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(査読付) | (Refereed) |

# First References to Lithuania in Japanese Maps and Books: Findings from the 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> Century Sources

By Linas DIDVALIS

# First References to Lithuania in Japanese Maps and Books: Findings from the 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> Century Sources

By Linas DIDVALIS<sup>†</sup>

## Abstract

The article is dedicated to exploring the early knowledge about Lithuania that exists in Japanese written sources such as books and maps. The chronological boundary of the study starts with the early 17<sup>th</sup> century when a curious case of naming territories in the Baltic region first appears with the arrival of Mateo Ricci's world map to Japan. The first undisputed reference to Lithuania is then indicated in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century with further cases appearing later in the decades starting with the 1780s. Lithuania's name is reaching Japan at this time mainly due to exceptional incidents, such as G. B. Sidotti's attempt to visit Japan or Kodayu Daikokuya's unfortunate adventures while being stranded in Russia. A substantial increase in more detailed information is noticed with the beginning of more liberal stages of Edo period's isolationist policy at the start of the 19<sup>th</sup> century which then transitions into the Meiji era. Overall, Lithuania's name is discovered in around a dozen written sources, which provides a basis for further research to establish a more nuanced and contextualised view on Japanese early knowledge about European countries beyond those that interacted with Japan the most.

## Introduction

Although Lithuania and Japan are two distant countries, they have been attracting each other's attention for a long time. The past 100 years are marked by relations on the diplomatic level which were established on 20 December 1922, while people-to-people interaction goes back to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century when Japan ended isolationist foreign policy (鎖国, *sakoku*) and first visits of Japanese to Lithuania and Lithuanians to Japan took place.<sup>1</sup> Until now, several scholars looked into the major events and identified the most outstanding moments of historical relations between Japan and Lithuania, ranging from *Bunkyū Japanese Embassy to Europe* visiting Kaunas in 1862 and inter-war period treaties to Chiune Sugihara's *Visas for Life* and most recent bi-

lateral affairs.<sup>2</sup> Although it seems that still many more details can be revealed in future research, it is obvious that the ground work is already covered.

Despite the existing research, literature review reveals that one particular topic has not received much attention and there have been no attempts to systematically investigate it until now – namely, the early knowledge about Lithuania that existed in Japan starting from the first mentioning until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, the goal of this article is to fill this gap and contribute to the growing corpus of literature dedicated to better understanding of not only Japan-Lithuania affairs but also of the spread of knowledge about Europe in Japan. The analysis is done by relying on archival material of the National Diet Library, Waseda University, Kobe Museum, and other institutions. In total, the author examined around 80 maps and books from the

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16<sup>th</sup> till the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although the best effort was put to indicate relevant publications and review their contents, it must be acknowledged that some might have been overlooked and new discoveries in this field are possible in the future.

The research for this article was possible thanks to the support of Meijo University Fellowship Program and the kind assistance of Professor Chiharu Inaba. The Program allowed to conduct research in Japan and use various resources provided by Meijo University during June-October 2023.

## Historical Background

Information on Eastern Europe remained limited in Japan until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Due to the country's policy of limited foreign affairs throughout the Edo period, knowledge about Europe reached the Japanese interested in faraway lands mainly through contacts with the Dutch, and to a lesser extent through publications from China and the occasional exceptional case when either the Japanese managed to visit Europe or Europeans had the opportunity to spend an extended period in Japan. Moreover, Eastern Europe was not a priority of interest, with more attention being paid to Western European countries, which were the ones with the most active, even if limited, contact with Japan. An example of that can be short annual Dutch reports (阿蘭陀風説書, *oranda fūzetsusho*) that were delivered to the Japanese government by Dutch representatives since 1644. Although these reports describe Western European affairs, information about Eastern Europe is scarce, and Lithuania is not mentioned even once.<sup>3</sup>

Overall, considering that most geographical knowledge about Europe was spread around the globe by explorers, merchants, and missionaries from Western Europe (Portugal, Spain, Italy, The Netherlands, Great Britain, etc.), they were more readily capable to describe historical, cultural, and political aspects of their countries rather than those further away in the east. For this reason, the description of Eastern Europe in early Japanese sources is mostly short, vague, and mixed with inaccuracies. Therefore, it is not surprising that Lithuania's name undoubtedly appears in the written sources rather late, only in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. However, before discussing it, it is worth to dedicate some attention to the 17<sup>th</sup> century as well as it provides a curious case related to the topic.

