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Beyond Japan Transcript

[Series 2, Episode 27: Maps & Imagined Travel with Sonia Favi](#)

Edited by [Oliver Moxham](#), Host and Producer (25/5/2022)

MAPS & IMAGINED TRAVEL
WITH DR SONIA FAVI



OM: Oliver Moxham

SF: Sonia Favi

OM: Hello and welcome to *Beyond Japan*, an interdisciplinary podcast that looks at the broad reach of Japanese Studies from within and beyond Japan. This podcast is brought to you by the Centre for Japanese Studies at the Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures in collaboration with the University of East Anglia. I'm your host, Oliver Moxham, Research Project Coordinator at the Sainsbury Institute and researcher of language and Japanese war heritage.

This week we were joined by [Dr Sonia Favi](#), researcher at the University of Turin, to discuss the history of imagined travel. Sonia's digital exhibition, '[Travels in Tokugawa Japan \(1603-1868\): A Virtual Journey](#)', explores how late Edo-period maps indulged the imagination of those unable to journey across the country due to restrictive travelling conditions, something we are all too familiar with in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We hope you enjoy the show.

OM: Okay, good morning, Sonia, welcome to the podcast.

SF: Thank you, good morning.

OM: So, first of all, we'd like to know a bit more about you. Can you tell us about your area of expertise and how your interests that brought you there?

SF: Yeah. Thank you very much. First of all, many thanks again for your invitation to be a part of this podcast. I'm really glad to be here.

So, my name is Sonia Favi. I'd say my main areas of expertise are Japanese history and book history, with a special focus on travel studies. For most of my career, I've been working on travel related sources and on travel encounters within Japan and between Japan and Europe. When I applied for my PhD, which I completed at Ca' Foscari University in Venice in 2013, I was at first mainly interested in doing research on book history, and I received funding for that by the European Social Fund. One condition for obtaining the PhD scholarship was for my research to involve a collaboration with an Italian cultural institution for the announcement of their Japan related holdings.

So, this is how I started a partnership with the Marciana National Library in Venice, which has an extensive collection of Japan related materials dated from the 16th and 17th centuries, mainly commercially published travel records connected to the activities of Jesuit missionaries in Japan. I mapped this collection, creating an online database now hosted on the Ca' Foscari University of Venice website, and that was how I developed an interest in the travel encounters that led to the production and circulation of this sort of material in Italy.

This became the main focus of my thesis, which analysed the cultural and intellectual exchanges and the editorial processes that led to the popularity of Japan as a subject in travel literature in 16th century Italy. This later also became the subject of a monograph

which was published in 2018. In the meantime, my newfound interest in the history of the cultural exchanges between Japan and Italy led me to be involved in a couple of other projects related to both book history and travel history.

I participated in a project led by the National Institute of Japanese Literature of Tokyo, which involved the cataloguing of a collection of Japanese manuscripts put together by the Italian missionary Mario Marega, who was in Japan from the 1930s to the late 1970s. The manuscripts, which are mostly legal documents related to the prosecution cases of Christians in Japan in the 17th century, are now preserved in the Vatican Library in Rome. I was also part of the project, led by Professor Akamuro of the Art Research Center of Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto, for the mapping, digitization, cataloguing and study of Japanese collections reserved in European libraries and museums. I worked in particular on a second collection put together by Mario Marega and preserved at the Pontificia Salesiana University in Rome, which includes woodblock prints and printed books and maps.

It was through this collection that I developed a passion for maps, and then in 2016, I learned of the existence of the Japanese collection at the John Rylands Library of the University of Manchester, which had been previously catalogued by Professor Peter Kornicki in 1993. The collection included a wide and still mostly unstudied group of maps dated from the Tokugawa or Edo period (1603-1868) and from the Meiji period (1868-1912), and this piqued my interest and led me to apply for a visiting fellowship at the library [which] I got.

From the weeks I spent at the Rylands Library, I gained enough material to work on a research proposal for a longer project related to the collection. The proposal was titled 'Travel in Tokugawa Period Japan', and it ended up winning a [Marie Skłodowska-Curie] Fellowship in the context of the EU-founded Horizon 2020 European Research Frame, and the project started in 2019, and it ended actually a few months ago, in 2021. It was meant to investigate the cultural and social meaning of travel as both a physical and a virtual and intellectual practice in 18th and 19th century Japan, and it also led to a two-year partnership with the John Rylands Library, which I am very grateful for because it opened many opportunities for me and also helped in opening new directions for my research. I'd say that's about it.

