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DOI: [10.15293/2226-3365.1606.04](https://doi.org/10.15293/2226-3365.1606.04)

УДК 929.62

## ОСНОВНЫЕ НАПРАВЛЕНИЯ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ ЯПОНСКОЙ ГЕРАЛЬДИКИ В ЗАПАДНОЙ ИСТОРИОГРАФИИ\*

А. А. Речкалова, Е. Э. Войтишек (Новосибирск, Россия)

*В статье представлен обзор основных направлений исследования японской геральдики в Западной историографии. Несмотря на то, что знакомство европейцев с японскими гербами состоялось сравнительно поздно, в конце XVI в., европейские и американские ученые внесли большой вклад в изучение данного феномена.*

*Процесс изучения японской геральдики на Западе имеет свою специфику, выявление которой и является основной целью данной статьи. Поскольку на протяжении долгого времени ка-мон не воспринимались на Западе в качестве гербов или иных видов геральдических символов и не определялись при помощи этих терминов. Вероятно, причина состояла в различии структуры и облика гербов в Европе и Японии. Когда европейцам удалось установить, что в мире существуют и другие геральдические традиции, помимо европейской, они попытались объяснить новое явление с помощью привычных им терминов и определений. Этот метод исследования нельзя назвать успешным, поскольку японская геральдика включает в себя множество аспектов, которые невозможно объяснить при помощи терминологии европейского культурного ареала. В конце XX в. многие западные исследователи поставили под сомнение рациональность использования европейских терминологии и методологии применительно к японской геральдике. Проблема эффективности методологической базы европейской историографии истории японской геральдики вызывает активные дискуссии вплоть до настоящего времени. В контексте того, что ни в Китае, ни в Корее в настоящее время не обнаружено следов существования геральдики, проблема допустимости сравнительного анализа японской геральдической системы в рамках европейской традиции весьма актуальна не только для западной, но и для мировой историографии в целом.*

**Ключевые слова:** историография, японская геральдика, компаративистский подход, герб, ка-мон.

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\* Исследование проведено за счет гранта Российского научного фонда (проект № 14-28-00045)

**Речкалова Анастасия Александровна** – аспирант отделения востоковедения Гуманитарного института, Новосибирский государственный университет.

E-mail: [rechkalova.nasutya@gmail.com](mailto:rechkalova.nasutya@gmail.com)

**Войтишек Елена Эдмундовна** – доктор исторических наук, заведующая кафедрой и отделением востоковедения Гуманитарного института, ведущий научный сотрудник лаборатории гуманитарных исследований, Новосибирский государственный университет.

E-mail: [elenavoyt@academ.org](mailto:elenavoyt@academ.org)



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DOI: [10.15293/2226-3365.1606.04](https://doi.org/10.15293/2226-3365.1606.04)

Anastasia Aleksandrovna Rechkalova, PhD student, Department of Oriental Studies, Institute of Humanity, Novosibirsk State University.

ORCID ID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2049-1938>

E-mail: [rechkalova.nasutya@gmail.com](mailto:rechkalova.nasutya@gmail.com)

Elena Edmundovna Voytishek, Doctor of Historical Sciences, PhD, Professor, Head of Department of Oriental Studies, Institute of Humanity, Novosibirsk State University.

ORCID ID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8054-6369>

E-mail: [elenavoyt@academ.org](mailto:elenavoyt@academ.org)

## TRENDS OF JAPANESE HERALDRY STUDIES WITHIN WESTERN HISTORIOGRAPHY\*

### Abstract

*Study of Japanese heraldry in Western historiography started relatively late, but can be highly appreciated as rich materials of the Medieval history of Japan. Development of Western heraldic historiography can be divided into the following stages:*

*1. The end of XIX cent. – 80 years XX cent. The trend of comparative study prevailed in the field of Japanese research of heraldry. Western historians applied terms, definitions and concepts accepted in European heraldry to the Japanese coat-of-arms. This method was not successful as Japanese heraldry was found to include many aspects which were not presented as part of the European culture.*

*2. 80 years XX cent. – present day. The comparative method of research has been widely used within heraldic science for a long time, but towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century some European specialists argued that it had been unproductive to compare the systems, which initially never had the same origins or sources. Other researchers admitted, that it is possible to compare separate heraldic systems such as European and Japanese, similarly to how linguistics allow for comparison of languages from different language families. Currently, the European heraldic science shares two different approaches. On the one hand those who insists that it is absolutely necessary to study Japanese heraldry as original tradition use Japanese terms. On the other hand their opponents, insist on comparative style and deem usage of European terms internationally to be correct.*