## Publications from the 17<sup>th</sup> century

The earliest possible mention of Lithuania is a disputed one, as it very likely involves a confusion of words. It can be found on one of the first maps of Europe, which appeared in Japan in

the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>4</sup> Most of them were brought by Jesuit missionaries, but it is known that the first Japanese to visit Europe – *The Tenshō Mission* (天正の使節, *tenshō shi-shetsu*), which travelled through European countries from 1582 to 1590 – brought back as a gift *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, an atlas by Abraham Ortelius (1527-1589). As the story goes, the feudal lord Toyotomi Hideyoshi (豊臣秀吉, 1537-1598) was highly impressed by it and ordered some of the maps to be enlarged and repainted on decorative screens by local artists.<sup>5</sup> The artists have basically depicted the contours of the continents with some major rivers and lakes in a rather minimalistic style skipping informative details that we would expect a map to have. In these decorative screens there are hardly any toponyms in Chinese or their versions in Japanese.<sup>6</sup>

The first world map to be translated into Japanese was *Map of the Ten Thousand Countries of the Earth* widely known as *Kunyu Wanguo Quantu* by its Chinese name (坤輿萬國全圖). It was compiled by the Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) with a help of local assistants and published in China in the second half of 16<sup>th</sup> century and the early 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>7</sup> The map had at least five versions produced, appearing between 1584 and 1603.<sup>8</sup> Several copies of the last version were brought to Japan, and based on them a translation appeared in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and included Japanese readings in katakana characters alongside some inscriptions in Chinese.<sup>9</sup> Since Matteo Ricci's map of Europe was largely based on the aforementioned *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, it is possible to find many similarities when comparing the two maps. This helps to understand which Chinese characters were chosen for certain place names. On the other hand, there are also numerous differences in these two maps which occasionally bring complications and confusion because clear equivalents of toponyms cannot be determined with complete certainty. Lithuania is one of such latter cases.

In the Japanese version of *Kunyu Wanguo Quantu* (see Figure 1), on the south-eastern shore of the Baltic Sea, one can find a toponym which at first glance may look like the earliest known mention of Lithuania: Chinese characters 札勿泥亞 with a Japanese reading レタニア (*re-ta-ni-a*). This would correspond to the designation of Lithuania in *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* as "Litvania." The proposal that 札勿泥亞 (or its synonymous variations such as 禮勿泥亞) is Lithuania, read as リトニア (*ri-to-ni-a*), is also stated in the book by Hirotada Kawamura (川村博忠), a scholar of old maps.<sup>10</sup> The word "Retania" or "Letania" and its match to Lithuania is seen here by other researchers as well.<sup>11</sup>

The debate on this point could be closed if it were not for the adjacent and similar-sounding name "Livonia," which can be found on Ortelius' map north to Lithuania in the location of present-day Latvia and Estonia. This is all the more so as the



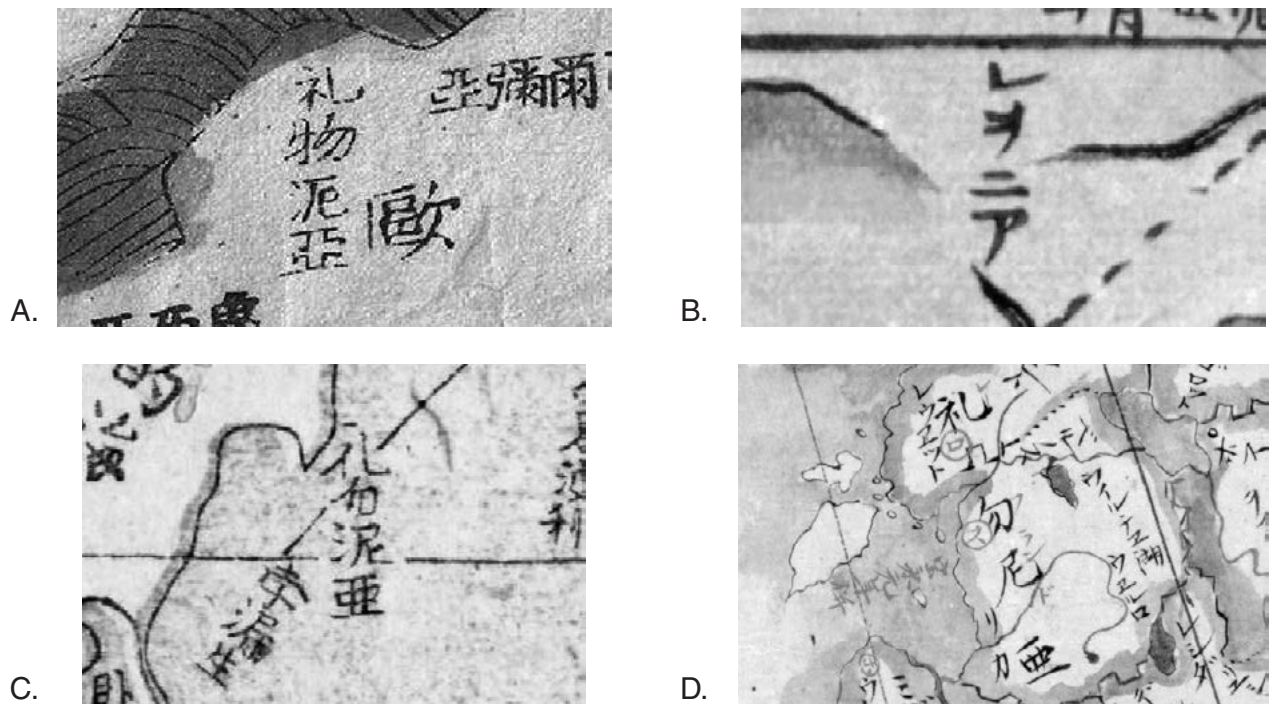
**Figure 1.** The Baltic region as depicted in the Japanese version of *Kunyu Wanguo Quantu*, first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The toponym in question – 札勿泥亞 with Japanese reading レタニア is in the top right corner. Source: Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Kunyu\\_Wanguo\\_Quantu](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Kunyu_Wanguo_Quantu) (public domain), originally from Image Database of the Kano Collection, Tohoku University Library.

