

## ENGELBERT KAEMPFER'S JAPANESE LIBRARY

by K. B. GARDNER

It may not be generally known that the collection of Japanese books in the British Museum includes a group of about 40 volumes which once belonged to Engelbert Kaempfer, the German physician and traveller. Kaempfer, who visited Japan in 1690-1692, and is well known for his *History of Japan*, accumulated a small library of Japanese books during his travels. In this article a first attempt is made to introduce this small collection and to describe the manner in which it came to the British Museum.

Japan was not an unknown country when Kaempfer visited it towards the end of the seventeenth century. Since the first landing of shipwrecked Portuguese sailors in 1542 or 1543 and the arrival of St. Francis Xavier in 1549, the eventful "Christian Century" had elapsed and Japan had indeed had more than her fill of travellers, traders and missionaries from Europe. Some of them had written more or less detailed accounts of the country and people, the most notable being the collections of letters and reports from the Jesuit fathers in Japan to their superiors at Goa, Lisbon and Rome, and the *Account of Japan* by Francis Caron. But Kaempfer was perhaps the first learned visitor to Japan who had no mercantile or proselytizing axe to grind and could devote almost the whole of his time and energy to satisfying his curiosity about the country, its history, geography, products, customs, religious beliefs, arts and government. This he did in a thoroughgoing fashion, though the gathering of information was not without its difficulties. Following on the expulsion of all missionaries from Japan, the closing of all churches and the proscription of Christian belief and worship among the Japanese, which Ieyasu's decree of 1614 had enforced, the Shogun's government had again been seriously alarmed by the Shimabara rebellion of 1637-1638 which clearly showed that Christianity (and foreign influence) had by no means been stamped out in Japan. This led to the final prohibition of trade with the Portuguese from Macao in 1639 and the almost complete withdrawal of Japan from contact with the outside world. The *sakoku* or "closed country" policy of the Bakufu, frowning as it did on all contact with Europeans and exposure to Western ideas, made things exceedingly difficult for Kaempfer in his search for information. He records in the preface to his *History of Japan* that "those in particular who

are more immediately concerned with our affairs, are all obliged, by a solemn oath, not to discourse with us, nor to discover any thing to us, of the condition of their Country, the Religions therein established, the private transactions at Court and in the Empire, and other things; and they are so far necessitated to be upon their guard, as by the same oath they are tied down to watch and to betray one another". However, Kaempfer found ways and means of by-passing this official conspiracy of silence. He won the confidence and friendship of his interpreters and other officials, partly by teaching them the elements of western science and medicine, and treating them when sick; partly by plying them "with a cordial and plentiful supply of European liquors". This clearly had some effect in loosening their tongues and overcoming their scruples with regard to the oath that bound them, but Kaempfer was still glad to call upon another source of information. This was a young Japanese whom he engaged as his servant and who was allowed to accompany him as interpreter throughout the whole two years 1690-1692, thus providing Kaempfer with a constant source of information both verbal and written. We may assume that it was through this man that Kaempfer acquired his Japanese books, now in the British Museum.

In the Introduction to his English translation of Kaempfer's *History of Japan*, published in 1727, J. G. Scheuchzer tells how the news of Kaempfer's death in 1716 reached Sir Hans Sloane in England, and Sloane, being impressed by Kaempfer's reputation and published works and knowing "that he must have collected and brought with him to Europe many natural and artificial curiosities", set about purchasing these and all Kaempfer's drawings and manuscript notes. In this way Sloane acquired most of the books which Kaempfer had secured in Japan, and in so doing he may well have imported into England the first Japanese printed books ever to reach this country.

A list of Kaempfer's Japanese books, compiled from his manuscript writings and from the books themselves which came into Sir Hans Sloane's possession, is given by Scheuchzer (who was also Sloane's librarian) in his Introduction to the *History of Japan*. The list is not large—it comprises only about sixty books and maps—and fifteen of these were not known to Scheuchzer except as titles quoted in Kaempfer's writings. The remainder, marked by Scheuchzer with an asterisk, are described as being "now in the valuable collection of Sir Hans Sloane", having been brought back by Kaempfer from Japan in 1692. When Sloane's library was acquired for the nation as one of the foundation collections of the British Museum in 1753, all of Kaempfer's Japanese books should have come with it. But no complete catalogue of Sloane's printed books exists, and it is now hard to say exactly which of the books on the shelves of the Museum Library belonged to Sloane. An article by J. S. Finch in the *Transactions of the Bibliographical*

*Society*\* indicates that between 1700 and 1738 Sloane gave a number of his books to the Bodleian Library, and it is just possible that a few of the Japanese books were among them.