OM: It's fascinating. So, your recent publications have looked at the circulation of people and literature between Japan and Italy in the 16th century. Could you give us an idea of who would be able to travel such great distances then, and to what end were they travelling?

SF: Yeah, it was mainly European merchants, Christian missionaries, and at least in two occasions before the mid-17th century, also Japanese dignitaries travelling to Europe. So, I'd say that the exchanges and travel encounters that happened between Europe and Japan in the 16th century can be understood mainly in light of commercial drive and of religious order. Commercial drive was one of the engines of the so-called European age of exploration, a period of time usually located by historians between the 15th and the 17th centuries, when several European countries engaged in naval

explorations of areas of the world that were either unknown to them or only very partially explored. Japan was one of those areas before the 15th century. No European travel that we know of ever set foot in the archipelago and only vague references to the country had appeared in European literature.

A key event for the arrival of the first European travellers in Japan was the voyage to India by the Portuguese explorer Vasco Da Gama between 1497 and 1499. This voyage for the first time rounded the Cape of Good Hope on the Southern tip of Africa, and it was a milestone for the creation of a Portuguese commercial Empire in Asia as it opened a new sea route which made it much easier for merchants to reach the region. After the Gama's voyage, the Portuguese proceeded to create the so-called *Estado da Índia*, or "State of India", which is perhaps better understood as a structured group of trade posts rather than as a state in the proper sense of the term, and they launched a very profitable exchange with several Asian countries, including China.

Initially, they didn't show any particular interest in Japan, perhaps because, as I mentioned, very little was known in Europe about the country at the time, but then in 1543, a small group of Portuguese travellers who had joined the crew of a Chinese ship were driven by a storm to the shores of Tanegashima, a small island to the south of Japan. The local lord, Tanegashima Tokitaka, welcomed the travellers and showed interest in the goods that they were carrying and especially in their guns, so much so that he bought two of them. A Portuguese blacksmith was then called to the island the

following year in order to help local blacksmiths in reproducing them. This initial exchange sparked a mutual interest in commerce, and by 1555 the first ships officially sent by the *Estado da Índia* reached the Japanese port of Hirado. By the end of the 16th century, Spanish settlers in the Philippines also began to trade with Japan, and at the beginning of the 17th century trade posts were created on the archipelago by the Dutch and British East India Companies.

This kept on until the late 1630s, when a change in political circumstances in Japan led to the expulsion of all European merchants, with the exception of members of the Dutch East India Company. As for religious drive, it was another key motivation for the Portuguese expansion and more generally for travel between Europe and Japan. In the 16th century, under the protection of the Portuguese Crown, the Franciscan Order and the Dominican Order carried out their earliest missions to convert the local population of India in 1500 and 1503 respectively, and then in 1538, a fiscal policy was established in Goa, giving official sanction to their efforts.

As far as Japan was concerned, however, the missionary effort was mainly undertaken by the Society of Jesus, which was founded right when the first Portuguese travellers were about to land in Japan in 1540 by Ignatius of Loyola and nine other core fathers. These founding fathers identified the purpose of the order in the defence and propagation of the faith and strongly emphasized the role of education, a trait that defines the Jesuits in relation to other orders. Their initial agreement also required a subscription to a specific vow which bound members of the Society to travel anywhere

in the world to perform their ministry, and this gave birth to what was in all respects an order of itinerant missionaries. In this sense, travel was part of the Society ever since its foundation, and members of the Society, mainly of Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian origins, came to exert a big role in the diffusion of Christianity, both in the Pacific area and in the Atlantic area.

The first Jesuit father to set foot in Asia was one of the members of the original group of the Society's founders, Francis Xavier, who was sent by Ignatius on a mission to India in the very year of the creation of the order and was then followed by 40 or so missionaries in a matter of less than ten years. Xavier himself sailed from India to Japan in 1549, motivated by a very promising encounter with a Japanese native named Yajiro, or 'Angelo', and in Japan a group of missionaries was able to establish connections with a number of local lords, particularly in the Kyushu area, and to give birth to a flourishing local mission.

