

Persian Muslim Merchants in Thailand and their Activities in the 17th Century : Especially on their visits to Japan¹⁾

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I

In the beginning I have to say that I will limit the theme of this paper to the Persian Muslim merchants' visits from Siam to Japan during the 17th century, though my original plan was to deal with their activities in broader aspects. This is a revised version of my previous paper on the same topic [Nagashima 1989]. Several historians have dealt with this topic. Some of them have taken this topic as a part of the so-called "Moor" merchants' activities in Siam. Some others have taken this topic as a part of the Japan-Siam relations [See those papers mentioned below and also Arasaratnam: 120]. According to Dhiravat na Pombejra's study, the "Moors" comprised Indian Muslims, Arabs, Turks, and Persians. They were numerous in Ayutthaya and Mergui, and they were, with the Chinese, the wealthiest merchants in Ayutthaya. The fortunes of the Moors reached a high point during King Narai's reign, when many leading khunnang (high ranking officials) were Moors, including several provincial governors. The Persian Aqa Muhammad, or Okphra Sinaowarat, an ancestor of the famous Bunnag family, was one of Narai's favourite courtiers during the 1670s. Moor strength at court suffered a setback when Aqa Muhammad died in 1679 without a worthy successor [Pombejra: 81-82]. The main stage of their trading activities was the Indian Ocean, especially the Bay of Bengal. However, they also played an important role in the Siamese trade with Japan and China at least during the 1660s. In this paper I will at first trace the Moor merchants' visits to Japan chronologically, and then will dis-

cuss some relevant points. "Moors" in the European sources of the period can usually be identified with the above nations. But sometimes the term "moor(s)" was used to mean Muslim(s) in general, as we see our sources referring to the Chinese Moors ("de Moorse Chinees") and black Moors ("swarte mooren") [DB1661 : 183 ; VOC1236 : 765]. However, it is safe to say that Chinese and Malays organized different communities respectively from the Moors in Siam. This is also shown in some maps of Ayutthaya of those days such as the French map of Ayutthaya c. 1685, in which the quarters of Moors, Malays and Chinese are separated from each other [cf. L. Sternstein : facing p.88, fig.5 ; also cf. Hutchinson : facing p.xvi, fig.3]. I therefore usually use the term "Moors" in the narrower sense as comprising Indian Muslims, Arabs, Turks and Persians. I also use the term "Muslim" in the same sense except in the case of "Chinese Muslim". As we have mentioned in the preceding passage, Persians played the most important roles among the Moors in Siam.

II

So far as I know, Moor merchants' visits to Japan from Ayutthaya can be traced back to the 1630s. According to Y. Nagazumi's translation of the diary of the VOC factory at Hirado, a Moor merchant was allowed to go on board a Dutch ship at Hirado bound for Ayutthaya in November 1634. He seems to have been the person who was named in the records as a brother of Sitton, the highest Rajjasila at Ayutthaya [Nagazumi 1969-70 : III, 191 ; DJ : I, 195 ; DJT : Ib, 52]. However, I do not know what kind of position the Rajjasila was. I do not know whether Siton and his brother were Persians, either.

The diary of September 8th, 1635 noted that 54 Chinese and 9 Moors had come to Nagasaki on board a junk from Siam via Cochinchina recently and one of the Moors was a brother of Radia Ebrahim [Nagazumi 1969-70 : III, 257-258, 398 ; DJ : I, 264, II, 125 ; DJT : Ib, 150-151, IIa, 154].

These Moors visited Nagasaki again the next year and sold their goods there [Nagazumi 1969-70 : III, 398 ; DJ : II, 125 ; DJT : IIa, 154]. One of them remained at Nagasaki that year and left for Siam aboard a Dutch ship in October 1637. He was called Hessingh Colij [Hasan Quli?] and was Radia Ebrahim's brother-in-

-law [Nagazumi 1969-70 : III, 494, 498 ; DJ : III, 54, 58, DJT : IIIa, 69-70, 76].