Chinese inscription 札勿泥亞 in other maps published in China at the time<sup>12</sup> is written as similarly looking 礼物泥亞 which is pronounced very similarly to “Livonia” – “li-wu-ni-a”. Consulting a Chinese character dictionary for foreign proper nouns does not fully resolve the issue – the characters 礼物泥亞 are identified as being used for three toponyms: レポニア (re-po-ni-a) which is Lapland (the historical region of Sweden), リトアンヤ (ri-to-a-n-ya) – Lithuania, and レイボニア (re-i-bo-ni-a) – Livonia.<sup>13</sup> Lapland can be excluded from this discussion because its geographical location is further north, but the question of Lithuania and Livonia remains open. Judging by the pronunciation of either katakana or Chinese characters, it seems more likely that *Kunyu Wanguo Quantu* is mentioning Livonia rather than Lithuania. This is further supported by the first known Japanese written source that definitely mentions Lithuania – *Varying Words Observed* (采覧異言, *sairan igen*) published in around 1715 – which indicates Lithuania separately as 里都亜尼亞 (ri-to-a-ni-a), and on the same page also mentions Livonia as 禮勿泥亞<sup>14</sup> with the reading リトニア (ri-to-ni-a) or リホニア (ri-ho-ni-a).<sup>15</sup> This spelling of Livonia in Chinese characters can also be found in other later Japanese texts,<sup>16</sup> and in some of them it is clear that 里都亜尼亞 and 禮勿泥亞 are treated as separate toponyms.<sup>17</sup>

In summary, it seems that the confusion between Lithuanian and Livonian toponyms in Japan has deep roots, and there are no studies that have been conducted to bring clarity in this area. Given that the very earliest written references to Lithuania in Japan differentiate it from Livonia, the subsequent attribution of

two different Chinese characters to Lithuania and only one to Livonia, which overlaps with Lithuania, indicates a confusion at some stage, which was later picked up and circulated. This only illustrates that little was known about Lithuania, let alone Livonia, and not much attention was paid to this misunderstanding.

Returning to Mateo Ricci’s map, it is worth noting that it was highly influential, and became the basis of a number of redrawn and modified world maps published in Japan over the next couple of hundred years (see Figure 2 for some sample fragments). These maps retained the essential information of *Kunyu Wanguo Quantu* and allow to identify how much new geographical information managed to become widespread among Japanese cartographers. For example, the Japanese map maker Sekisui Nagakubo (長久保玄珠, 1717-1801) in his map of the world produced in around 1785 still relies on information that is more than 200 years old and instead of the Russian Empire names the territory as Moscovia – モスコビヤ (mo-su-ko-bi-ya).<sup>18</sup> In these adaptations of Mateo Ricci’s map, the description of Europe remains essentially unchanged and without any updates, with Livonia, Prussia, and Poland being mentioned in the approximate territory of Lithuania. According to Unno, the lack of change also indicates that knowledge considered to be from China (such as *Kunyu Wanguo Quantu*) was treated as more valuable than newer information arriving from the Dutch.<sup>19</sup>



**Figure 2.** Fragments of some 16-19<sup>th</sup> century maps that mention Livonia. (A) *Complete Map of the Nine Border Towns of the Great Ming and of the Human Presence and Travel Routes of the Ten Thousand Countries* (大明九邊萬國人跡路程全圖, reprint by Yahaku Umemura) from the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. Source: Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wang\\_Jun\\_Fu\\_World\\_Map.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wang_Jun_Fu_World_Map.jpg) (public domain); (B) *Complete Map of World's Mountains and Seas* (山海輿地全圖, attributed to Sekisui Nagakubo) printed around 1785. Source: Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3200.ct001813/> (public domain); (C) *World Map* (坤輿全圖, attributed to Inagaki Shisen) published in 1802. Source: Library of Yokohama City University, [https://www-user.yokohama-cu.ac.jp/~yuc-rare/pages/WC-0\\_14.html](https://www-user.yokohama-cu.ac.jp/~yuc-rare/pages/WC-0_14.html); (D) *Map of Russia* (魯西亜圖, unknown author) published in 1830. Source: Library of Yokohama City University, [https://www-user.yokohama-cu.ac.jp/~yuc-rare/pages/WCT\\_1.html](https://www-user.yokohama-cu.ac.jp/~yuc-rare/pages/WCT_1.html)