Whatever the explanation, the fact remains that several of the Japanese books quoted with an asterisk in Scheuchzer's list are not now to be found in the Museum's Japanese collection, despite careful searching. One difficulty, of course, is the brevity of the descriptions and the unfamiliar or inaccurate transliteration of some of the Japanese titles in this list. Identification is further complicated by the scattered locations of the Kaempfer books, which have not hitherto been kept together as a single unit, either in the Department of Printed Books to which they belonged until 1891, or in the Department of Oriental Printed Books and Mss., to which they were transferred when that department was founded in 1892. The result is that these books have never had any distinguishing mark to identify them with Kaempfer, save the manuscript notes in his hand which can be found in some of them. Only a handful of Japanese books entered the British Museum from other sources during the eighteenth century, however, and it can safely be said that all the books which could have belonged to Kaempfer have now been found and isolated from the rest. It is a great pity, as this research has proved, that a few of the more interesting items in Scheuchzer's list are missing and perhaps never reached the Museum at all. One of them is the geographical work which Kaempfer calls *Sitzi Jossu*, on which all the material in Book I, chapter 5, of his *History of Japan* is said to be based.

But on the other hand some books have been found in the Museum which clearly belonged to Kaempfer and yet were not recognized as such by Scheuchzer. Their titles figure in his list, it is true, but without the asterisk which he employed to mark those books which had found their way into Sloane's collection. Either these books escaped Scheuchzer's notice altogether, or he saw them but did not recognise them as items on his own list.

With one or two exceptions Kaempfer's books are not in themselves remarkable. They probably represent a fair cross-section of the kind of literature that was generally current in Japan towards the end of the seventeenth century. Among them are popular works of fiction or semi-historical narratives (such as the *Ise monogatari* and *Osaka monogatari*), an illustrated encyclopaedia, historical and legal works, guides to Buddhist temples, copy books, calendars, itineraries and the like. All, it should be noted, are books intended for popular reading, with text in pure Japanese. Editions of the Chinese classics, Buddhist doctrinal works and native Kambun literature are conspicuously absent, and there are few Japanese works of literary

\* *Trans. Bibl. Soc., London*, Vol. XXII, No. 1, June 1941, pp. 67-72.

merit. Maps are fairly numerous, as one might expect from Kaempfer's interest in the geography of the country. There is a large scale picture-map of the port of Nagasaki, hand-coloured, with sketches of Dutch ships and foreigners in costume, and a table giving the distances of various foreign ports from Japan in *ri*.

Of the books, one of the most interesting is *Shimabara kassenki*, an eye-witness account of Iemitsu's campaign against the Christians at Shimabara in 1637-38. It contains fifteen lively wood-block illustrations. Japanese reference books do not record any block-printed edition of this work before the 1st year of Hōei, 1704. By that time Kaempfer had long left Japan. This edition must therefore be regarded as an earlier one, probably of the 1680's, which remains unknown to the bibliographers.

Much the same can be said of Kaempfer's copy of the *Osaka monogatari*, an account of the siege of Osaka castle by Ieyasu in 1615. This has 19 illustrations and was published by Yasuda Jūbei at Kyōto in 1671. No record of this edition exists in Japanese reference works so far consulted.

Kaempfer obviously gained much useful information on Japanese botany and natural history from the pictorial encyclopaedia *Kimmō zui* in 21 parts, compiled by Nakamura Tekisai. Kaempfer's copy of this work is now bound up in a single volume, with some duplicate parts bound separately, but when Scheuchzer drew up his list the various parts were evidently still loose and he did not recognize them as component parts of a single work. Consequently, Scheuchzer extends his list considerably by describing "Kinmodsui. A Japanese Herbal . . .", "A Book of Birds", "An Anatomical Treatise . . .", "A Book of Minerals, Stones, Corals . . .", and so on, as separate items. This copy of *Kimmō zui* is undated, but it differs from the 1660 edition in the British Museum and could hardly belong to the annotated edition of 1695, since Kaempfer left Japan in 1692. It seems fair to conclude that this is an unrecorded edition published in the period 1670-1690.

