

# The Man Who Paved the Way: The Interpreter Imamura Gen'emon Eisei (1671-1737) as the Founder of Dutch Studies

The Dutch trading-post on Deshima, in Nagasaki Bay is a prime example of a place where a reciprocal dialogue between two cultures commenced, not only with a view to establishing profitable trading relations but also to begin a meaningful cultural and scientific exchange. The interpreter Imamura Gen'emon Eisei is a man who personified this dialogue. As a young man he played an instrumental role in the transference of Eastern to Western culture and later, as an adult, he played a pivotal role in the transference of the Western to Eastern culture. The principal theme of this article is his role in the development of Dutch Studies or Rangaku, which will be examined in six phases. Before writing about his personal role in this phenomenon, we begin with a sketch of the place where this transference of knowledge happened.

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## The Window on Two Worlds Opened

Gen'emon's whole life was structured by Deshima. From 1641 to 1853, Deshima was a window on the world: for Japan a revelation of the West and for the Dutch an education about Japan. All the information about the outside world reached Japan via this tiny island and, albeit much less, some knowledge about Japan did trickle out to the outside world. In 1634 it had been put at the disposal of the Portuguese but in 1639 they were banned from Japan. The island was connected to the mainland by a heavily guarded bridge, the Holland Bridge. The houses of the employees of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) were aligned along its only street. From the point of view of the Japanese authorities, Deshima was considered a regular quarter of Nagasaki and fell under the control of a mayor (*otona*). Like Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka and Sakai, Nagasaki was one of the five cities which fell under the direct control of the Shogun (central government) (*gokasho*). Each of these cities was administered by two magistrates (governors / *bugyō*) who took turns to reside alternately in their own city or in Tokyo. Its unique position meant that a third *bugyō* was appointed in Nagasaki in 1668. "(...) to permit closer attention to [be paid] to the arrival of

foreigners and to ensure the safety of this world-renowned harbour". [Sloane Manuscripts 3060, f. 210v.]

The Dutch administration closely resembled that of the Japanese. Hence, the Dutch chiefs could also spend only one year on Deshima. When they returned to Batavia (the VOC headquarters in Asia), they served a term on the Judicial Council before returning to Deshima for the second or third tour of duty. Whereas the governor-general (the VOC top-man in Asia) can be compared to the Shogun, the equivalent of the Japanese emperor was the Stadtholder (the hereditary governor of the Netherlands, a member of the House of Orange) and the Heren XVII (the Seventeen Gentlemen, or the Board of Governors of the VOC) in the Republic. The chief invariably held the rank of chief merchant in the VOC hierarchy and his jurisdiction was confined to the ten to fifteen Dutchmen and the twenty to thirty Malay- or Portuguese speaking slaves who lived on Deshima. For their official contacts with the authorities in Nagasaki, the Dutch were forced to rely completely on the Japanese Interpreters guild which consisted of 150 persons. Membership of the guild was hereditary. The interpreters had their own house on Deshima, close to the Watergate. The guild was subdivided into eight ranks. The VOC employees distinguished only four: apprentice interpreter, junior interpreter, interpreter and senior interpreter. The senior interpreters controlled the flow of information between the Dutch and Japanese authorities.

Besides these official contacts, the Dutch maintained informal relationships with a whole range of servants such as cooks, domestic personnel, gate-keepers and so forth, who were all on the VOC payroll. The Dutchmen also enjoyed close relationships with their Japanese "housewives" or "keesjes" who are never mentioned in the official correspondence of the VOC authorities. Only in private correspondence do we sometimes catch a glimpse of these women of the "Flower and Willow World". But it is no exaggeration to claim that a very large proportion of the population of Nagasaki was dependent on Deshima, either directly, or indirectly. The Chinese, who also maintained a trading-post in Nagasaki, likewise provided many Japanese with employment.