Unfortunately for them, at the end of the 16th century began the persecution of Christians in Japan, which became systematic by 1614, again in light of changing political circumstances. So, all in all, the Jesuits didn't accomplish much in terms of conversions, but they were still instrumental in bringing elements of the so-called *nanba bunka*, or 'culture of the Southern barbarians', as the Europeans were called in Japan, and this included commercial products, but also linguistic, cultural, and artistic influences of various kinds. It was also through the Jesuits that Japan as a geographic reality became familiar to a growing section of the European public. Members of the

Society sent regular records to their superiors in Rome meant not only to relay information but also to spread the defined news, also as a way to gain patronage for the Society, and this was why the letters, in edited form, were often commercially distributed and became vehicles through which the European public collected information about the countries in which the missionaries were stationed, including Japan.

It was also through the mediation of missionaries that the Japanese travellers reached Europe. The first group travelled there as part of the so-called 'Tensho Shisetsu', or 'embassy of the Tensho era', which is the time period going from 1573 to 1592. The embassy was nominally sent by a group of local lords from Southern Japan, but in reality it was carefully orchestrated by the Jesuit Alessandro Valignano, who wanted to showcase the success of the Japanese mission in Europe. It was composed of four very young boys who left Japan in 1582 and travelled through India to Portugal, Spain, and Italy, and returned in 1519 after a very long, memorable journey where they were received by many representatives of the European nobility.

Then in 1613, a second embassy, this time promoted by the Franciscan Luis Sotelo and by the dignitary and explorer of Hasekura Tsunenaga in the name of the local lord of Northern Japan, reached Europe again, but this time travelling through the Pacific and Mexico.

OM: I see. It's fascinating to hear about those young boys being sent to Europe from Japan. A lot of the history around this period tends to emphasize Europeans going to

Japan and writing back home about it. Is there any Japanese literature from the time about travels in Europe?

SF: Not much Japanese literature, but there's a lot of literature published in Europe about that because the embassy made a great impression in Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian cities. So, we have both archival documents recording the passing of the boys who travel to the different members of the Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish nobility, and we also have the gazetteers and other published materials announcing their passing.

OM: So, while you've looked at the Jesuits travelling to and from Japan, you've also looked at recreational travel in the late Edo period. After the country had closed its borders to foreigners, how did this differ from religiously motivated travel?

SF: I actually argue that there is a level of overlap between the two, at least as far as late Edo period travellers were concerned. So, the Tokugawa family imposed a number of travel restrictions, not only on journeys abroad but also on travel within Japan. These measures were devised as a way to preserve the power of the Tokugawa as the self-declared peacekeepers of Japan after a long period of internal war. However, a number of people were still allowed or even required to travel for a variety of reasons.

There were, for example, the officials and messengers serving the Tokugawa, the scholars who embarked on journeys for their studies and sometimes conducted service for the authorities, and the local lords who had formed loyalty to the Tokugawa were required to build residences called *yashiki* in the Tokugawa capital in order to comply to

a complex hostage system called *sankin-kōtai*, or 'alternate attendance'. In accordance with this system, parts of their families had to live in Edo permanently, and the lords themselves had to periodically travel there with their retinue of warriors, alternating between living in the capital and in their domains.

There were also, of course, people shipping goods or moving around to provide services. The Tokugawa themselves were actually frequent buyers of some products that came from far away locations. For example, the tea they consumed was especially imported from Uji near Kyoto. So, it happened that even if initially the Tokugawa did not intend to allow massive movements of travellers, the very nature of the political structure they controlled made it basically inevitable.

It also happened by the end of the 17th century, as the country remained politically stable, that the Tokugawa became more lenient in granting travel permits for other reasons, particularly health and religious reasons, in a way that sometimes allowed a little bending of the rules, and that's where recreational trouble came into play.

Authorities were particularly keen on granting permits for religious travel, and in some cases, pilgrimage was even considered a desirable or necessary step in the life of a young adult. The diffusion of pilgrimages was also helped by political stability, which meant that the country was relatively at peace and that roads were well controlled and safer by improvements made in the road system, which made it quicker to move around. [Also], a general rise in living standards meant that more people could afford to travel.