### Publications from the 18<sup>th</sup> century

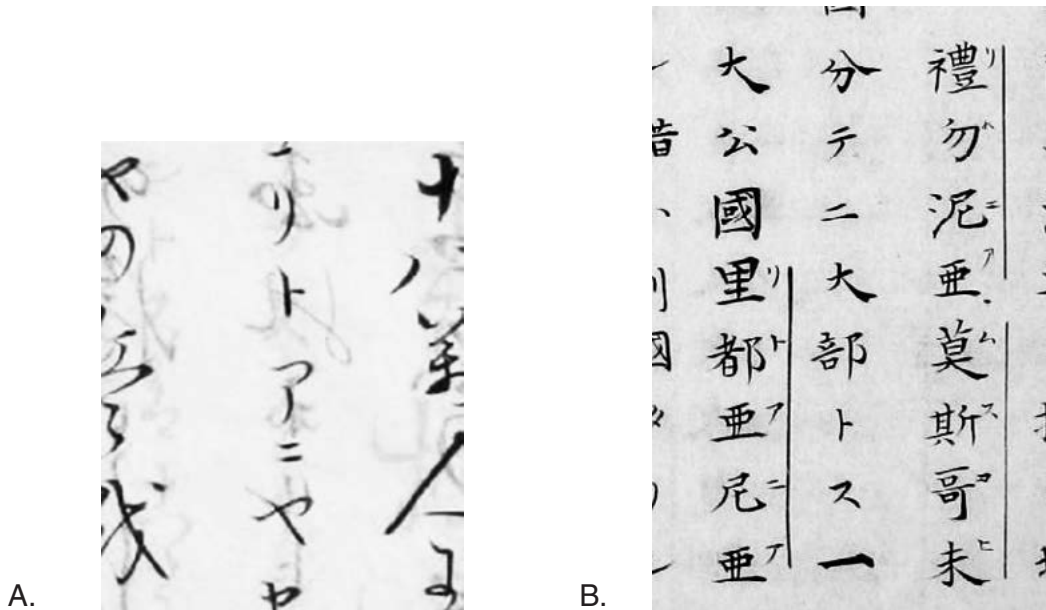
To find the undoubtedly earliest written mention of Lithuania, we must focus on the visits of Europeans to Japan during the period of the country's closure. Perhaps the most significant of these is the illegal entry of the Italian priest Giovanni Battista Sidotti (1668-1714) into Japan in 1708, when he was arrested and interrogated by Hakuseki Arai (新井白石, 1657-1725), a Confucianist government officer of the time. Arai wrote down gathered information and later published two books on the subject – *Annals of the Western Ocean* (西洋紀聞, *seiyō kibun*) and *Varying Words Observed* (采覧異言, *sairan igen*). Both manuscripts were completed around 1715,<sup>20</sup> but due to the country's policy of closedness and the forbidden topic of Christianity mentioned in the contents, copies were distributed in a limited way in public, and official editions only appeared after the Meiji Restoration.<sup>21</sup> For this reason, the publications did not have a major impact on Japanese society at the time.

*Annals of the Western Ocean* describes the knowledge of European politics, history and culture mainly provided by G. B. Sidotti. Lithuania's name also appears here: the book describes the turmoil in Poland during the Great Northern War and the three countries involved – “Brandenburg, Lithuania, and Ger-

mania”. Lithuania is written as リトアニア (*ri-to-a-ni-ya*) (see Figure 3(A)), and its mention is telling in its own way, as it is followed by a remark that “nothing is known in detail about Lithuania” (i.e. not much was known by G. B. Sidotti himself about Lithuania).<sup>22</sup> Meanwhile, in the *Varying Words Observed*, the name of Lithuania is written as リトアニア (i.e. the same as it is nowadays), and the equivalent in Chinese characters is given as 里都亞尼亞. Lithuania is referred to as the Grand Duchy north of Poland, whose name is pronounced by the Dutch as リタウエン (*ri-ta-u-e-n*). Lithuania and Poland are also said to have formed an alliance after Jogaila became the king.<sup>23</sup> This more detailed knowledge was most likely gathered from books obtained from the Dutch and using the previously discussed map by Mateo Ricci. As it was mentioned earlier, this book also mentions Livonia in the same page as Lithuania indicating them as two separate toponyms (see Figure 3(B)).

It is worth adding that the *Varying Words Observed* was revised and expanded in 1803 by Saisuke Yamamura (山村才助, 1770-1807), a geographer with an interest in western science.<sup>24</sup> In his version, the description of Lithuania remains almost unchanged, with no mention of the partitions of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth or other important events that happened by that time, indicating that information about developments in the Eastern Europe reached Japan in a rather limited way, and





**Figure 3.** Fragments from pages that mention Lithuania. (A) Arai, H. (1715). *Annals of the Western Ocean* (page 63). Source: Waseda University Library, found at [https://archive.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kosho/bunko08/bunko08\\_c0130/bunko08\\_c0130.pdf](https://archive.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kosho/bunko08/bunko08_c0130/bunko08_c0130.pdf); (B) Arai, H. (1715). *Varying Words Observed* (page 29). Source: Waseda University Library, found at [https://archive.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kosho/ru02/ru02\\_00959/ru02\\_00959\\_0003/ru02\\_00959\\_0003.pdf](https://archive.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kosho/ru02/ru02_00959/ru02_00959_0003/ru02_00959_0003.pdf)

that up-to-date information was not even known to the contemporary specialists.