The annual routine of the trading-post was determined by the arrival of two or three ships from Batavia around the middle of August. During the subsequent trading season, the Dutch sold their imported commodities such as linen and cotton cloth from India, silk piece-goods from China and spices from Indonesia. Their principal purchases from the Japanese consisted of copper, camphor and small amounts of lacquer-work and porcelain. At the end of October, the ships returned to Batavia on the northern monsoon. This was the time when neighbouring *daimyos* (feudal lords) and the magistrates of Nagasaki came to visit Deshima where they examined the cabinet of curiosities containing creatures preserved in formaldehyde. They would also often go on board the ships. The sailing of the ships

ushered in the quiet period, which was used to make preparations for the court journey to Tokyo which the chief was obliged to undertake each year to present gifts to the Shogun.

His travelling companions included the doctor, two merchants, a Japanese interpreter and a throng of bearers. For the period of this journey, which took three months, the chief was given the rank of *daimyo* and he was treated as such. Both on the outward journey as on the way back to Deshima the caravan spent a few days in Osaka where orders were placed for lacquer-work and porcelain. They also spent several days in Kyoto and, on the outward journey, they were presented with a travel pass permitting them to travel along the famous Tōkaidō (Eastern Sea Route). On the return journey they visited some of the renowned temples of Kyoto (Bodaert-Bailey: 1991). During the time they spent in Tokyo, the company lodged in what was known as the Nagasaki Inn where the Dutch could be visited by the court physicians and students, albeit under strict supervision. The high point of the whole exercise was the audience with the Shogun which would often take hours. Once this was over the caravan returned to Nagasaki.

In the absence of the chief, the second-in-charge supervised the repair of the buildings on Deshima. After the chief had returned in May, everything was made ready for the arrival of the ships in August. In the literature, Deshima is portrayed as a prison but I think this gives a wrong impression which was perpetuated by the employees and by later historians. Instead, certainly for the Dutch VOC employees, it was more like an earthly paradise. They could spend almost the entire year living a carefree existence wallowing in incredible luxury. In comparison to the Netherlands, there was an abundance of everything: food, pleasurable leisure activities (billiards, flying kites), drugs (opium) and sex.

The free sexual morals in Japan must have come as a shock to the upright, pious Dutchmen, but nothing was easier to become accustomed to than your own Japanese mistress who very quickly initiated you into sensual delights. They also taught you to take a bath every day and they massaged you whenever you so desired. A smallish number of employees immersed themselves in the Japanese language and culture. The prevailing image of Deshima as a prison where the Dutch were mostly driven out of their minds by boredom can, as far as I am concerned, be consigned to the waste-paper basket of history. I would like to replace this image with a picture of Deshima as an earthly paradise on which the VOC employees lacked for nothing and enjoyed a wonderful time. This was equally true of the large majority of interpreters for whom this multi-cultural island must have been a breath of fresh air. Anybody who reads the diaries of the chiefs and their assistants realises that there was a strong bond between the interpreters and the VOC personnel. This was expressed in a shared sense of humour, a quintessential characteristic of reciprocal understanding.

Among the many items they noted in these diaries, the chiefs reported information about Deshima and Japan to the Board of the VOC. By some small miracle, these have all been preserved and they are a rich source of information about what was happening in Nagasaki and in Japan. The prime importance of the Deshima Diaries Source Publication Project, in part initiated by Leonard Blussé, lies in the fact that this unique Western source about Japan in this period will be made completely accessible to researchers and other interested parties through the indexing and translation of the more than 200 volumes (Blussé: 1992 / Van der Velde 1990).

### Gen'emon Makes His Bow

“However, fortune presented me with another opportunity and an instrument in the shape of a learned young man, thanks to whom I could achieve my aims and gather a rich harvest of knowledge (...) He had to seek out significant information about the state of the country, the government, the court, religion and the history of past ages, family affairs as well as daily events. There was not a book I endeavoured to see, which he did not obtain for me and explain and translate the passages indicated” (Kaempfer: 1727).

With these words the botanist and VOC physician Engelbert Kaempfer expressed his belated gratitude to his Japanese assistant who, during the time he had been posted on Deshima, 1691-1692, had supplied him with the information on which his book *The History of Japan* (1727) was based. Until well into the twentieth century, this book not only influenced Western perceptions of Japan, it can even be said to have determined them to a large degree. It is therefore no surprise that specialists have long sought to find the identity of this assistant. The diaries have proved to be the key through which the identification of Gen'emon could be made.