Another factor was the flourishing of religious confraternities called *kō*, which organized journeys to temples, shrines, and to the sacred mountains of Japan. As a result of these many factors, by the beginning of the 19th century, a real pilgrimage boom was taking place in Japan. In the context of this boom, religious travel ended up encompassing also a recreational dimension. As the authorities tended not to endorse travel motivated solely by recreation, pilgrimages became an occasion for what was called *yusan tabi*, or 'pleasure-seeking travel', or *monomi yusan*, 'sightseeing'.

A way to escape from the everyday, pilgrims tended to travel to faraway destinations with an unprecedented rate and frequency, and they also tended to follow different routes in the outbound and return legs of the trip to touch as many landmarks as possible along the road. They tended to specifically aim for *meisho*, a term that can be translated as 'famous places', and a term that encompassed a large variety of sites such as historical sites, or *kyūseki*, famous literal landmarks of *utamakura* (famous poetry), sightseeing spots, but also commercial activities of various kinds. For example, inns, restaurants, and shops provide huge sections within travel guides. Trips were consequently often several weeks and even months long, above all for members of confraternities and for wealthy travellers. Religious sites such as temples and shrines were, of course, considered *meisho* in their own right, and they were visited for reasons that often went beyond their sacred nature.

Some pilgrims even lost sight of the religious meaning of what they were doing. We have reports, for example, of pilgrimage travelling to the Ise Shrine, which was one of

the most popular pilgrimage destinations, and then barely visiting it, and rushing to the commercial activities and entertainment of the *monzen-machi*, the 'temple-front town', and major temples and shrines from their side capitalized on the influx of travellers, offering lodging, food, and even souvenirs to pilgrims.

In this sense, even if the Tokugawa government never officially recognized pleasure seeking as an acceptable reason for travel, the Edo period marked in all respects the birth of a tourist industry in which religious travel played a central role.

OM: So, let's turn to your virtual exhibition, 'Travels in Tokagawa Japan, 1603-1868: A Virtual Journey'. What themes does the exhibit cover and what inspired you in its curation?

SF: So, the virtual exhibition was created in partnership with the John Ryland's Library as part of my Marie Curie project. One of the objectives of the project was to announce the Japanese collection at the Rylands, making its travel-related material, particularly its maps, more widely accessible both to a public of specialists and to a more general public. A project that was more specifically addressed to specialists was the Japanese Maps Portal that we created with the Manchester Digital Collections, a metadata-rich and high-resolution image repository specific for research collections as ways to engage with visitors.

Instead, we opted for collection encounters and for exhibitions. A physical exhibition was launched within the Rylands Gallery in November 2021, and it closed at the end of

this past March, and the virtual exhibition was launched in October 2021 as a permanent feature of the Manchester Digital Exhibition's website. In this sense, the exhibition's original aim was to showcase the Japanese maps collection permanently and in a way that might be engaging for a public of non-specialists. We linked every item in the exhibition to the detailed descriptions included in Manchester Digital Collections, but I also created an exhibition-specific, shorter description, which would give viewers an immediate sense of the item, and I also developed a narrative which put every item in context.

My inspiration in creating the narrative was the idea to at least partly recreate for visitors the experience of using the items in the ways they were originally envisioned for. In other words, considering this is a travel-related collection, I wanted to offer our visitors the opportunity to experience a sort of virtual journey in pre-modern Japan. The landing page of the exhibition briefly illustrates how in Edo Japan, or Tokugawa Japan, the ruling Tokugawa family banned travel with the exception of travel connected to a number of essential reasons, and it also describes how well some people found ways to circumvent the restrictions. Many also had the opportunity to travel virtually thanks to cartographic and topographic materials.

Then the exhibition is structured into three main sections, each one focused on a central theme. The first section, 'Japan and the Outside World', illustrates how, even if travel abroad was banned, cartography made it possible for the public to put Japan in relation with the wider world and far away travel destinations, and also to learn about foreign

Sciences, particularly European surveying and cartographic techniques imported from the Dutch.

The second section, titled 'An Interconnected Country', then presents images and maps that reflect the nature of premodern Japan as a partially centralized state with a complex web of internal communication networks. A subsection, titled 'The Countries Within the Countries', focuses on the Japanese state internal structure of provinces and regions, and another subsection, titled 'Spider Web Routes', focuses on items mapping sea and land routes within Japan.