The presence of these Japanese books in the British Museum during the eighteenth century must have been something of an embarrassment to the cataloguers of the time. This much is clear from a glance at the handwritten notes inside the covers of many of them. In 1770 the books were examined by one Chetqua, a colourful character who seems to have been well known in London coffee-house society in the late eighteenth century and who probably hailed from Canton. Whatever Chetqua's qualifications as a scholar in his native language, he was certainly no Japanologist. The descriptions of Kaempfer's books which he dictated to an English assistant, to be noted down inside the cover of each, are highly amusing and testify to the richness of Chetqua's imagination, if to nothing else. Evidently the unfamiliar *Kana* writing and the sprawling cursive script in which so many Japanese books of the seventeenth century were blockprinted proved

altogether too much for Chetqua, who proceeded to invent where he could not guess. The trusting assistant copied it all down with complete confidence. Typical of Chetqua's pronouncements are the following.

"This Book is difficult to be comprehended by the Chinese themselves and is supposed to contain some abstract Doctrines of their Religion." (Note inside the book *Taihei bukan taizen*, a register of the feudal aristocracy giving family crests, lineage, residence, income, etc.)

"This Book is in the old Chinese Character which Chetqua does not sufficiently understand to explain. But it probably is an Account of the different Dresses of the Empire in different Times." (*Ise monogatari shō*. Selections from the *Ise monogatari* with commentary notes, illustrated by Hishikawa Moronobu.)

"A Book of Instruction by a Chinese Priestess." (Chetqua's description of the text of *Nokiba no ue*, a Nō play by Zeami Motokiyo.)

"A Book of Examination for the Office of Mandarin." (A collection of five Nō plays by Zenchiku, Motokiyo, etc.)

It is pleasing to be able to record, in this anniversary number for Arthur Waley, that it was Dr. Waley himself who saw that all was not well with Chetqua's account of the last two items, and added in pencil in his distinctive handwriting a correct description of the books. No doubt Dr. Waley has long forgotten this, but his pencilled notes survive (though unsigned) as another small tribute to his astonishingly wide-ranging scholarship.

The British Museum hopes to publish in the near future a catalogue of the books which Kaempfer brought back from Japan. This will bring to light no startling discoveries of Japanese literary works unknown to bibliographers, and few unrecorded editions, but it will at least place on record a full description of this small library of historic interest, in all probability the first Japanese books ever seen in this country.

## "BEING" IN WESTERN PHILOSOPHY COMPARED WITH SHIH/FEI AND YU/WU IN CHINESE PHILOSOPHY

by A. C. GRAHAM

### Introduction

*Part I.* The treatment of six functions of English "to be" in Classical Chinese

- A. Existence. "There is a man"
- B. General copula linking nouns. "He is a man"
- C. Identity. "He is Charles"
- D. Roles. "He is a soldier"
- E. Copula with adjectives. "He is tall"
- F. Copula with location. "He is in Paris"

Conclusions

*Part II.* *Shih* 是/fei 非 and *yu* 有/wu 無 in Chinese philosophy.

Introduction

- A. *Shih* and *fei* in *Chuang-tzu* and the Mohist canons
- B. *Yu* and *wu* in Taoism and Neo-Confucianism
- C. The treatment of "to be" in Chinese translations of Western philosophers

*Appendix.* The supposed vagueness of Chinese

### INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

To what extent are differences between Chinese and Western thought affected by grammatical differences between Chinese and the Indo-European languages? Every Western sinologist knows that there is no exact equivalent in his own language for such a word as *jen* 仁 or *tê* 德, and that as long as he thinks of it as synonymous with "benevolence" or "virtue" he will impose Western preconceptions on the thought he is studying. He is bound to suspect that there are also deeper structural differences which mislead him in the same way, and which it is much harder to identify. This question, vital to the study of Chinese philosophy and still hardly touched, is of interest to others besides sinologists. It is now widely recognized that the relation between the thought of a society and its language presents an