On 22 September, 1695, Gen'emon and two other Japanese employees took exams in Dutch in the presence of the Chief Merchant Hendrik Dijkman and the physician Matthijs Raquet, to whom Gen'emon was assigned as a servant (NFJ 108 (1695), 290). The exam was held at the request of the Nagasaki magistrates. The result would actually have little real impact on who would eventually be appointed because other factors, such as ties of friendship and family, played a greater role. According to the Deshima Diaries, Gen'emon was a scion of an interpreter family. His grandfather, Imamura Shirobei, had been an interpreter for the Dutch when their trading-post was still located on Hirado (an island off the north-west coast of Kyushu). His father, Imamura Ichizaemon, moved to Nagasaki in 1641 when the Dutch were forced to move to this city (Imamura: 1942). His son, Gen'emon, was born there in 1671 and Ichizaemon retired in 1694. In view of the fact that the

profession of interpreter was hereditary, we should not be surprised that his son followed in his footsteps a year later.

Four days after the exam, clad in ceremonial robes, Gen'emon called on Dijkman to pay his respects and inform him that he had been appointed assistant/junior interpreter. Dijkman describes him in the following terms: “[...] in the Low German language, he is so proficient that none of the other interpreters can match him, having since his youth served here at the counting-house as the servant of the chief surgeon.” The final part of this sentence provides us with irrefutable proof that he was Kaempfer’s assistant. (NFJ 108 (1695), 290). This entry in the diaries has been overlooked by scholars such as Numato Jirō and even Imamura Akistune, who had searched the diaries for traces of his ancestors, but had failed to register it (Jirō: 1966). Often important information about people or events can be found in places where one would not necessarily expect to find them.

Additional proof that Gen'emon was Kaempfer’s assistant is provided by the fact that he sold Kaempfer many books from the library of the wealthy mayor (*otona*) Yoshikawa Gibuimon at high prices. The Sloane Collection in the British Library contains a number of different books with Gibuimon’s name stamped in them (Sloane Manuscripts). During the time he spent in Japan, Kaempfer had enjoyed a reputation as a good doctor but, after he left, he became best known in Japan as the founder of the science of artillery, which became known as Kaempferian artillery science (Jirō: 1966, 33). This is a fine example of historical invention because the man himself knew nothing about it. What is true is that, shortly after his departure, thanks to Gen'emon’s efforts, the manuscript about the science of artillery began to circulate there and this is the reason that Kaempfer is associated with it.

Gen'emon not only supplied Kaempfer with Japanese maps, books and drawings but, because he could read and copy Dutch books, he also introduced his fellow countrymen to Western knowledge. The copying of texts and the subsequent circulation of the copies was a ubiquitous way of disseminating knowledge in Japan. Nevertheless, it is never linked to transference of European knowledge at the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth century. In this context, a number of “rediscovered” manuscripts from the archives of the Dutch trading-post in Japan deserve our closer inspection.

## Right on Target

The archive of the Dutch trading-post (or factory) in Japan contains manuscripts which are remarkable for a wide variety of reasons (NFJ 650). The compiler of the inventory, M.P.H. Roessingh, dated them to around 1695 and attributed them to a Japanese interpreter whose identity he did not specify (Roessingh: 1964, 11).

In fact, he gives no explanation for either the dating or for the attribution. The manuscripts are all written in Dutch in the same hand and deal with such topics as the production of white cloth which could be dyed and descriptions of whaling and the artillery. The fourth manuscript, which will be dealt with in greater detail here, bears the title “Bosscieterij Konst” (Science of Artillery), first volume and contains 132 pages. This manuscript is a copy of the second edition of *Korte en bondige verhandeling der Bosscieterij Konst als mede hoe men een constapel examineren moet* (Brief and Succinct Treatise on the Science of Artillery and How a Gunner Should Be Examined) (Von Zedlitz: 1662). The author, Frederick von Zedlitz, was a non-commissioned officer in the army of Willem Hendrik of Nassau. The Library of Leiden University is home to the only surviving copy of the first edition in the Netherlands. This means that it can be compared with the handwritten copy of the second edition and it does not take very long to determine that this part of the text of the copy does not deviate from that in the first edition.