Hessingh Colij departed from Siam for Japan aboard a Chinese junk in May 1639. He is said to have been responsible for Radia Ebrahim's death in the year. Radia Ebrahim was reported to have died (or to have been executed by the king of Ayutthaya) due to Hessingh Colij's false behavior towards Radia [Nagazumi 1969-70 : IV, 260-261 ; DJ : IV, 101-102 ; DJT : IVa, 130 ; Smith : 30].

G. V. Smith mentions in his study that Radia Ebrahim was the most important Thai Muslim merchant at that time [Smith 1977 : 30]. M. Kanai also notes that he was a Muslim captain who sailed actively in the south sea [DJT : Ib, 151]. I do not know whether he was a Persian or not. In any case, however, his punishment seems to have been a great blow to Moors' trade with Japan. Moor merchants' visit to Japan from Ayutthaya seem to have been discontinued up to the beginning of the 1660s.

III

It was around 1660 that Moor merchants in Thailand resumed their visit to Japan. Joan Bouchelion, the director of the Dutch factory at Nagasaki wrote to the Governor-General at Batavia on the 15th October, 1660 as follows :

That nation [Moors] had sailed to this kingdom [Japan] aboard the junks from Siam previously, but for the last 20 or 24 years people here have not learned about them except one or two sailors being aboard the junks from Siam [VOC 1233 : 785r].

It is therefore since 1660, as we will see justly, that the Moor merchants began to visit Japan again in some numbers, though G. V. Smith says that "the king and other Thai traders successfully reentered the Japan trade in 1659 by manning their junks with Chinese and Muslim sailors" [Smith : 36].

According to the above-mentioned Joan Bouchelion, a junk from Siam arrived at Nagasaki on the 10th September, 1660, and the sails of which were made of Coast [Coromandel Coast] cloth. The junk was borrowed from the Chinese at Siam and carried some Chinese and 22 Moors. They were native Moors and they resided at Siam [Ayutthaya] under the famous two chiefs. They

brought many Indian merchandise such as diverse kinds of textiles of Coromandel and Bengal, shark skins and others, in addition to Siamese goods. These Indian goods were brought into Ayutthaya through Tenasserim in great quantities. These Moor merchants had their servants, friends and trade masters at those places [Coromandel and Bengal] and could buy anything at cheaper prices than the Dutch could. They lived a prodigal life in Nagasaki, having a costly house and taking several Japanese into their service besides their own servants. They were saying that they would bring here more quantity of every kind of cloth and even raw silk of Bengal the next time. Joan Bouchelion expresses his strong concern that if this Siam-Japan trade by the Moor merchants continues, VOC's trade with Coromandel and Bengal will be disturbed seriously [AJ73 : 10 & 13.9.1660].

According to the director, the same junk set out again from Ayutthaya and reached Nagasaki on 4th August 1661, bringing on board 23 Moors as well as 54 Chinese. The nakhuda or master of the junk was called Mamet Mousoen and the junk belonged to Opra Sinorat, the captain of those Moors who lived at Ayutthaya. The junk had a pass which had been issued on 29th May of that year by Jan van Rijk, the director of the VOC at Ayutthaya. He wrote in the pass that due to several reasons he could not reject the issuing of the pass [AJ74 : 4.8.1661].

According to the above passage, therefore, the junk was dispatched by Opra Sinorat [Okphra Sinaowarat], the famous Persian merchant [Cf. also Jan Aubin : 102-112]. Some, if not all, of the 23 Moor merchants who visited Japan in 1661 were, therefore, probably Persian Muslims who belonged to the community under Opra Sinorat.

That the junk which sailed to Japan in the previous year also belonged to Opra Sinorat is also confirmed by the Dagregister Batavia. The same source notes that the date of the departure of the junk from Ayutthaya was on 29th May, 1661 [DB1661 : 363].

However, we also have some slightly different information. Mainly relying on the General Missive written at Batavia on 26th December, 1662, S.Iwao writes as follows :

Two ships of King Narai left Siam on July 6, 1661 for Japan, being furnished with a letter of recommendation dated May 29, which had been prepared by Jan van Rijk,

director of the Dutch Factory in Siam, and the ships arrived at Nagasaki in August of the same year and left for home after making successful trade at the port. Learning from bitter experiences of King Prasat T'ong who had failed in restoring diplomatic and commercial relations with Japan on several occasions, King Narai sent out the two ships under the name of a Moor, Oja Pieschijt, although the voyage was made by the direct order of the King. ... Unfortunately, however, one of the ships was wrecked on the way back from Nagasaki on a rock of Paracells off the shore of Annam [Iwao : 22-23].