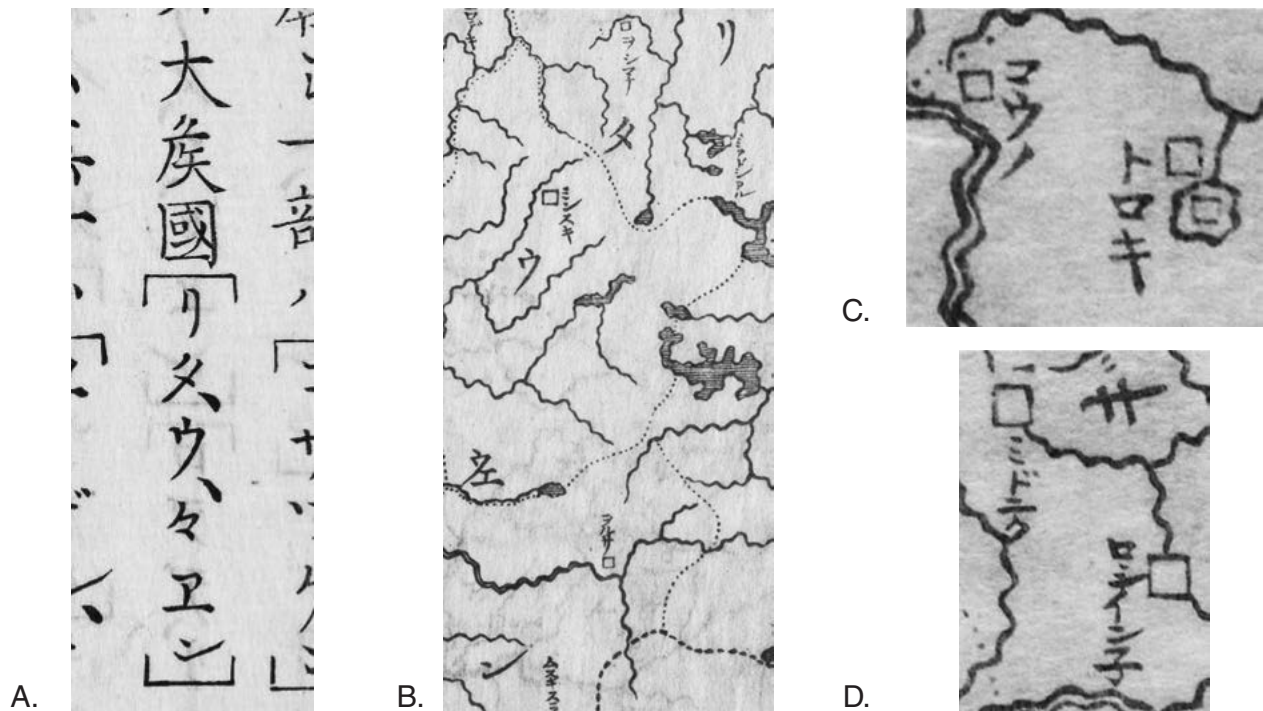
The oldest currently known Japanese map that mentions Lithuania comes from a 17-part book on European geography published in 1789, entitled *Illustrated Description of the Western World* (泰西輿地図説, *taisei yochi zuzetsu*).<sup>25</sup> It was written by Kutsuki Masatsuna (朽木昌綱, 1750-1802), a nobleman (daimyo) of the late Edo period from the Fukuchiyama domain, who was an avid collector of coins from various countries and showed a great deal of interest to scientific knowledge arriving to Japan from the West. Masatsuna published several books on numismatics and geography that have survived to the present day. Lithuania is mentioned both in the text of the book and on the maps of Europe, using the spelling “Ritauwen” (リタウエン), which is most likely Dutch.<sup>26</sup> Compared to *Varying Words Observed*, this book provides similar information, but is in some respects more comprehensive, with more detail on geographical features. The book mentions that Lithuania is a Grand Duchy, and that such cities as Vilnius, Breslau, Minsk, Naugarduk, Trakai, and the region of Samogitia can all be found there.<sup>27</sup> The accompanying maps also include Kaunas, Raseiniai, Varniai (Midniki), Biržai (see Figure 4).

The last significant 18<sup>th</sup> century work mentioning Lithuania is the book *Brief Report on a Northern Raft* (北槎聞略, *hokusa bunryaku*), written by a Western scholar Hoshu Katsuragawa (桂川甫周, 1751-1809). It is based on the stories of Kodayu Daikokuya (大黒屋光夫, 1751-1828), who spent nine years in Russia after getting lost at sea. The first encounters between