The manuscript is written on good quality, handmade lined Japanese paper. As it is impossible to write on this sort of paper using a metal nib or a quill without immediately damaging its structure, the conclusion has to be that not just this manuscript but also the other three were written with a brush. Because I had never seen a manuscript like it, I sought contact with a specialist in Japanese books. He confirmed that the manuscript was indeed handwritten and added that he had also never seen anything else like it. Taking into account the level of control which would be needed to achieve such brush-work, the Dutch have to be excluded as possible authors. This brings us closer to identifying the as yet unknown but certainly Japanese copyist. Besides a thorough knowledge of Dutch, he must have had lengthy experience in writing in the language because, otherwise, he would never have been able to accomplish such brush-work. This could only be one person: Gen’emon.

A closer examination of the manuscript reveals that some letters of the alphabet show a strong similarity to the symbols used in the *katagana* syllabary, including the “t”, the abbreviation of the word “het”. In this fashion the *katagana* syllabary could have provided a bridge for the interpreters, by which they could learn to write Dutch. When the copyists made errors in their writing, they used *gofu*, a good masking material (rather like Tipp-ex) which could be written over. The few corrections there are have mostly to do with double “ls” which have been corrected to double “rs” (it is a well-known fact that Japanese have difficulty pronouncing “r”). The drawings in the copy of *Bosscieterij Konst* also deserve special attention. The fact that the copyist used shading in his illustrations indicates that the copy has been made by a literary man rather than by a professional illustrator, because the latter would have used variegation and resorted to *sumi* (a sort of gum) instead of *gofu*.

When these facts are associated with the important ban on Western books, this and the other manuscripts just mentioned offer a clear indication of how Western

knowledge was disseminated throughout Japan. When all is said and done, it was much easier to smuggle loose pieces of Japanese paper rather than whole books out of Deshima. Proof that this sort of smuggling actually happened is provided by the pagination of the Bosscieterij manuscript which, in contrast to the text, is written in Japanese. This made it possible for Japanese bookbinders who had no Dutch to piece a book together. One of the places where this could have taken place was in Gibuimon's library.

Gen'emon visited him frequently and it was at his house that he met one of his nieces. Gibuimon, who had tutored him in the intricacies of commerce, saw in the intelligent young man an eligible suitor for his niece. He was able to contrive with the governor for Gen'emon to be promoted to the rank of interpreter on 24 July, 1696 (NFJ 110 (1696), 145). Although the majority of the assistant/junior-interpreters never ever attained the well-paid job of interpreter, Gen'emon succeeded in acquiring the coveted position within one year, a meteoric career rise. His new job paved the way for him to supplement his income in all sorts of ways. His star continued to rise because, on 8 January, 1697, he achieved yet another promotion when he was appointed junior rapporteur interpreter. Another interpreter who would achieve almost the same importance as Gen'emon, Namura Hachizaemon, was appointed senior rapporteur interpreter (*nenban tsūji*). As established earlier, these rapporteur interpreters played a key role in the communication between the Dutch and the magistrates in Nagasaki. They reported directly to the mayor and the governor and took it in turns to escort the chief on the annual court journey to Tokyo. At any rate, Dijkman was delighted with their appointments. He described them both as good-tempered, pleasant company as well as remarking that their mastery of Dutch was unsurpassed (NFJ (1696), 78). It is therefore no surprise that the marriage between Gen'emon and Gibuimon's niece was settled in March 1697 (NFJ 110 (1696, 307-338 / NFJ 111 (1697), 221).

## The Pioneers of Dutch Studies

Although Gen'emon is considered the founder of Dutch Studies and his activities in this period marked the first phase, in this same period there were other pioneers alive who were important to the second phase, which ushered in a deeper immersion accomplished by the interaction between two Japanese and two Europeans. The latter two were Giovanni Batista Sidotti (1668-1714), an Italian priest who landed in Japan uninvited in 1708 bearing a papal command to convert the Japanese to the one true religion, and Cornelis Lardijn, who was chief on Deshima in the years 1711-1712 and 1713-1714. The Japanese actors were Arai Hakuseki (1657-1725), councillor to Shoguns Ienobu and Ietsugu and a famous Confucian scholar who wrote