While the director of the VOC at Nagasaki describes that a ship was sent to Japan by Opra Sinorat, Iwao interprets that King Narai sent out the two ships under the name of a Moor, Oja Pieschijt, although the voyage was made by the direct order of the King.

The information about the two junks sent by the king of Siam under the name of Oja Pieschijt presented by Iwao is very important. However, as G.V. Smith and J. Aubin have pointed out [Smith : 37 ; Aubin : 104n.64], these two junks mentioned by Iwao were dispatched not in 1661 but in 1662, which is clearly seen in the passages of both Jan van Rijk's "Raport" to Batavia written on 3rd November, 1662 and in the "Generale Missive" (which is based on the former) written at Batavia on 26th December, 1662 [VOC 1240 : 1488r, 1489r, 1496r-1497r ; VOC 1238 : 158-159, 164-165]. On the other hand, Jan van Rijk's letter of recommendation was issued on 29th May in 1661 (to the junks despatched in the same year) and not in 1662. Further, the junk which was wrecked on a rock of Paracells off the shore of Annam was not the junk of 1662 but that of 1661.

The junk of 1661 left Nagasaki on 31st January, 1662 [AJ75 : 31.1.1662]. As Iwao mentions, however, the junk was wrecked off the Islands of Paracells, and only 22 naked Chinese escaped with their lives [VOC 1238 : 165 ; GM : III, 424 ; Cf. Records : II, 39-40].

Moor merchants were constructing a large junk at Ayutthaya in 1661 in order to sail for Japan the next season [GM : III, 377]. And as we have seen, King Narai sent out the two junks to Japan on 6th July, 1662. They were manned by unshaven Chinese and Moors [VOC1238 : 164 ; Records : II, 39]. One of them reached

Nagasaki on 22nd August of the same year, and set out for Siam at the end of January of the next year [AJ75 : 22.8.1662 ; AJ76 : 29, 30 & 31.1.1663].

The other of the two junks of 1662 seems to have reached Nagasaki in July, 1663, after having spent the winter at Quinam (Cochin China). The director of the VOC at Nagasaki describes in his diary as follows :

On 11th July, 1663, a junk which belonged to, or was fitted out by, the Moor Opra Signorat reached here. It had left Siam the previous year and had spent the winter at Quinam [AJ76 : 11.7.1663].

The junk left for home on 15th of January, 1664. It was wrecked, however, due to a tempest off the Ryukyu Islands [or rather the Koshikijima Island off Kagoshima] on 24th of the same month and lost most of her cargoes. 29 Moors [probably the correct number being 23 Moors] and 35 or 36 Chinese were rescued, given Japanese clothes and sent back by the lord of Satsuma-han to Nagasaki on board some Japanese ships. They reached Nagasaki on the 10th of June. They went aboard a Dutch ship called the Buijenskercke on 21st October of that year. The ship sailed for Siam the next day [AJ77 : 15.1.1664. ; 10.6.1664 ; 20, 21 & 22.10.1664]. She reached Siam on 16th November in the same year [DB1664 : 599].

The activities of these Moors in 1663 and 1664 are also recorded in the *Totshuji kaisho nichiroku* (the diary of the office of the interpreters of Chinese) at Nagasaki. According to it, Moors came to Nagasaki on board at least two junks from Siam, though at least three junks reached Nagasaki from Siam in 1663. They reached Nagasaki on 11th July and on 2nd September, 1663 respectively. Opra Sinorat invested his capital in both of the junks. The king of Siam also invested his capital in at least one of them. A Japanese (the captain of the Japanese community residing at Ayutthaya) also invested his capital at least in the first junk. The nakhudas of both the first and the third junks were Chinese. It was discovered that on the second junk 赤梅檀 [red sandalwood (?)], money and coral were sent as presents by the above mentioned Japanese to his brother and another Japanese merchant in Japan. Hahes [Hafiz ?], a Moor who might have been the nakhuda of the second junk, submitted his written excuse in "the Moor scripts." No Japanese interpreters, however, could