*The problem of efficiency within the methodological framework of the European historiography of the history of Japanese heraldry still attracts active discussions to date. Within context of the fact that other countries such as China and Korea currently show no traces of the existence of heraldry, the issue of admissibility of the comparative analysis of the two heraldic systems is highly relevant - and not only for Europe but for the world as a whole.*

### Keywords

*Historiography, Japanese heraldry, comparative study, coat-of-arms, kamon.*

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\* Supported by the Russian Science Foundation, project No14-28-00045

Europeans first got to know about Japanese heraldry in the late XVI century due to diplomatic contacts between Portuguese, Spanish and Italian missionaries and Japanese feudal lords. The most authoritative hypothesis in European, as well as in Japanese historiography, owes the discovery of Japanese heraldry to Italian Jesuit Alessandro Valignano (1539–1606) whose diplomatic activity was conducive to being informal correspondence between Chancellor of the Realm (*daijō-daijin*) Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536/1537–1598) and Governor of Portuguese India Dom Duarte de Meneses (1537–1588) accompanied by arms and official seal, according to European norms of that time. Among the arms in the letter, there is the emblem “5-3 Paulownia” (*go san*

*kiri*)<sup>1</sup>, the official arm (*jōmon*) of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, which is supposed to have been used on padre Valignano’s recommendation. In European historiography there is no evidence of the latter assumption, but padre Valignano actively used Japanese emblems *kamon* in his correspondence with Toyotomi Hideyoshi by the same way as European heraldry. His letters, as was found contained coat-of-arms of Rome and the emblem of Paulownia, serving as the Japanese official emblem. Thus usage of the Japanese emblem “go san kiri” in keeping with rules of European heraldry demonstrates that Europeans became aware of the existence of Japanese heraldry [3, pp. 163–164; 4, pp. 57–58, 113; 5, pp. 25, 49].



**Fig. 1.** Formal letter of greetings, dated April 1588, from Dom Duarte de Meneses, Portuguese Viceroy of India, to Toyotomi Hideyoshi.

For European historiography in the end of XVI – late XIX centuries, it was typical to accumulate information about Japanese heraldry. Data about *kamon* are presented in the correspondence between Spanish and Portugal missionaries and papacy or European monarchs and aristocracy, and also in the diaries and letters of sailors and merchants of the Dutch East India

Company. Interest of European monarchs and aristocracy in Asian culture led to the creation of new forms of art such as *chinoiserie*<sup>2</sup> in the XVIII century and development of trade relationship in Asia, including Japan. Thus, rich sources for studying Japanese heraldry printed on everyday objects and pieces of art brought from Japan became available for Europeans [6, pp. 143–153].

<sup>1</sup> Cf. [1, pp. 71–78; 2, pp. 94–97].

<sup>2</sup> *Chinoiserie* means imitation and collection of Chinese and East Asian decorative arts.

The first papers and materials summarizing information about Japanese heraldry were published in Europe relatively late (the late 19<sup>th</sup> century), especially if we compare it to the Japanese historiography<sup>3</sup> [7, pp. 7–9, 21–30; 8, p. 3; 9, p. 37; 10, p. 23]. It was one of the first



**Fig. 2.** The official arm (*jōmon*) of Toyotomi Hideyoshi – “5-3 Paulownia” (*go san kiri*).

The most authoritative scholar of Japanese heraldry, specialist of Japanese history Thomas R. H. McClatchie<sup>4</sup>, during his speech before Asiatic Society of Japan in 1876 pointed out that heraldry wasn't regarded in Japan and Asian countries with the same amount of consideration amongst European nations. Nevertheless Prof. McClatchie agreed that heraldic science terms existed in Japan, but perhaps it was a lack of the advancing civilization's influence which prevented its growth. In the conclusion of his work, Prof. McClatchie noted that poor design, variety of style and its usage made comparative study of both heraldic systems difficult<sup>5</sup>. And thus

attempts to identify the main peculiarities of Japanese heraldic symbols by comparing Japanese and European coat-of-arms. Due to developed heraldic tradition in Europe, Western historians have used its terms and definitions and applied it to the Japanese *kamons*.