Figure 1. *Plegtigheid der Vertreedinge van het Krucifix, enz. te Nagasaki in Japan* (Trampling upon the Crucifix, etcetera), c. 1770. Engraving, 18 × 12.5 cm. Collection Vortex. Photo Cindy Bakker.

various books about the West. These works were based on information he had obtained from Sidotti and Lardijn through the translations of the other Japanese actor, Gen'emon. According to the scholar of Japanese Grant K. Goodman "[...] the interpreting had to be extremely scholarly and detailed [and] it is obvious that were it not for Imamura Eisei, the writings of Arai Hakuseki and the important effects they produced might never have occurred" (Goodman: 1986, 46).

The diaries give a clear picture of the interaction between the various actors. On 2 September, 1707, Gen'emon was appointed chief rapporteur interpreter. He was the first to interrogate Sidotti after his arrival in Nagasaki on 18 December, 1708. Gen'emon was quickly aware that Sidotti was a priest, a conclusion easily drawn from the many Christian accoutrements which he carried with him. The authorities in Nagasaki were alarmed by the sudden appearance of a Roman Catholic priest bearing his concomitant symbols like the Cross, which had been forbidden in Japan for seventy years on pain of death. As a precaution, the governor of Nagasaki had the interpreters swear a blood oath that they would not allow themselves to be converted by the priest. The ceremony known as *fumi-e* (trampling on the crucifix) had to be observed every year by the people of Nagasaki.

As matters stood, Fatsizemon and Gen'emon were actually the only two people who might have been tempted; Gen'emon in particular as he was the one who had to interrogate Sidotti, with occasional help from the Dutch. Gen'emon was ordered to write a report, destined to be sent to Tokyo, about the answers Sidotti had given to the governor's questions. The Shogunal government decided that Sidotti should be brought to Tokyo in person. Considering the strict laws banning Roman Catholicism, this was a remarkable decision. In fact, if these had been strictly adhered to Sidotti should have been executed on the spot, which is certainly what would have happened a decade earlier. However, Sidotti's arrival coincided with the illness and death of Shogun Tsunayoshi and the rise of Hakuseki as councillor to his successor, Ienobu. Probably, as a consequence of having read Gen'emon's report, Hakuseki decided to have Sidotti brought to Tokyo because he was interested in meeting him. Gen'emon was commanded to escort Sidotti to Tokyo. Before his departure, the chief, Hermanus Menssingh, impressed upon him that he had to be careful with the answers to the questions about religion because he feared that careless answers might endanger Japanese-Dutch relations (NJF 121 (1710), 5). Gen'emon promised him that he would go out of his way not to awaken any suspicions that he might be a crypto-Roman Catholic.

All this meant that Gen'emon was caught up in a delicate mission fraught with danger. He and Sidotti left together on 25 October, 1709, stealthily under the cloak of night, in the hope of escaping the attention of the people of Nagasaki (NFJ 121 (1710), 54). They arrived in Tokyo on 1 December and Sidotti was immediately jailed in the prison for Christians (*yakshiki*) which had stood empty for seventy years (in 1714

Sidotti would meet his end there in a gruesome manner after being locked up in an incredibly small cage in which he could not move an inch). Hakuseki questioned him there with the assistance of Gen'emon. He remained in Tokyo for two months. It was in this period that Hakuseki must have collected the bulk of the material which he would later work into his *Seiyō kibun* (1715), a manuscript which contains some critical views about Christendom. On his journey home, Gen'emon met Menssingh in Osaka on 3 March, 1710, and informed him about the conversations between Hakuseki and Sidotti (NFJ 121 (1710), 5).