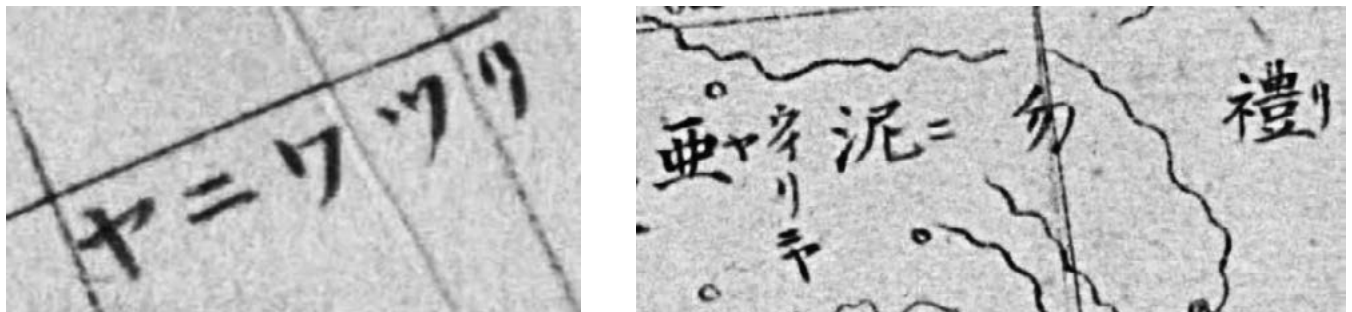
Katsuragawa and Daikokuya took place in 1792 after which a small booklet dedicated to Russia appeared in the same year.<sup>28</sup> A much more extensive work was completed in 1794 and published in 12 parts. It was accompanied by 10 maps and two sets of illustrations depicting household items, clothing and footwear used in Russia.

Two maps are relevant for Lithuania: the one representing Russia and the one dedicated to Europe. The first one identifies Lithuania as リツワニヤ (ri-tsu-wa-ni-ya) and depicts it as one of the neighbouring states of the Russian Empire, close to Poland (see Figure 5).<sup>29</sup> Meanwhile, the map of Europe is much more detailed, but again introduces confusion in the use of toponyms. Livonia there is marked as リフランジヤ (ri-fu-ra-n-ji-ya), probably from the Russian version of Livonia's name “Лифляндия” (Lifljandija), with Samogitia (サモキテヤ, sa-mo-ki-te-ya) just below, and the only city, Raseiniai (ロジイニヤ, ro-ji-i-ni-ya, probably also based on the Russian “Россиены” (Rossieny)).

Further down in the map, we can find the previously discussed 禮勿泥垂 with the reading リ?ニヤ (ri-?-ni-ya, 勿 comes without any visible corresponding katakana). This time it can be argued that the toponym was intended to indicate Lithuania, as there could be no duplication with Livonia, already mentioned to the north, and there is a geographical correspondence as Vilnius (ウイリニヤ, vi-ri-ni-ya) is marked next to 禮勿泥垂. This latter case further illustrates confusion regarding the characters 礼勿泥亞 (including their synonymous variations 礼物泥亞 and 禮勿泥垂). First introduced in *Kunyu Wanguo Quantu*, this toponym reappears a century and a half later to cause further confusion.



**Figure 4.** Fragments from pages that mention Lithuania and related toponyms. (A) Lithuania's name mentioned in book 11, page 15; (B) Lithuania indicated on a map in book 15, page 18; (C) Lithuanian cities コウノ (Kaunas) and トロキ (Trakai) on a map in book 15, page 16; (D) Lithuanian cities ミドニク (Midoniki or Varniai) and ロシンネ (Raseiniai) on a map in book 15, page 16. Source: Masatsuna, K. (1789). *Illustrated Description of the Western World*. Found at Waseda University Library, [https://www.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kotenseki/html/ru08/ru08\\_02859/index.html](https://www.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kotenseki/html/ru08/ru08_02859/index.html)



**Figure 5.** Fragments of maps that mention Lithuania: リツワニヤ on the left and 禮勿泥垂 with the reading リニヤ on the right. Source: Katsuragawa, H. (1794). *Complete Map of Russia and Its Borders* (魯齊亜國疆界全圖). Found at National Archives of Japan Digital Archive, <https://www.digital.archives.go.jp/gallery/0000000535>, and Katsuragawa, H. (1794). *Map of Europe*. Found at National Archives of Japan Digital Archive, <https://www.digital.archives.go.jp/gallery/0000000530>

### Publications from the 19<sup>th</sup> century

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, mentions of Lithuania and related toponyms increase substantially as more than a dozen of maps and other types of publications can be identified. This can be associated with the general boom of geography as a science which was expressed through map making, compiling information received from the Dutch traders, surveying, etc. Furthermore, the growing pressure from other countries for Japan to establish trade relations, convinced the shogunate to encourage map

making for political purposes. For example, Unno mentions that under the supervision of astronomer and geographer Kageyasu Takahashi (高橋景保, 1785-1829) a team of specialists was assembled in 1807 and the newest available geography related materials from Chinese, European (including Russia) and local sources were reviewed to produce the most advanced maps of that time.<sup>30</sup> Western learning especially gained prominence towards the end of the Edo period (1603-1868) and reached unprecedented extent with the start of Meiji Era (1868-1912). The opening up of the country and eagerness to acquire knowledge from all over the world led to numerous translations and local ini-

tatives to summarize information and conduct original analysis. As a result, the quality of maps has improved substantially and new original books appeared that investigated European history, including Eastern and Northern Europe. Here is an extensive but not necessarily complete list of such examples:

