

the winter equinox, learned men to his Shirandō Academy, of which he is the principal instructor. That day is the first day of the year in Holland, and those [present at these gatherings] all pursue Dutch studies. The ancients used to say: 'The responsibility for scholarship lies with the cleverest men of each generation. Gathering these men together means that the Way will not be destroyed.'

It is almost as if our Master was meant by this.

Today is the 28th day, Eleventh Month, Kyōwa 1 [2 January 1802], which really is that day again.¹⁶ So, as is the custom now, [Master Ōtsuki] opened the academy and invited the scholars to have a good time together. Although I am unworthy, I am allowed to receive the benefits of the Master's teachings as his pupil and to be present at this illustrious gathering. It is very much like the case of Sūrang 蘇瓌 climbing the mountain to meet Hua 華.¹⁷

Many attended and were enjoying plenty of wine. At the height of the excitement the Master arose, pointed at the painting of this gathering hanging on the wall, and said: 'There is this empty space here in the painting. It has been waiting a long time for your contribution.' I bowed my head and looked at the painting. Many scholars who had attended this party had written something: vignettes of intricate design and poems of exquisite taste had preceded me here.

How could I possibly add my clumsy writing? But after a while I changed my mind. Do green flies not attach themselves to superior steeds and go a thousand miles? If, by some happy coincidence, [this painting] survives the ravages of time, my children and grandchildren will one day be able to see that I was once a pupil of Master Ōtsuki's academy. Is there greater honor imaginable? And so disregarding the question of my inadequacy, I have had the temerity to put down these awkward words of mine, and they have blackened the blank space left open. This is my contribution:

Japan is the country where the sun rises. Because of the virtue of its rulers, the relationships between high and low are stable and all living things multiply in great numbers. From olden times we practice the literary and military arts. The emperor and the shogun have nothing to fear. Moreover, the arts and sciences flourish and everyone has work. In general we depend upon our ancient customs and the new we remove as fluttering weeds, so everything thrives and prospers on its own.

Only with our medical science is this not the case, and this makes our wise men sigh deeply: 'Can nothing be done?' Holland is a country far from here. Because of the reigning peace and our efforts in studying, foreign books are brought by ship and strange theories have taken root here. There is no doubt that these are extremely useful. When you rely on the facts, you cannot go wrong. Many people's misconceptions are being cleared away and a thousand old errors are abandoned. We take their strong points and we make up for our weak ones. We translate this and imitate that, and by coming together we reinforce our commitment: However will I reward us and our country will be grateful!

[Signed] Kimura Tei Kōkan 木村貞公幹 from Ise wrote this.

[1st seal] Kimura Tei 木村貞印; [2nd seal] Kōkan 公幹.

¹⁶ If the 1802 party was really held on this day, then it was, through some kind of miscalculation, a day too late.

¹⁷ Reference unclear. The Chinese names are probably misspelled.

7.

飛耳何偏聽、衆善公擇五大洲。
長目絕瞽爭、全象並觀四元行。
宇晉

With sharp ears why have only partial hearing
When you can pick up so many useful things
From all Five Continents?
With keen sight you can stop stupid quarrels
And observe all the different phenomena of nature,
One by one.
[Signed] Ufu 宇晉.¹⁸

8.

王化由來撫四方
最喜珍貢自西洋
殊疆圖籍因君譯
剩此佳正舉酒觴
唐橋進 [印]原進子与

Because of the moral superiority of our rulers, they are respected
[by all the countries] in the four directions.
The valuable tribute they rejoice in most, however, comes from the West.

Because of your¹⁹ translations [we can now read] foreign books and documents.
Thus, let's raise our glasses to this auspicious New Year's Day!

[Signed] Karahashi Susumu 唐橋進. [Seal] Hara Susumu Shiyo 原進子与.²⁰

9.

[印]飛耳忘面

蘭學會盟引

惟寬政甲寅閏十一月癸丑日南至越若來閏月甲子及群賢會于芝蘭堂尋西
學翻譯之盟、何為用是日乃大西洋一千七百九十四[一七九四]年正月上日也。何用其上日今讀其書
肆其業於其穀、且者祝斯業之大成也。夫物之有偏長、雖聖人有不及焉、故仲尼問禮
於老聃覺衆諸師襄。豈直人也哉。管仲師馬隄朋師蟻荀道之所存誰氏非吾師夫。吾醫
之道炎黃以降聖賢間出草討脩潤蓋無餘蘊矣。雖然邈哉、遠乎、吾奚以論其
世哉。其載諸簡蓋在蒼姬之末乎、時則終始五德施、乱我道古者稱萬物今
也。五其數牽強傳會動見其間淄澠合流薰蕕同器論包宇宙失在眉睫
豈可盡信其書哉。自此厥後非無僞傑多禁其方後死莫述獨有長沙氏
立言而不朽然唯拳其綱未張其目尋及後世載籍極博唯是繁而寡用

¹⁸ Udagawa Genzui.