That Hakuseki's interest was not confined to religion can be deduced from his meetings with Lardijn. In November 1710, the bookkeeper Jacob Nentwig completed a Japanese map of the world by adding the names of the countries and cities at the request of the governor of Nagasaki (NFJ 122 (1711), 8). Not long afterwards, the governor visited Deshima accompanied by a student of cartography and, according to the chief, N.J. van Hoorn, the student asked all sorts of "stupid" questions about a fifth continent, as if four were not enough in his opinion! (NFJ 122 (1711), 8). The world map was forwarded to Tokyo as a present for the Shogun. Now Hakuseki really had the bit between his teeth and, when Lardijn was escorted to Tokyo by Gen'emon in 1712, he poured forth a stream of questions about cartography, geography and Dutch paintings. The information which Hakuseki extracted from Lardijn found its way into a new manuscript, *Sairan Igen*, the first scientifically based book about the geography of the world in Japanese. More information found a place in his manuscripts *On Dutch Matters* (*Oranda Kiji*) and *Description of the Natural Features of Holland* (*Oranda Fudoki*). Although these only appeared in print at the end of the Tokugawa period, they were initially eagerly devoured in manuscript form, stimulating the further development of Dutch Studies.

At the request of Hakuseki, Gen'emon also transcribed a list of 300 Dutch words in the *katagana* syllabary. Japanese interest in Dutch books about botany, medicine and military science was almost certainly larger in this period than has hitherto been thought; the manuscripts just mentioned are proof of this. Hakuseki was in the position to legitimate the study of the West and he must have stimulated other scholars to follow the path of Rangaku. Hakuseki's interest encompassed everything to do with the Dutch and the Netherlands and also unquestionably medicine as, for instance, he allowed his son's stiff knee to be examined by the physician Willem Wagemans whom he asked if the problem could be cured. Wagemans diagnosed the problem and prescribed medicine for it (NFJ 123 (1712), 128-139). In 1716 he again showed his faith in the healing properties of Dutch medicine when he used a prescription from the Dutch physician for an ailment from which he was suffering (NFJ 126 (1716), 117).

Whereas before 1715 the emphasis in Dutch-Japanese relations had been on commerce, the accent now shifted in the direction to the transference of Western

knowledge. On the one hand, Shogun Yoshimune clung onto the tight restrictions on the export of raw materials (copper) brought in by Hakuseki in 1715 and the concomitant striving to achieve autarky. On the other, Yoshimune also shared Hakuseki's interest in Europe. Hakuseki set the tone in this new phase of Japanese-Dutch relations and, with the lifting of the ban on the importation of Western books in 1720, Yoshimune changed the official policy which ushered in the third phase of Dutch Studies (Van der Velde: 1990, ii).

### Dutch Equestrianism or Oranda Bajutsu-sho

In 1719, the chief, Joan Aouwer, described Gen'emon as "the man who takes care of everything" (NFJ 129 (1719), 79). Thereafter, Gen'emon was definitely seen by both the Dutch and the Japanese as the irreplaceable intermediary between the two countries. From this time, he is invariably referred to in the diaries as Vadertje Ginnemon (Little Father Gen'emon). His status was raised to even greater heights by Yoshimune's interest in Rangaku. The Shogun sent a number of scholars to Nagasaki to study a whole gamut of wide-ranging aspects of Western knowledge. The Dutch sources devote great attention to Inomate Sositje, very probably the son of the interpreter Inomate Denbei, as well as to Mukai Gensei and Fukami Kyūdayū. The last mentioned spent the years 1722 to 1727 in Nagasaki and, during this time, on Yoshimune's behalf, he asked the Dutch chiefs about an enormous range of subjects. His questions were about practical matters such as agriculture, animal husbandry, architecture, fire-engines, foodstuffs, forestry and navigation as well as covering more theoretical realms such as astronomy, the calendar, geography, geometry, legislation, mathematics, religion and state institutions. The barrage of questions launched by Kyūdayū, who was an intelligent man according to Chief Merchant De Hartog, must have made huge demands on Gen'emon's time (NFJ 136 (1726), 51).

After his return to Tokyo, Kyūdayū was appointed Shogunal librarian (*goshomotsu bugyō*). He would play a big role in the dissemination of Dutch Studies and until his death in 1773 continued to ask questions of any Dutchmen who happened to visit Tokyo. Notwithstanding the expansion of Dutch knowledge during the reign of Yoshimune, the first Japanese manuscripts on such theoretical subjects as linguistics and mathematics would only see the light of day at the end of the eighteenth century.