read it. But one of them was able to interpret what he expressed verbally. As we will see later, the Moor language spoken by Hahes was probably Persian. He excused that he had been ordered by the chief of the Moors, i.e. Opra Sinorat, immediately before the departure of the junk, to board it and sail for Japan, and he had nothing to do with the coral. Otsubashinousu [Opra Sinorat]'s letter was also submitted by the person in charge of the second junk to the interpreters' office. Thus it is clear that not only the first junk but also the second junk was fitted out by Opra Sinorat [TN : 6-7,8,27-28].

Details of the shipwreck and especially the way the money saved from the wrecked junk was distributed, are also written in the above diary of the interpreters' office. It shows that this trade was financed mainly by Opra Sinorat, the king of Siam and Kiya [i.e. Kimura] Hanzaemon, i.e. the chief of the Japanese community at Ayutthaya [TN : 8,27-28,35].

No ships from Siam or at least no ships of the Moors arrived at Nagasaki in 1664. This must be one of the reasons why the Moor merchants whose lives had been saved in the shipwreck returned to Siam aboard a Dutch ship.

According to the Dutch diary, a junk from Siam reached Nagasaki in 1665, and two junks of the king of Siam arrived at Nagasaki in 1666. But there is no mention of Moors. Smith shows, however, that in 1666 the Siamese king's junk to Japan was manned by Moors as well as Thais and Thai-born Chinese [Smith : 40]. The junk of 1665 was sent out from Siam in June 1664 and passed the winter season at a port in Quinam, according to S.Iwao's study [Iwao : 23].

In August 1667, a party of Moor merchants arrived at Nagasaki aboard a Chinese junk from Siam, carrying all kinds of textiles [AJ80 : 1667.8.21,22].

So far as I have looked through the Dutch diaries at Nagasaki from 1668 to 1673 cursorily, I could not find any reports about Moors' visits to Japan during the same period. I have not yet examined any Dutch sources after 1673.

It is, however, known from a Japanese record that two "Moor" merchants visited Nagasaki on board a Siamese ship in 1680. According to the book, *Tsuko ichiran* (Vol.7), these two merchants called themselves Motarma and Qimir-eshu respectively. According to their statement, they were both born at a place

called Shupafang of the "Moor Country" [Hayashi : 20]. Shupafang seems to be Isfahan in Iran. They started from Shupafang five years before and reached a place called Balaoba after a three months' voyage. Balaoba might have been Malabar. They left Balaoba in February 1680, and came to Siam for trade after a voyage of about 50 days. Then, following a suggestion from the king of Siam, they came to Japan in August 1680 in order to buy porcelain and lacquered wares suitable for the Moor country [Hayashi : 20-21]. If their statement is reliable, they were not residents of Ayutthaya but travelers from Shupafang.

The number of Moor merchants who visited Japan from Siam in a year, if any, must have decreased by that time. According to Y. Ishii's study, a junk from Siam carried 56 Chinese and one Siamese in 1692 and another junk brought 102 Chinese and 4 Siamese in 1693 [Ishii & Yoshikawa : 85-89]. None of them seem to have carried any Moor or Persian merchants.

IV

In the preceding passages I followed Moor merchants visits from Ayutthaya to Japan. I will now discuss some aspects of their activities which appeared in those passages and in some other sources.