**Fig. 3.** Heraldic image, which was found in formal letters from Alessandro Valignano to Toyotomi Hideyoshi.

Japanese heraldry could be productively studied in comparison with the earliest Western one<sup>6</sup>.

Prof. McClatchie explained this state in the following way: “It is allowed by Heralds that before the adoption of regular coats-of-arms, Europe had what was merely termed badges”<sup>7</sup>, that is, “figures or devices assumed for the purpose of being borne either absolutely alone, or in connection with a Motto, as the distinctive cognizance of an individual or a family.” Up to the present time Japanese heraldry has advanced no farther than this primary state”. Among three elements – the shield, the helmet or the breast-plate that could be marked with heraldic insignia, the shield was widely used in Western tradition to

<sup>3</sup> The first pre-scientific research started in Japan in middle of the 18th century.

<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, date of birth and date of death are unknown.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. [11, p. 1–3].

<sup>6</sup> McClatchie T. R. H. Japanese Heraldry. (in English) Available at: <http://www.unterstein.net/Toyoashihara-no-Chiaki-Nagaioaki-no-Mitsuho-no-Kuni/McClatchie-1876-Heraldry.html> (Accessed 24.06.2016).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. [12, pp. 46–47].





present a coat-of-arms. He considered the limited use of shield in Japan as one of the reason why the development of Japanese heraldry had stopped so early. However this deficiency was partly balanced by a variety of symbols being marked upon flags or banners of different colours. Also Prof. McClatchie pointed out a curious fact that the shape, colour, and so on of the majority of these flags and devices could be described in terms of European heraldic phraseology peculiar to this art. In other words, Western scientists could apply European rules of construction of heraldic symbols but in fact Japanese people never took care following strict rules regarding the combination of metals and tinctures observed in Western countries. Instead of this, focused on the colour of their symbols, as this provided the change of the general outline of the device. According to Prof. McClatchie's opinion, this fact alone is sufficient enough to show that the Japanese heraldic system is far from perfect. Thus Prof. McClatchie stated that the Japanese heraldic system existed in Japan and he expressed hope that it would transform into regular heraldic art<sup>8</sup>.

Thomas McClatchie set the trend of comparative study in the field of Japanese heraldry. This trend was popular until the end of the XX century. Many scholars tried to find balance between simple listening of differences of European and Japanese heraldries and analysis of distinctive features of both systems.

Sir Arthur Charles Fox-Davies (1871–1928) specialized in the study of British heraldry. Although he never worked as a herald or pursuivant of the College of Arms, he was one of

the 250 Gold Staff Officers who on 22 June 1911 assisted at the Coronation of King George V<sup>9</sup>. In fact, Japanese heraldry was not the object of his study, but in his work “A Complete Guide to Heraldry” where Arthur Fox-Davies wrote a review about heraldic traditions of different countries and different ages, including Japanese heraldry. In this review Fox-Davies states that Japanese heraldry has the same function as European and because of that it can be accepted as a “heraldic system” according to the scientific definition of this term<sup>10</sup>.

In his opinion, the differences between visual shapes of Japanese and European heraldic systems are related to the fact that Japanese heraldry was used as an element of clothing, rooms and furniture decoration, but not as an element of weapons or armour. Going on from this, almost every conceivable object in Japan can be used and has been used for decorative purposes, therefore Arthur Fox-Davies concluded that the main function of Japanese heraldry is decoration<sup>11</sup>. It was astonishing for European people for whom heraldry's main function is always described as a way of retaining knowledge about ancestors, their advantages and their position in society.

The comparative method of study has been widely used in heraldic science for a long time, but towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century some European specialists argued that it had been unproductive to compare the systems, which initially never had the same origins or sources. Other scholars admitted, that it is possible to compare separate heraldic systems such as

<sup>8</sup> McClatchie T. R. H. Japanese Heraldry. (in English) Available at: <http://www.unterstein.net/Toyoashihara-no-Chiaki-Nagaioaki-no-Mitsuho-no-Kuni/McClatchie-1876-Heraldry.html> (Accessed 24.06.2016).

<sup>9</sup>Lattimore C. The Bookplates of Miss C. Helard and Other Related Matters. (in English) Available at: [http://www.ebookchicklit.com/the-bookplates-of-miss-](http://www.ebookchicklit.com/the-bookplates-of-miss-c-helard-and-other-related-matters.html)

[c-helard-and-other-related-matters.html](http://www.ebookchicklit.com/the-bookplates-of-miss-c-helard-and-other-related-matters.html) (Accessed 24.06.2016).