Finally, the third section, titled 'The Worlds Within Japan', illustrates the logistics of travel within the country and focuses on key travel destinations and how they were represented in cartography and topography. In this section, there are three subsections which focus respectively on Japan's national or famous places, which were popular travel destinations that had some sort of artistic sacred landscape of commercial relevance.

On Japanese cities and the way they were represented in maps in a rolling urban society and on ports in Japan that, at different stages of Japanese early modern history, allowed the supervised presence of and commerce, with foreigners becoming bridges to the outside world, we decided to enrich this section of the exhibition with the GIS Map of Japan Digital Map of Japan, where all the items included are linked in correspondence with their actual geographical locations. Through the map, visitors can better envision

the geographical distribution of the travel destinations, and they can also choose to navigate them more freely in a way that is independent from my narrative.

My hope is that by exploring the exhibition, visitors will allow themselves to metaphorically get lost and will get to virtually experience the geographical reality that is both physically and temporally remote.

OM: Fascinating, and any listeners who would like to follow up on this will find a link to the exhibition in the episode description afterwards. So, as we mentioned earlier, where you have travellers, you also have the distribution of literature and knowledge, something at the heart of your exhibition. Through its displays of beautifully illustrated maps, it's easy to find yourself longing to have walked the scenic roads of Edo Japan looking over these, but you make the case that many living in Japan at the time would have done the exact same thing due to obstacles to travel. Could you unpack that for us a bit?

SF: Yeah. So, I've already mentioned that the Tokugawa family put travel restrictions in place as a way to preserve political stability in the country and how a number of people were still allowed or even compelled to travel. However, not everyone had the same access to travel. For a start, some local authorities were stricter than others in granting travel permits. Moreover, class, status, and gender were two factors that had an impact on the possibility to move and also to access specific spaces. For example, even if – or maybe precisely because – they were at the top of the social hierarchy, men and women from the samurai class, the warrior class, had usually less chances than

commoners to engage in pilgrimages and in recreational travel. Women belonging to the higher ranks of the samurai class were expected to move only for strictly official business, such as when they got married and moved into their husband's home. In particular, samurai women residing in Edo were usually hostages in the context of the *sankin-kōtai* system, the 'alternate attendance' system that I described earlier. So, they were legally bound to stay in the Tokugawa capital.

For men too, social obligations made it difficult to leave their stations even at times of the year such as winter where peasants were more at liberty to temporarily neglect their jobs. Even taking detours from official journeys to embark on pilgrimages required explicit permission from the authorities. Moreover, lower-ranking samurai often didn't have the financial means to travel, so the vast majority of travellers tended to consist of male commoners, above all, merchants.

Women commoners did travel in far greater numbers than before and, while we know of only a few confraternities who had women as their members, it was not so uncommon for them to join their assets in pilgrimage even if some sacred spaces were restricted to them. Women, on the other hand, were still bound to their role into the economy of their households and to their husbands who, in theory, had to give them permission to leave. We do have testimonies of women flaunting the rules, above all in the context of well-accepted pilgrimage practices, such as the pilgrimage to Ise Shrine, but generally speaking, it was above all women who could not claim a direct relation to a man, such

as nuns, widows, and unmarried women, or those who were at the fringes of society that had greater freedom to travel.

So, for those who couldn't embark on a journey, either because they couldn't get permits for it or because they couldn't afford it, literature was one effective way to travel with the mind. Just as today we travel with the world using books, television, and the Internet, with tools such as the virtual exhibition, people from the Edo period could and would embark on virtual journeys thanks to travel-related objects, literature, and art, and they were helped in this by the commercial print revolution that happened in Japan in the Edo period, a revolution that was connected on the one hand to innovations in printing techniques and on the other hand to a growing literacy rate, also favoured by the general rise in living standards that I have already mentioned.

Commercial publishing houses grew and increasingly turned to producing literature addressed to consumers of all social standings, and with the growing popularity of travel and the development of a tourist industry, travel literature, and other travel-related printed media came to play a major role in the editorial policies of many of them.

Woodblock printed maps such as those included in the virtual exhibition were part of that editorial culture and, as the exhibition shows, they included many different kinds of material road maps, regional maps of famous places, city maps, or maps of specific sites, above all religious sites. Many of these maps were not drawn to scale or with exactness in mind and, in many cases, they were too big to be even brought on the road. What inspired them was the idea of captivating users and to guide them virtually

within the location, hence also the frequent use of a hybrid cartographical and pictorial style.