First, who organized this Siam-Japan trade? As we have seen, according to the Generale Missive, S. Iwao has said that learning from the bitter experiences of King Prasat T'ong, who had failed in restoring diplomatic and commercial relations with Japan on several occasions, King Narai sent out the two ships under the name of a Moor, Oja Pieschijt, although the voyage was made by the direct order of the King. Oja Pieschijt was a Persian. He is identified as Abdur Razzaq Gilani. At that time he was in favour of King Narai for a short time, though he was not the Okya Phrakhlang, i.e. the minister for commerce and foreign affairs. He and Opra Sinorat must have been the two chiefs of the Moor community at Ayutthaya. Oja Pieschijt's relations with the VOC at Ayutthaya were worsened due to various reasons. And he began to assemble a Japan cargo to be shipped on crown junks in 1662. Deer hides, a VOC export monopoly product, were also included in it. There is therefore no doubt that he was also connected to the two crown junks which sailed to Japan

in 1662. But the director of the VOC at Nagasaki never mentioned his name in his diary on the king's junks or on the junks of the Moors which sailed from Siam to Japan at that time. The director says that those ships were fitted out by Opra Sinorat since 1660 continuously. The Siamese crown junk to China which was seized by a VOC ship off Hainan in August 1661 had also been fitted out by Opra Sinorat. It was therefore not Oja Pieschijt but Opra Sinorat who was more deeply connected with Siam's trade with the countries in the East China Sea such as Japan and China. In any case, however, Oja Pieschijt lost royal favour soon afterwards and he was thrown into prison in March 1663 [For this paragraph, see Ponbejra : 275-276, 292-293].

We have seen the Siamese crown ships often visited Japan in 1660s and after. According to Y. Ishii's study, however, the Siamese king did not own any large number of ships for his foreign trade. So far as his trade in the South China Sea was concerned, he selected some Chinese ships and invested his capital in them. In that case the voyage and trade were all managed by the masters (*sendo*, i.e. *nakhuda*) of the respective ships, and Siamese officials had nothing to do with the business abroad. The crew of the Chinese ships were at the same time incorporated into the Siamese kingdom as officials and they were given ranks called *sakdina* marks based on their positions on their ships. It is thought that the Siamese trade in the Bay of Bengal was also probably under the similar consignment system as in the South China Sea [Ishii : 80].

It may therefore not be crucial to ask whether the Siamese ships were actually fitted out by the king or by Opra Sinorat or by the Chinese. But as we have seen, Moor merchants sometimes fitted out ships which they constructed themselves. Even these ships were manned by a large number of Chinese. The Moors aboard these ships were mainly merchants. However, we sometimes see there were "black Moors" aboard such Moor ships, such as the one captured by the Dutch ship off Hainan in 1661 [VOC1236 : 765]. They seem to have been sailors. As we have seen, the *nakhuda* of such a junk was sometimes Moor, though sometimes Chinese. This is a characteristic of the ships fitted out by the Moors. Once, a junk which reached Nagasaki in 1660 hoisted the sails of Coromandel cloth [*cust doeck*], as we have seen. Chinese junks usually used sails made of bamboo,

though they also used small supplementary cloth sails at the same time. These show that Opra Sinorat tried to develop the trade by Moors with Japan and China at least in the 1660s.

Now we will turn to see the goods which Moor merchants imported into and exported from Japan. The goods which they imported via Cochin China into Japan in 1636 consisted of both Chinese and Vietnamese raw silk and other Southeast Asian goods, and there was no special reference to Indian goods [Nagazumi 1669-70 : III, 398 ; DJ : II, 125 ; DJT : IIa, 154]. But the lists of the goods imported into Japan by the Moor merchants in the 1660s contained, besides Southeast Asian goods, some Indian goods such as many kinds of Coromandel and Bengal textiles and Coromandel shark skin [AJ73 : 13.9.1660. ; VOC1233 : 784v ; AJ74 : 4.8.1661 ; AJ76 : 11.7.1663 ; AJ80 : 21&22.8.1667]. The list of the merchandise brought by non-Muslim junks from Siam in the 1660s, on the other hand, contained very few Indian piecegoods, if any [Cf. Nagazumi 1987 : 92, 95]. The main items of export from Japan by the Moor merchants in the 1660s were silver, copper, porcelain and lacquered wares. The Chinese merchants, however, also exported almost the same items as the Moor merchants did [Cf. Ishii & Yoshikawa : 107].