¹⁹ That is, Ōtsuki Gentaku.

²⁰ Does the same man have two surnames? The signature is Karahashi, while the seal is Hara. There is a Hara Yōtaku 原養澤 from Edo on the *Sumō Banzuke*; see Okamura Chibiki, *Kōmō Bunkashiwa*, p. 28.

語而不詳非失鹵莽則弊鑿空嚆亦何是微焉始吾思之忘寢忘食幸遇先覺與聞斯業其為術也。近取諸身遠取諸物施諸行事則親切著明矣。豈其空言淫辭之所企及哉夫西方之人其性機巧上自天文曆數下至凡百技藝精工瀋密幾奪天工唐都落下箝口千古魯般工倕擺指九原日月所照孰出其右豈風土之使然抑何妙也則獨奚於我醫而疑之哉愚者所笑賢者察焉。吾與諸君雖欲不師之將焉得不師嗚乎。無怠無荒解其孚甲成其華實子々無已者其從今日始

磐水 大槻茂質撰 [印] 儒臺醫員 [印] 號玄澤
 萱齋 岡田甫說書 [印] 甲斐之印 [印] 田尹君簡

[Seal:] An Ear in the Air Forgets the Face.²¹

Introduction to this Dutch studies gathering.²²

On this 11th day, Eleventh Intercalary Month, Kansei 6, I have assembled a group of scholars at the Shirandō Academy. I have asked them to participate in a meeting of translators of Western Science. Why did I choose this day? It is the first day of January 1794 [sic] according to the Western calendar. As it is an auspicious day for reading Western books and learning how to translate, many who make translating their profession came to celebrate.

Our field is one of extreme complexity, and so there are many things that even the most accomplished among us do not know. In former times, Confucius asked Laotan 老聃 about etiquette and learned many things about music from Shixiang 師襄. Was there a more accomplished man than he? Kuan Zhong 管仲 made a horse his teacher, and Ximing 隄明 did the same with an ant. Everything that has even the least part of the Way should be our teacher.

Now, our Way of Medicine has come down to us ever since the emperors Yan 炎 and Huang 黃. Since their time there were, now and then, wise and learned men who collected herbs and tested their properties. But it was never enough. As this happened extremely long ago, we really have no way to discuss their views. The writings they have left us on these matters probably date from the time of the last descendants of Emperor Huang. Time passed and the theory of the Five Elements was considered the ultimate touchstone for everything, and so became an obstacle to our Way.

The ancients gave names to all phenomena and these are the categories we use today. To say they are but five in number is to distort reality, which is what we all too often see in those books. Such authors make the Zi and Sheng rivers flow together, and put stinking and fragrant herbs into the same container. They theorize about the universe, but their weakness lies in their explanation of concrete and everyday things. Do we have to believe everything that is written in those books?

It is unlikely, of course, that since the time of the ancients nothing of value was produced. But often newly found methods were proscribed, and after their inventors died there would be nothing left. Only the man from Zhang Sha 長沙 wrote down his findings in a book that has stood the test of time.²³ He dealt only with the general,

²¹ Meaning unclear.

²² A printed version of this text is found in *Ransetsu Benwaku: Bansui Yawa*, in EKS 17, pp. 165–69.

²³ According to Professor Miyachi Masato 宮地正人, the reference is to *Bencao Gangmu* 本草綱目 ('An Outline of Botany') by the Ming scholar Li Shi-zhen 李時珍.

however, while the specific still remains to be researched. Later generations produced a great number of books on a variety of topics, but they contain little that is useful. These authors talk a lot but avoid precision, they do nothing but chisel holes into the air. Ah, what is the use of all this?

When I first realized this, I could not sleep and forgot to eat. But I was lucky enough to meet the pioneers of our discipline and listened to what they had to say. Now what is our discipline? Close by we examine our bodies, and further off we research everything else. If you practice this, things become clear and evident. What do we need that empty and frivolous talk for, anyway?