Moreover, travel was a dominant theme also in other media. For example, the board games called *dōchū sugoroku*, which were a sort of snake and ladders game, were very popular for both children and adults. The paper board of the games often featured major highways such as the very well-known Tōkaidō highway. Travel-related visuals included a wide range of landscape prints and also travel guidebooks, some clearly meant for imaginary travel rather than an actual guide to be taken on the road. This is, for example, the case of the illustrated guides called *Meisho Zue* or 'Illustrated Guides to Famous Places', which were very large multi-volume books with detailed pictures and descriptions of famous places, complete with historical and legendary narrations. Ample geographical and topographical sections were also included in many encyclopaedias, sometimes also depicting real and invented foreign countries.

Last but not least, there were fictional works, in particular, ever since the 17th century, many picaresque stories were published featuring two main characters on a journey, *Tōkaidōchū Hizakurige*, translated as 'Shank's Mare' by the author, Jippensha Ikku, was published in 1802 as one late example of this literary trend, and after its release it became a true best seller. So, works like this served to stimulate and guide travel, but they were also a way to explore Edo Japan with the mind without leaving one's home. The popularity of topographic media, even in peripheral areas, contributed to the development for the first time in Japanese history of a shared geographical and also

social lexicon among people belonging to different local cultures and to different social classes.

OM: As a slight aside, it's remarkable, looking at these maps now, how accurately they captured enormous tracts of land. I've always been curious how are panoramic bird's eye view maps created in Tokugawa Japan?

SF: So, it depends on the map, but in many cases the route was some type of land survey, either conducted by the author of the map or by some previous surveyor. For example, one of the items in the Rylands Collection displayed in the virtual exhibition is a beautiful aerial map of Mount Fuji called *Fuji Sanshikedenzu*, or 'A Complete Map of the True Form of Mount Fuji'. This is by an artist named Hashimoto Sadahide who was active in the mid-19th century and was famous for his very accurate and bird's eye views, both in landscape prints and maps, and those in some cases were based on previous sources, but mostly they were based on actual journeys to the place by the artist, who would walk around it and reconstruct it by assembling a collection of partial views.

In other cases, the landscape was represented in a perspective that was pictorial rather than cartographical from a specific point of view, and this was the case, of course, of many landscape prints, but also of some hybrid cartographic and pictorial materials. For example, the virtual exhibition includes a 19th century illustration of the famous places of Edo, where the city is represented as a whole in a way that clearly draws on city maps,

but in single point perspective as seen from the direction of the present-day Sumida ward.

Other types of maps were based on the use of Dutch surveying techniques, that is, on land measurements supported by the use of a sextant, and that type of knowledge was strictly reserved for Shogunate officials, at least until the mid-18th century, and it was not very widespread even after that. However, commercial maps of larger areas, such as provincial and regional maps, road maps, and city maps where in many cases based on administrative maps drawn through official Shogunate service. For example, the map of the Tōkaidō highway titled *Tōkaidō Bunken Ezu*, or 'Sectional Map of the Tōkaidō', included in the virtual exhibition, was based on a mid-17th century map drawn on the basis of a survey conducted by two cartographers in the service of the Tokugawa.

Of course, even with an administrative map as a model, the commercial version tended to be different from the original. There was a matter of censorship of classified geographical information, but there was also the fact that commercial maps tended to alter the original model in order to cater to the interests of the public. A very clear example of this are maps of the old imperial capital of Kyoto. Maps of Kyoto produced in Edo period, mostly at their origin were a group of administrative maps commissioned in the first half of the 17th century by the Tokugawa to the Nakai, a family of master cartographers appointed to manage public works in Kyoto. Their maps were black and white, highly detailed, and very functional, and they only represented the central area of the city, the section called *rakuchū*, which literally means 'within the capital'.

Later commercial maps took their model, but they expanded on it. For example, they started to represent the area called *rakugai*, which literally means 'outside of the capital', and which basically included the hills in the outskirts of Kyoto, where many of the travel attractions of the city, such as temples and shrines, were actually located. Including *rakugai* meant that for the majority of the commercial maps the scale actually tended to be very inaccurate, as the area around Kyoto had to be compressed in order to include all the attractions, but objectivity wasn't necessarily a preoccupation. On the contrary, the scale of certain buildings in the outskirts, for example, the Kiyomizu Temple was exaggerated on purpose and made even more conspicuous by the addition of colours and of pictorial elements, and this is actually a point worth making: richness in details didn't necessarily mean accurateness. What really mattered for most commercial map creators was capturing the imagination of viewers.