<sup>10</sup> Fox-Devies A. C. A Complete Guide to Heraldry. Ballantyne, Hanson & Co. 1909. 716 p. C. 10–33.

<sup>11</sup> Fox-Devies A. C. A Complete Guide to Heraldry. Ballantyne, Hanson & Co. 1909. 716 p. C. 10–33.



European and Japanese, similarly to how linguistics allow for comparison of languages from different language families. Currently the European heraldic science shares two different approaches. On the one had those who insist that it is absolutely necessary to study Japanese heraldry as original tradition use Japanese terms. On the other hand their opponents insist on comparative style and deem usage of European terms internationally to be correct.

Stephen Richard Turnbull (1946–), a specialist in Japan’s military history belongs to the first group. He defines *kamon* as a simple and easily recognizable coat-of-arms, which provides more precise identification of an individual. He is the first in Europe to study the development of the Japanese heraldic system and suggests that development of each stage of it is based on the relationship between the coat-of-arms’ function and its form. It is more important to understand what ways of usage prevail in different periods, rather than to describe how many rules or styles exist in a heraldic system. Thus, Prof. Turnbull prefers to study Japanese heraldry from inside-out, from content to visual aspects. This method allows him to focus on characteristics of the heraldic system, avoiding the numeration of disadvantages in comparison to European heraldry [13, pp. 5–6, 16–25].

Prof. Anthony J. Bryant (1961–2013), of Florida State University, also shared the views of the first group. He criticized the opinion that *kamons* should be described in English terms. On the one hand, there are a lot of heraldic figures or devices that only exist in the Japanese heraldic system and cannot be described without specific Japanese terms. On the other hand, some objects

in Japanese heraldry are visually similar to European heraldic motives, but have different meanings. Scholars widely use terms accepted in native-tongue, but peculiar terms and concepts of each heraldic system should not be forgotten. Considering the specific features of Japanese heraldry, Japanese terms should not be replaced with Western terms<sup>12</sup>.

The most authoritative scholar of the second group is Prof. Julia Hartmann<sup>13</sup> from University of Pennsylvania. She states that Japanese *kamons* have similar development of symbols and patterns as European coat-of-arms. Prof. Hartmann suggests that Japanese *kamons* and European coat-of-arms have a similar historical context: “need of warriors to distinguish their enemies from their allies in a battle, and the nobility requiring to bestow upon their family a unique identity in society”. But in case of Japanese heraldry, this was used mostly to demonstrate family or clan relations and it is completely unusual for Europe, where identification of the individual himself had great importance [14, pp.1–12; 15, pp. 13–21]. It could be said that Japanese and European heraldic systems were examples of two different ways of heraldic development with similar origin. Comparing both of them, scholars can understand the nature of these systems, main factors of their development, and so on.<sup>14</sup>

In the end of XVI century Japanese heraldry was introduced to European people, but for a long time *kamons* weren’t perceived as coat-of-arms or other types of heraldic symbols and defined in these terms. It is believed that the reason is differences between form and image structure of European and Japanese heraldic symbols. Despite

<sup>12</sup> Bryant A. J. Heraldry. (in English) Available at: <http://www.sengokudaimyo.com/miscellany/heraldry.html> (Accessed 24.06.2016).

<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, date of birth is unknown.

<sup>14</sup> Hartmann J. The Japanese Mon – An Eastern Equivalent to the European Coats of Arms? (I): Form, Content, Tincture and Blazon. (in English) Available at: <http://heraldica.hypotheses.org/2456> (Accessed 24.06.2016).



this fact, when Europeans finally recognized the unique Japanese heraldic system besides their own heraldic tradition, they tried to describe the new object in common terms and definitions. This method was not successful because Japanese heraldry includes many aspects which cannot be converted and presented in terms familiar to European culture.

In the end of XX century many Western scholars doubted the rationality of continuing to use European methodology toward Japanese heraldry. At the same time the famous British

historian Stephen Turnbull offered to refuse the comparative way and to study Japanese heraldry without prejudice. The problem of efficiency within the methodological framework of the European historiography of the history of Japanese heraldry still attracts active discussions to date. Within context of the fact that other countries such as China and Korea currently show no traces of the existence of heraldry, the issue of admissibility of the comparative analysis of the two heraldic systems is highly relevant – and not only for Europe but for the world as a whole.

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