- *The New World Map* (新訂万国全図), published in 1810 by Kageyasu Takahashi, does not mention Lithuania, but Vilnius (ウィルナ, vi-ru-na) and Kaunas (コウノ, ko-u-no) can be found marked.<sup>31</sup>
- In 1844, the geographer Shogo Mitsukuri (箕作省吾, 1821-1847) used recent world maps produced in Europe and published *The Newly Made World Map* (新製輿地全圖), which mentions Vilnius (ウィルナ, vi-ru-na).<sup>32</sup>
- In 1850, the geographer Tsūki Shirai (白井通気) published *The New World Map* (新訂万国全圖), which does not include the name of Lithuania, but mentions Vilnius (ウィルナ, vi-ru-na) and Kaunas (コウノ, ko-u-no).<sup>33</sup>
- In 1852, the geographer Shuzo Shibata (柴田収蔵, 1820-1859) introduces a fair amount of new content in his *World Map* (坤輿畧全図, later updated in 1855) where Lithuania is mentioned as リタタウエン (ri-ta-u-e-n) and the location of Vilnius (ウィルナ, vi-ru-na) is also indicated.<sup>34</sup> In the same year, Suidō Nakajima's (中島翠堂) *Map of the World's Countries* (地球萬國方圖) also mentions Vilnius (ウィルナ, vi-ru-na) and Kaunas (コウノ, ko-u-no).<sup>35</sup>
- An 1853 map *Map of the World's Countries* (地球萬國方圖) produced by an unknown author mentions Vilnius (ウィルナ, vi-ru-na) and Kaunas (コウノ, ko-u-no).<sup>36</sup>
- In 1854, the artist Gyokuran Hashimoto (橋本玉蘭, better known as Sadahide Utagawa, 歌川貞秀, 1807-1873), using maps created by others, published his own version – *The Map of the Parts of the World* (萬國地球分圖). It does not mention Lithuania, but refers to Vilnius (ウィルナ, vi-ru-na) and incorrectly lists Kaunas as コウ (ko-u).<sup>37</sup>
- In 1855, *The Revised Map of the World* (重訂万国全図), compiled by the astronomer and geographer Kaikō (or Yukitaka) Yamaji (山路諧孝, 1777-1861), was published, which mentions Lithuania as リトーオウエン (ri-to-o-ve-n) and Kaunas as コウノ (ko-u-no).<sup>38</sup> Interestingly, the map also indicates Vilnius but does that by using Chinese characters 威尔那. According to Ayusawa,<sup>39</sup> the map was based on a German atlas produced by Sohr and Handtke but it is not clear why numerous toponyms are not written in katakana.
- Vilnius (ウィルナ, vi-ru-na) and Varniai (ミドニキ, mi-do-ni-ki – the old name of the city) are mentioned in Masayasu Satō's (佐藤政養, 1821-1877) *The New World Map* (新刊輿地全圖) issued in 1861.<sup>40</sup>
- A number of maps from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> cen-

ture mention Vilnius and Kaunas,<sup>41</sup> some mention Vilnius, Klaipėda (メメル - me-me-ru or ミル - mi-ru), or other cities,<sup>42</sup> and some include the name of Lithuania along with the names of the cities,<sup>43</sup> or mention Lithuania without mentioning any cities.<sup>44</sup>

If we move our attention from maps to books, there are several examples from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The major name here is Tamotsu Shibue (渋江保, 1857-1930) who wrote the multi-volume *Military History of the World* (万国戦史) in the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The 10<sup>th</sup> volume, published in 1895, was devoted to Poland, and the history of Lithuania (written as リチュアニア, ri-chu-a-ni-a) is also presented in this context.<sup>45</sup> A very brief mentioning of Lithuania can also be found in another grandiose history book *The Treatise on World History* (万国歴史全書) written during 1889-1890 by Saburō Kawasaki (川崎三郎, 1864-1943). The 9<sup>th</sup> volume is dedicated to Russia's history and there the name of Lithuania (written the same as in Shibue's book – リチュアニア, ri-chu-a-ni-a) is brought up only in passing and seemingly by mistake because the author claims that Kharkiv University is in Lithuania Governorate.<sup>46</sup> Other books of the period, such as geography or European history textbooks, mention Lithuania very briefly.<sup>47</sup> Some sources are not entirely accurate, such as a dictionary published in 1892, which refers to Lithuania as a territory of Russia and Prussia, while the Lithuanian language is described as extinct.<sup>48</sup>

To summarize toponyms, until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the name of Lithuania was written in many ways. In Chinese characters such as 里都亜尼亜 (also a synonymous variant of 里都亞尼亞) or 里都亜尼. In katakana as リトアニヤ, リトアニア, リットアニア, リットアニヤ, リタウエン, リタウエン, リトーオウエン, リチュアニー, リツワニヤ, リシュアニア, リチュアニア, リシュエーニア. This indicates different linguistic origins of Lithuania's name when it arrives to Japan – Dutch, Latin, German, Russian, etc.

## Conclusions

On the one hand, the journey through almost 300 years of Japanese publications and search of references to Lithuania matches the general expectation that the knowledge about Eastern Europe was very limited during the period of Japan's self-isolation. Only exceptional events, such as G. B. Sidotti's attempt to visit Japan or Kodayu Daikokuya's unfortunate adventures in Russia allowed educated Japanese to learn some limited details about the Baltic region. The political circumstances did not allow the exchanges to be more active up until eventual liberalization in the 19<sup>th</sup> century which brought major breakthroughs and sub-



stantially widened the Japanese horizons.