OM: Amazing. I must admit, the ban on foreign travel, strict checkpoints, and 'essential travel only' rules sounded eerily familiar to our most recent circumstances in the COVID-19 pandemic. I'm sure many of our listeners are looking at travel adverts to Japan with the same longing as many Tokugawa Japanese poring over maps. Following this exhibition, what do you think drives this common desire to travel?

SF: I think I'll borrow the words of Jippensha Ikku, the author of the fictional work I mentioned earlier, *Tōkaidōchū Hizakurige*. I will quote a small passage from the translation by Thomas Sachel, titled 'Shank's Mare'. This is on page 237:

"Naturally, one is curious about the people who are travelling the same roads, and those whose fates are linked together at the public inns are not tired by convention as when they live in the same row of houses, but can open their hearts to each other and talk 'til they are tired. On the road, also, one has no trouble from bill collectors at the end of the month, nor is there any rice box on their shoulder for the rats to get at. Truly, travelling means cleaning the life of care. With your straw sandals and your leggings, you can wander wherever you like and enjoy the indescribable pleasures of sea and sky."

I love how universally this applies and how modern it sounds, and I think it is a very effective description of the joys of travel. In travel there's, first of all, an element of discovery of new things, which I think appeals to a very core characteristic of human beings, curiosity, which translates in a thirst for knowledge and for new encounters.

Then there is another element which is the escape from the everyday. Travel encompasses a destruction and temporary respite from common worries, be it physical travel or be it being lost in a book or in a piece of art. In the COVID-19 pandemic, I think we truly realized just how enriching and relieving travel can be as an experience. With the exhibition, the staff at the Rylands and I actually hoped to offer a small opportunity for escape from confinement. So, the project was in a sense also a child of the pandemic.

OM: Beautiful. Well, thank you for answering all my questions, Sonia. Before we finish the episode, could you share with us what other projects are currently working on?

SF: First of all, many thanks to you too for having me here today, it was very fun. So, as for my current projects, aside from wrapping up a few residual ideas for publications connected to my Marie Curie [project], I'm actually settling into a new job right now as a tenure-track researcher at the Department of Humanities at the University of Turin in Italy. We started a nice partnership with the Oriental Arts Museum of Turin, where an exhibition on Japanese *kakimono*, that is paintings displayed on wall hangings, just closed this week, and some of those were landscape paintings. We had the occasion to do a few public engagement events together, and I hope this will lead to future collaborations, maybe also for digital projects.

In terms of research, I have moved on a little bit from the Tokugawa period to the Meiji period. At the Rylands, I also had the occasion to work on a late-19th century tourist map of Japan by a society called the *Kihin Kai*, or 'Welcome Society', which was one of the earliest associations for the promotion of tourism in the world, and this led me to interrogate the ways in which tourism and travel maps and guidebooks were used as tools of soft power at an early stage of Japan's history as a nation state, which has translated in an article recently published for Japan Forum. I'd love to work further on this.

I've been recently involved in a research group at the University of Geneva for a project on globetrotters at the end of the 19th century, and I'm very excited to work on it. Moreover, as a little side project, I'm also working with Dr Rebecca Widely, a former colleague from the Rylands, on a project on a Meiji period traveller of a different kind, a

gynaecologist named Shibata Koichi, who travelled to Germany at the end of the 19th century and published a booklet on obstetrics in German, which was then translated in English and in Japanese. We recently presented our findings at the Association for Health History annual conference, and we hope to publish a paper in the near future.

So, I guess you might say that travel remains at the core of my research, and perhaps precisely because of that, I'm very willing to explore new avenues, so to say. Thank you.

OM: That's definitely a diverse research approach. Thank you for joining once again, Sonia, it's been a real pleasure.

SF: Thank you, thank you very much.

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Join us for our next episode with Adam Hunt, PhD candidate at the University of Sheffield, to compare crime and safety between Japan and the UK.

We hope you will join us then. Thank you for listening.