At the end of this paper I will introduce a Japanese interpreters' manual. Its title is the *Yakushi chotanwa*. It was compiled by a interpreter of the Vietnamese language in 1796. The 5th volume of it is about the so-called "Mouru" language, and it contains about 1200 Mouru sentences and words, though the number may decrease to about 700 or 1000 after removing overlapped words. I have found that these Mouru sentences and words are mostly Persian, though nearly 30 Hindi or Urdu words are also included in them [Nagashima 1986a & b]. One sample sentence runs in Japanese as follows (translated into English) :

Are you not a European who has gone to Persia, and resided there for many years, learned the Persian language, put on Persian clothes and come to Japan pretending to be a Persian ? [Cf. Nagashima 1986a & b]

Another sentence runs as follows :

After leaving my own country such and such years before, I went to Siam and after such and such years I sailed aboard a ship from Siam to Japan [Cf. Nagashima 1986a & b].

It also contains, for example, many terms of the crew on the

ships, and names of spices, as follows :

nākhudā, karrānī, sarhang, mu'allim, khalāṣī, jahāz, suk-kān, langar

qirmiz, sandal, baqqam, qalambak, agar, dār-chīnī, qaran-ful, girdū [Nagashima 1986a & b].

To tell the truth there is a strange fact that Mouru (Moor) merchants were believed in Japan throughout the Edo period to have been those from Mouru country, i.e. a country in north India [Mughal Empire] [Cf. Nagashima 1986a : 150]. But I will not go into this problem in this paper. I only say that the Moor merchants might have replied to the Japanese that they were Mughals, or that they were originated from the Mughal Empire. In the *Ship of Sulaiman* the author sometimes refers to Iranians (Persians) as Mughals (*Mughūl*) [Muhammad Rabi' : 75, 98 ; O'Kane : 77, 100]. In fact Opra Sinorat and other Moor merchants residing in Ayutthaya had strong ties with India such as Bengal and Coromandel, as we have seen. Further, Aqa Muhammad (Opra Sinorat), for example, invited 200 Iranians residing in India and recruited them as the guards of the Siamese King [Muhammad Rabi' : 98 ; O'Kane : 100]. In any way it was in 1672 that two persons were appointed as interpreters of the Mouru language for the first time in Japan. It must have been a result of the Moor merchants' visits to Japan in the preceding years.

NOTE

- 1) This is a slightly revised version of my paper read at the 14th IAHA Conference held at Bangkok in May, 1996.

ABBREVIATIONS AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

AJ : Archief Japan ; Dagregisters Gehouden bij de Opperhoofden van het Nederlandsche Factorij in Japan. [AJ73 : 10. 9. 1660] means the diary of 10th September, 1660. AJ indicates the new class number of Archief Japan at The Algemeen Rijksarchief in The Hague.

DB : *Dagregister gehouden int Casteel Batavia vant passerende daer ter plaetse als over geheel Nederlands India (1624-1682)*, J. A. van der Chijs & J. E. Heeres a. o., (eds.), 31 vols, The Hague, 1888-1931.

DJ : *Nihon Kankei Kaigai Shiryō : Historical Documents in foreign lan-*

- guages relating to Japan (original texts) Selection I : Diaries Kept by the Heads of the Dutch Factory in Japan*, Historiographical Institute (*Shiryō Hensanjo*), The University of Tokyo (ed.), 4 vols., Tokyo, 1974-1981.
- DJ T : Japanese Translation of the above Documents, Selection I : *Oranda Shōkanchō Nikki*, The above Institute (ed.), 4vols (2 parts each), Tokyo, 1975-1984.
- TN : *Dainihon kinsei shiryō : Tōtsūji kaisho nichiroku*, The Historiographical Institute (*Shiryō Hensanjo*) of The University of Tokyo (ed.), Vol. 1, Tokyo, 1955.
- VOC : Overgekomen Brieven en Papieren uit Indie. [VOC 1233 : 785r] means the front page of the folio 785 of the above document. [785 v] implies the rear page of the folio 785. VOC indicates the new class number at The Algemeen Rijksarchief in The Hague.
- GM : *Generale Missiven van Gouverneurs-Generaal en Raden aan Heren XVII der Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie*, 7 delen. W. Ph. Coolhaas (ed.), 's-Gravenhage, 1960-79.
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