On the other hand, the peaceful times during the Edo period created favourable conditions for education and science to develop among the population. This led to a wide variety of publications dealing with numerous topics, and it could be surprising that despite limited contacts with the world the name of Lithuania managed to reach Japan at all in such early year as 1715. It is hard to imagine that information about Eastern Europe had any practical relevance to the Japanese beyond fulfilment of pure curiosity about faraway lands. Despite that, it was recorded and published rather than being discarded.

We also must consider that the timing was not really favourable for Lithuania as by the establishment of first Japan-Europe contacts Lithuania already passed the period of being one of the largest European countries and became increasingly overshadowed by Poland after forming a common state in 1569. By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Lithuania ceased to exist as an independent state when it was divided, and majority of its territories were taken over by the Russian Empire. That reduced the need for Western Europeans, who influenced Japanese knowledge about Europe the most, to mention Lithuania in their descriptions of European geography.

Finally, to establish a more nuanced and contextualised view of references to Lithuania in Japan, a comparative approach would be of much assistance. At the moment there is a lack of studies that would look into Japanese early knowledge about European countries beyond the ones that interacted with Japan the most. Such studies and comparison of their results would allow to see if Lithuania's case is a typical one or rather an exception.

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- <sup>44</sup> For example, Urabe, S. (1874). *Detailed World Map* (地球精圖). Found at Yokohama City University Library, [https://www-user.yokohama-cu.ac.jp/~yuc-rare/pages/WC-0\\_106.html](https://www-user.yokohama-cu.ac.jp/~yuc-rare/pages/WC-0_106.html)
- <sup>45</sup> Shibue, T. (1895). *Military History of the World*. Found at The National Diet Library, <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/pid/776947/1/1>
- <sup>46</sup> Kawasaki, S. (1890). *The Treatise on World History*. Found at the National Diet Library, <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/pid/776975/1/139>
- <sup>47</sup> For example, Fujisawa, S. (1903). *References to Historical Places and Western Toponym History* (史地参考西洋地名歴史). Found at The National Diet Library, <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/pid/761262/1/112>; Pedagogy Research Association (1903). *Glossary of Foreign Toponyms* (外国地名字彙). Found at The National Diet Library, <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/pid/993733/1/184>
- <sup>48</sup> Shimada, Y. (1892). *A Dictionary of English Language* (雙解英和大辭典). Tokyo: Kyoyekishosha. Found at The National Diet Library, <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/pid/2938262/1/273>

**Appendix 1.** Summary of the maps and books mentioned in the article up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century that contain references to Lithuania.

Year	Author	Publication	Toponym
First half of the 17 <sup>th</sup> century	Matteo Ricci	<i>Kunyu Wanguo Quantu</i> , or <i>Map of the Ten Thousand Countries of the Earth</i> (坤輿萬國全圖), Japanese translation	札勿泥亞, レタニア – very likely Livonia rather than Lithuania
Circa 1715	Hakuseki Arai 新井白石	<i>Seiyō Kibun</i> , or <i>Annals of the Western Ocean</i> (西洋紀聞)	リトアニヤ
Circa 1715	Hakuseki Arai 新井白石	<i>Sairan Igen</i> , or <i>Varying Words Observed</i> (采覧異言)	リトアニヤ, リトアニア, 里都亜尼亞
1789	Kutsuki Masatsuna 朽木昌綱	<i>Taisei Yochi Zusetsu</i> , or <i>Illustrated Description of the Western World</i> (泰西輿地図説)	リタウエン
1792	Hoshu Katsuragawa 桂川甫周	<i>Hokusa Bunryaku</i> , or <i>Brief Report on a Northern Raft</i> (北槎聞略)	リツワニヤ, 禮勿泥亞
1852	Shuzo Shibata 柴田 収蔵	<i>Konyo Ryakuzenzu</i> , or <i>World Map</i> (坤輿畧全図)	リタウエン
1855	Kaikō (or Yukitaka) Yamaji 山路譜孝	<i>Jutei Bankoku Zenzu</i> , or <i>Complete Map of All Countries</i> (重訂万国全図), later revised and issued as <i>Revised World Map</i> (重訂萬國全圖)	リトオウエン
1873	Kōsai Asonuma 阿曾沼 恒齋	<i>Shinkku Kōkai Sekai Zenzu</i> , or <i>Revised World Navigation Map</i> (新刻航海世界全圖)	リチュアニー, 里都亞尼
1874	Seiichi Urabe 卜部 精一	<i>Chikiū Seizu</i> , or <i>Detailed World Map</i> (地球精圖)	リットアニヤ
1890	Saburō Kawasaki 川崎三郎	<i>Bankoku Rekishi Zensho</i> , or <i>The Treatise on World History</i> (万国歴史全書)	リチュアニア
1892	Shimada Yutaka 島田豊	<i>Sōkai Eiwa Daijiten</i> , or <i>A Dictionary of the English Language</i> (雙解英和大辭典)	リシューアニア
1895	Tamotsu Shibue 渋江保	<i>Bankoku Senshi</i> , or <i>Military History of the World</i> (万国戦史)	リチュアニア