Nevertheless, on a less theoretical subject like equestrianism and horse-breeding there was a successful transfer of knowledge in what can be categorised as the fourth phase of Dutch Studies in which Gen'emon, just as in the first, played a central role. The driving force behind this phase was the horse-lover Yoshimune. On 19 May, 1725, Gen'emon was appointed Shogunal messenger (*goyō kata*), for

which he was given an extra emolument of 500 taels over and above his usual salary (NFJ 135 (1725), 144). His appointment as Shogunal messenger coincided with the first shipment of Persian horses to Japan on 23 July, 1725. These horses were accompanied by the German horse-master J.G. de Keijser (1796-1736) (NFJ 129 (1719), 157-158). Yoshimune was extremely impressed by the horses and, in 1727, he sent the Shogunal horse-master, Matazaemon, to Nagasaki. He remained there two years learning about Western equestrianism from Keijser in a specially constructed riding-school. Gen'emon translated all the questions Matazaemon asked Keijser, who joined his Japanese colleague when he left to return to Tokyo in 1729.

Around this time, Gen'emon was arrested for a short while on charges of corruption. The chief, Pieter Boockestein, wrote that were it not for the fact he was the Shogunal messenger, he would have been banned, the fate which befell the rest of his accomplices (NJF 139 (1729), 66-67). Boockestein signed a petition addressed to the governor of Nagasaki pleading for Gen'emon's release. We cannot say whether this had any real influence but the fact remains that Gen'emon was released a few days later. His status as a pivotal figure, who was virtually indispensable, in the relationship between Japan and the Netherlands was perhaps the principal reason that he got off so relatively lightly.

Gen'emon was ordered to accompany Keijser and Matazaemon to Tokyo and he told Boockestein that he was afraid that he would not return from the journey alive (NFJ 129 (1729), 381-381). Despite his forebodings, he did survive his long stay from October 1729 to April 1730. During this time, he was ordered to write a report recording all the knowledge he had acquired about equestrianism and equine medicine. He took the opportunity to work it into a translation from the book by Pieter Almanus van Coer Toevlugt of Heylsame, *Remedien voor alderhande Siektens en Accidenten die de Paerden Soude kunnen overkoomen* (Recourse or Healing Remedies for All Kinds of Sicknesses and Accidents Which Might Befall Horses) (1688) which Keijser had brought to Japan (Katsuyama, 1993, 253-257).

Therefore, the report is the first proven successful attempt to transfer Western knowledge, in this case about equestrianism and related matters, because after its appearance horse-breeding techniques in Japan improved out of sight (Seiichi: 1990). In 1736 his book about Dutch equestrianism (*Oranda Bajutsu-sho*), an expanded version of his 1729 manuscript, appeared. This can be seen as the apotheosis of the career of a man who, in his youth as Kaempfer's assistant, had played a great part in the transfer of knowledge about Japan and in his later years as a man who was pivotal as the founder and mediator of Dutch Studies.

After his death in 1736, nobody could fill the gap he left behind. Thereafter the chiefs constantly complained about the deficiencies shown by the interpreters in their mastery of Dutch. The interpreter Chūjirō, who was in Tokyo with Gen'emon and Keijser, wished that he could have had just a little of Gen'emon's knowledge

## 今村源右衛門英生

P・G・E・I・J・ファン・デル・フェルデ

1736年9月22日（元文元年8月18日）、長崎のオランダ商館長ベルナルドゥス・コープ・ア・フルーン Bernardus Coop à Groenは商館日記にこう記した。「將軍御用方大通詞源右衛門、本日死去」。この短文の裏に、日蘭の文化交流の最も重要な担い手の1人であった男の生涯が隠れている。今村源右衛門英生（1671-1736）は阿蘭陀通詞の家に生まれた。幼少の時から出島に出入りし、そこで初めてオランダ語を耳にし

て、まもなく読み書きの両方を身につけた。1690（元禄3）年から1692（元禄5）年まで出島在勤の医師エンゲルベルト・ケンベル Engelbert Kaempfer も、源右衛門が助手となったときにその能力を認めた。源右衛門は、後に2世紀以上にわたり日本に関する基本文献となるケンベルの『日本誌』の資料収集に、貴重な役を果たしたのである。