Westerners are extremely clever and skillful in everything, from their science of astronomy by which they make calendars down to the myriad arts and crafts of this world below. Their findings are so precise and detailed that it is almost as if they take the place of the Great Creator himself. Even the Chinese who lived in the Tang capitals Xiang or Laoyang would be dumbfounded forever. Lu Pan 魯般 and Gong Chui 工倕²⁴ are breaking their useless fingers in the afterworld. Who in the world can surpass the dexterity of the Dutch? It must be something in the climate of their land that makes them so uncannily clever in everything.

There are those that may admit as much, but make an exception only for our medicine and doubt the methods of the Dutch. The fools may laugh, but the wise recognize the truth when they see it. Even if we do not want to learn from them, can we avoid it? Oh, that we may neither slack nor get bored [with translating], and learn to break through the outer shell [of the texts] to be able to get at the fruits inside.²⁵ From today let us make a start with a prodigious and continuous effort.

[Signed] Bansui 磐水. Ōtsuki Shigekata 大槻茂質 composed this. [Seal] Sendai Iin 僊臺醫員; [seal] Gentaku gō 玄澤號; [signed] Kensai 萱齋. Okada Hosetsu wrote it down; [seal] Kai no In 甲斐之印; [seal] Den'in Kunkan 田尹君簡.

10.

初陽之後十二日西洋正朔
 磐水先生勝集賦、奉呈
 泰西初曆物美新
 自是亦陰々至春
 更有高堂葡萄酒
 轉傾不斗到鷄晨
 又
 張宴窮陰曆日停
 高陽賓客滿仙亭
 人間只願忘憂物
 三万六千醉不醒

Twelve days after the winter equinox is the first day of the year according to the

²⁴ Famous Chinese artisans.

²⁵ At the right side of the table there is, in the middle, a bowl with an opened pomegranate. Is this an image of the act of translating as described here in the text?

Western calendar. Master Bansui collected a poem from everyone around. I want to offer the following to him:

The first day of the year according to the Western calendar is a wonderful new idea.
Spring will be here before we know it.

Moreover, there is wine in the Hallowed Hall [of the Shirandō Academy].
As we throw back cup after cup without counting, suddenly the cock crows
for the new day.

And:

A banquet is held in the Twelfth Month and the days of the
old calendar are counted.

Drinking guests fill the abode of the Sage.

People want only one thing: to forget their sorrows.

Let's get drunk without waking up for one hundred years.

[Unsigned]

11.

偶讀荷蘭萬國圖
始知散粟五洲殊
寧為西笠馱經客
敢擬東周問禮徒
稻村箭

Once when I happened to see a Dutch map of the world,
I first marveled at how the Five Continents were scattered like millet
over the globe. How different they are!
I want to be a monk from India, stupidly chanting the sutras,
And go to China to learn about the correct Way to live.²⁶

[Signed] Inamura Sen 稻村箭.

12.

九千里外存知己
五大洲中如比類
杉田勤

To have friends nine thousand miles away:
On the Five Continents there are people like us.

[Signed] Sugita Kin 杉田勤.

²⁶ For a different, and rather farfetched interpretation of this poem, see Sugimoto, *Edo Jidai Rangogaku*, 4, pp. 727–28. The weakness of this interpretation is that Sugimoto uncouples the poem's first half from the second, and leaves them unjoined.

13.

流槎漫遊九州外
足跡偏歷三世界
萬象 [印]中良

Traveling outside Japan in a raft adrift,
They left their traces everywhere.

[Signed] Manzō 萬象; [seal] Chūryō 中良.

14.

如月之恒
如日之升

[On the fan is written:]

tsuki no yumihari no gotoku,
hi no izuru ga gotoshi,

. . . *just as the moon waxes,*
*Just as the sun rises . . .*²⁷

15.

芝蘭堂會盟之宴以至後十二日蓋西洋元日云。筵亦得
与焉。興餘諸君見請為其雅集圖。固辭、不得命因
不掩拙為之。亦樂記姓名於諸君之尾也。 五瀬市川筵製。[印]□

[Lower left corner:]

The feast at the Shirandō gathering was held on the twelfth day after the winter equinox, which is the first day of the year according to the Western calendar, they say. Even I was allowed to be present here. At the height of the excitement I was asked by the people present if I could not paint a picture of this illustrious gathering. I said that I was not able to do so, but because I was not allowed to decline, I have made this without hiding my lack of skill. With pleasure I am writing my name below all the others.

[Signed] Ichikawa Yō 市川筵²⁸ from Ise painted this [seal]□

²⁷ Quotation from *The Book of Poetry*.

²⁸ Ichikawa Gakuzan's pen name.

