yazawa, 'Fr. Matteo Ricci's world map', p. 198). It even influenced the evolution of the Japanese language with its version of place names becoming the commonly used renderings. Although it influenced Japanese impressions of Islam (and indeed Christianity), it had no other particular significance for the development of Christian-Muslim relations. Rambelli notes that much of the information it records is several centuries old ('Muhammad learning the Dao', p. 302), whereas Hans Martin Krämer notes that Japanese impressions of Islam remained inaccurate until the mid-19th century ('Pan-Asianism's religious undercurrents', p. 621). Contemporaneously, the practice of Christianity was prohibited and foreign trade highly restricted, and so the text was not exported. Moreover, it does not appear to have retained popularity in the modern period, with few reprints being made in the 20th century. Despite all this, by quoting Sidotti and utilising Sidotti's thoughts, Hakuseki's work records Christian views on Islam of the time. These are primarily descriptive in nature and are neutral in tone, lacking any of the negative connotations one might associate with European works. This was probably the result of Hakuseki's authorship of the text rather than neutrality on the part of Sidotti. As noted, however, the knowledge shown of Islam

is dated, and more often than not its practices or rumours about the religion appear to be treated as exotic curiosities.

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Seiyō kibun, 'Accounts of the West'

'Western accounts'

'Tidings of the West'

DATE Written between 1713 and 1725

ORIGINAL LANGUAGE Chinese

DESCRIPTION

There is some debate over when *Seiyō kibun* was written, but most scholars agree that it was completed sometime between 1713 or 1715 and 1725 (Nakai, 'Arai Hakuseki's Confucian perspective', p. 261), and most favour an earlier dating of 1715, with some placing it earlier than *Sairan igen*. The text is usually divided into three volumes, the first an account of conversations with Sidotti, the second a global geography, and the third addressing several topics, most notably Christianity and religion more generally. The material on Islam matches what is found in *Sairan igen*, but in comparison Islam lacks detailed description. Here, the 1980 modern Japanese translation by Ōkami Katsuyoshi and Isagai Hiroshi is referred to, alongside Matsumura Akira's 1975 reprint of the original.

The first reference to Islam appears to come in the second volume during Hakuseki's exploration of the Mughal Empire. Here, much of the lengthier material found in *Sairan igen* is absent, although Sidotti's description of the world's three religions (Christianity, heathenism, and Islam), which appears there, is present (pp. 125-6). One important difference is that, whereas *Sairan igen* states that Islam is found in the Mughal Empire, Asia and Turkey, by contrast *Seiyō kibun* records the Mughal Empire, Africa and Turkey as the loci of Islam (p. 125). Although there is this slight difference, the information presented should not be seen as erroneous as, according to Hakuseki, Turkey is located within Africa. He also notes that he suspects the *Māgometan* religion is probably the same as the Chinese *Huihui jiao* (Japanese *Kaikikyō*), although he cannot confirm this through use of Ricci's *Kunyu Wanguo Quantu* and Dutch maps, because the Mughal Empire and *Huihui* (here meaning Uyghur rather than Islamic) region are separated by a great distance (p. 126).

The next (and final) reference to Islam appears in the third volume. Following a lengthy discussion of Christianity, Hakuseki turns to other religions. Here he reiterates the world's three religions, and adds greater detail than he had in the previous passage, by discussing denominations, for instance (p. 199). He refers to Islam not only by the term *Māgometan*, but also as *Kaikyō* (p. 200). Hakuseki devotes more space here to describing its geographical spread than in the passage in the second volume, but adds little more than the fact that the religion is perhaps also found in Russia (p. 200).

SIGNIFICANCE

Unlike *Sairan igen*, this work has remained popular into the modern period, with regular reprints and translations into modern Japanese. This

has also been reflected in modern scholarship, with a greater number of academic works focusing on the text. An English translation of Hakuseki's description of the three world religions from the third volume has also been published (Josephson, *Invention of religion in Japan*, pp. 263-4). Nevertheless, due to the scarcity of references to Islam and the restrictions on Christianity and foreign trade mentioned above, like *Sairan igen* this text generally lacks much significance for Christian-Muslim relations as such. References to Islam, which are attributed to Sidotti, are short and neutral in nature. All references to the religion are part of passages describing the names and geographical spread of world religions, and are purely descriptive. Unlike *Sairan igen*, here the sense that Islam is an exotic curiosity is absent, and there are no references to the practices of the religion.

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