源右衛門は見る見るうちに大通詞の地位に上り詰め、西洋における日

本像の形成のみならず、日本に西洋を紹介する上でも重要な役割を果たした。政治家の新井白石が、1708（宝永5）年に日本に潜入したイエズス会のイタリア人シドッティ Giovanni Battista Sidotti を尋問した際や、1712（正徳2）年にオランダ商館長ラルアイン Cornelis Lardijn から聴取した際にも、源右衛門は特別に通訳を務めた。白石はその会話を元に、19世紀まで日本人の西洋像に影響を持ったオランダと西洋に関する2著『西洋紀聞』『采覧異言』を著した。

1725（享保10）年、將軍吉宗は源右衛門を御用方に起用し、彼の特異な地位は公に認められた。吉宗は西洋の知識に非常に興味を持っており、とりわけ馬術に関心があった。そのため源右衛門は、1726年から1735（享保20）年に吉宗のもとに幾度か滞在したドイツ人馬術師ケイゼル Johan Georg Keijser(ing)のために通訳をすることになった。そのころまでにはオランダ人は彼を“源右衛門親父”と呼ぶようになっていたが、彼は西洋馬術に関する書『西観伯楽必携』をまとめた業績で、蘭学の祖の1人に位置づけられている。

原子爆弾の災禍を免れた源右衛門の墓所は、18世紀における日蘭の知識の伝播における彼の数多くの功績を歴史的に認めたもので、両国の史跡とされるにふさわしいものであろう。



今村源右衛門英生肖像（今村英明氏提供）

Figure 2. Summary of this article in Japanese. Source: Japanese Edition of *Bridging the Divide. 400 Years The Netherlands-Japan*. 2000. Edited by Blussé, Leonard, Rummelink, Willem and Smits Ivo. Hotei Publishing. Photo Cindy Bakker.

(NFJ 145 (1735), 203). His passing ushered in a fifth, fairly passive phase in Dutch Studies in which Kyūdayū, who was referred to earlier, carried the torch and also formed a bridge to the sixth period in which the knowledge acquired about Dutch Studies in all fields was expanded. The interpreters played barely any role in this. When Gen'emon died on 22 September, 1736, the incumbent chief, Bernardus Coop à Groen, confined himself to the business-like statement: "Also today the Imperial messenger Ginnemon died" (NFJ 146 (1736), 166). Not the most eloquent eulogy.

### Rangaku's New Time Sequence

In his book *Rangaku no sō Imamura Eisei*, which was published in 1942, Akutisna Imamura, a direct descendant of Gen'emon, proposed that his ancestor should be considered the founder of Dutch Studies (Imamura: 1942). He based his claim on the family records at his disposal and on research in the diaries. This proposition has never generated much response because the commencement of the "real" Dutch Studies has always been placed in the second half of the eighteenth century and what had preceded this was regarded as trivial (Jiro 1992: 52).

In this article, I advocate a more nuanced view of Dutch Studies. I put their initial period at the end of the seventeenth century and argue that Gen'emon should be acknowledged as their founder. Later came a phase in which he acquired a powerful ally in the advisor to the Shoguns Ienobu and Ietsugu, the scholar Arai Hakuseki, who systematically collected knowledge about the West which he committed to paper in a number of extremely influential manuscripts. The third phase was that in which Shogun Yoshimune gave his blessing to Dutch Studies and partially lifted the ban on the importation of Western books in 1720. He also sent Japanese scholars to Deshima to acquaint themselves with all aspects of Western knowledge. During the fourth phase, Yoshimune focused on equestrianism and horse-breeding, initiating the first concrete transference of Western knowledge, producing better-bred horses in Japan and a publication about Dutch equestrianism by Little Father Gen'emon, which appeared first in manuscript form in 1729 and was only published in the year of his death 1736. The phase which followed, the fifth, can be classified as a passive time in which little was done with Dutch Studies. It was only after 1770 that Dutch lessons were given to Japanese scholars on Deshima and work was begun on a Japanese-Dutch dictionary, marking the beginning of the sixth phase (Van der Velde 1996: 301-5). Gen'emon's wordlist containing 300 entries, compiled sixty years earlier, provided the basis. It is safe to say that, without Gen'emon's profound interest in Western knowledge and without his flawless mastery of the Dutch language, the history of Dutch Studies would have had a completely different complexion.

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