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Dutch grammar in Japanese words: reception and representation of European theory of grammar in the manuscripts of Shizuki Tadao (1760 – 1806)

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CHAPTER IX

Conclusions

"[…] welke berisping ook niet zal koomen dan van de zulke welke volstrekt geene of maar weinig kennis van de Hollandshce taal hebben, en een woordenboek verkeerdelijk uitleggen met een Spraakkonst. Want als men denkt dat men uit een Woordenboek de Hollandsche taal kan leeren dan is men in een verkeerd begrip."

"[…] such reprimand will not come but from those with little to no knowledge of the Dutch language, and who wrongly explain a dictionary with a Grammar. Because, if you think you can learn Dutch from a dictionary, you are misunderstanding."

Hendrik Doeff, *Doeff Halma* (1816)

9. Conclusions

9.1 Research on language in Edo Japan

Before the invention of the internet, the only way one could learn a foreign language without moving to a foreign country was to consult a book. If that language was not closely related to a language one already spoke, the choice of what type of book one would first consult was almost certainly limited to two: a handbook of grammar or a dictionary. These are safe assumptions for most people living in the 20th century. Even though they would still mostly also stand true for 17th and 18th century Europe, no such claim can be put forth with certainty when it comes to Edo Japan.

Before the Edo period, there were three main approaches to studying language: 1. the analysis of the use of Chinese characters and *kana* in the classics of poetry (*kana-zukai*); 2. translation studies, mostly concerned with the development of the *kundoku* annotation; 3. the phonetic research, that originated in Sanskrit literature, and developed into the table of the fifty sounds (*gojūon-zu*). No concept of "grammar" existed, at least not in the European sense. As Ogyū Sorai argued, it is realistic to believe that even in the practice of translation – mostly from Chinese – text was interpreted as a string of concepts composing a code one needed to crack in order to turn it into "language". This type of reasoning is only allowed by the logographic nature of Chinese characters. It is in the Edo period that one can see the development of new practices, schools of thought and learning materials that tried to overcome these traditional hurdles. The Neo-Confucian school of translation, best represented by Itō Tōgai, Itō Jinsai and Ogyū Sorai, started spreading new approaches based on the traditional Chinese concepts of "empty" and "full" words. These scholars are also responsible for the spreading of a new lexicographical genre: the *jigi*. These were philosophical dictionaries compiled in order to guide an exegesis of the classics of Chinese literature that could be more faithful to Neo-Confucian sensibilities. It is at the crossing point between this new lexicographic genre and the necessities of translators of Chinese texts that another sub-genre gained popularity among Japanese Sinologists: the genre of the books titled "Thoughts on Auxiliary Characters" (*joji-kō*), or variations thereof. The translation and adoption of the Chinese traditional categories of "full-empty-auxiliary" allowed for the explicit manifestation of interlinguistic differences within the words of different languages; differences that could now go beyond the superficial semantic and phonological level. Chinese and Japanese words behaved differently also from the point of view of grammar, so the Japanese finally possessed shared terms and concepts to refer to, when addressing these differences.

At the same time, so-called "nativists" (*kokugakusha*) were dealing with similar issues when trying to describe the language used in the classics of Japanese literature. The conventions of the use of language and spelling visible in these ancient and cherished sources was not easily intelligible anymore even for cultured individuals, calling for new investigations and methodologies. While it certainly is no incident that the *kokugakusha* themselves ended up adopting a very similar tripartite distinction of the parts of speech of Japanese, they also strongly believed in one fundamental issue: regardless of what many claimed, there was no connection between Chinese auxiliary characters and the Japanese *te ni wo ha*. In fact, they

believed, it is exactly by understanding the proper use of these small words and morphemes that one can display a distinguished control of the Japanese language. Nonetheless, the use of these particles had changed significantly since the times when the ancient classics were compiled. That is why Motoori Norinaga decided to study this topic precisely, culminating in the publication of the *Himo kagami* table and of the essay *Kotoba no tama no o*. In these works, Motoori illustrates his methodology of language analysis: one should take a poetic verse from a renowned classic work of literature and investigate its use of language. In so doing, Motoori understood that what was generally called *te ni wo ha* actually included two different parts of speech: an upper element called *kakari* and a lower element called *musubi* whose forms were influenced by the presence of specific *kakari* within the sentence. It is via this methodology that Motoori (re)discovered the phenomenon that is still to this day known as *kakari-musubi*, whereby a particle (nowadays *joshi*) influences the ending of the main predicate.

9.2 Dutch research on language

In Europe, things were slightly different. The study of languages had been connected to the concept of grammar since the first elucubrations of the philosophers of Ancient Greece had spread in the Roman empire. However, the tradition of grammatical studies of vernacular languages was no ancient phenomenon, with the first grammar of Dutch (the *Twe-spraeck*) only being published at the end of the 16th century, a few decades after the first recorded importation of a *jigi* into Japan. In some sense, thus, the application of the Greek-Latin tradition onto early modern Dutch grammar was no well-established feat, either. Oftentimes it is taken for granted that the way one formalizes the theory of the rules according to which a specific language functions is a well-established monolith. This is often done precisely with the impression that Latin grammarians have already defined these ideas so long ago. However, theory of grammar has always been a highly debated topic, with many different competing views, at least until the creation of standard languages and the centralization of the power defining "proper" grammar typical of nation-building.

The consistency of the theory of grammar in the Dutch sources of the 17th and 18th centuries is precisely what I intended to evaluate in Chapter IV. The three main Dutch authors that influenced Shizuki's study of language were part of the same cultural milieu, so much so that they knew each other directly and collaborated in the compilation of works on language. Nonetheless, in light of my analysis in that chapter, it is now clear that their description of Dutch grammar was far from being standardized. On the one hand, Halma and Marin's dictionaries often contained differing terminology and different labels to describe the same phenomena. On the other hand, Séwel's grammar does not contain sufficient information for it to be the only base upon which Shizuki developed his theories. However, Halma and Marin's dictionaries certainly provide their reader with detailed semantic reference and also rudiments of the morphological categories and how they are broadly conceptualized in the Greek-Latin tradition, still accounting for the numerous inconsistencies. Séwel, instead, provides a more complex and complete theoretical framework, and a

useful display of verbal conjugation, yet he often misses the opportunity to address the very specific issues Shizuki was interested in. There is one additional issue, and that is that in order to read and really understand Séwel – as Shizuki undoubtedly did at some point – you already need to possess a very good command of Dutch. Consequently, in some way, Shizuki must have had already learned Dutch by other means and must have had already developed his own representation of the grammatical rules of Dutch. This leads to one of the main questions of the present research: how did Shizuki learn Dutch grammar and conceptualize its theory?

9.3 The Japanese get exposed to European theory of grammar

The agents of the VOC, whose level of literacy in the "correct" grammar of Dutch certainly varied, had no vested interest in carrying grammar handbooks with them, for the Japanese to read. At least until it became a profitable business, there is no reason to believe that any agent of the VOC was purposefully carrying with him any such document. It is probably because of this reason that many of the earliest books that have been recorded to have circulated among the *rangakusha* were mostly bilingual materials, like Dutch-French dictionaries and Marin's *Spraakwyze*. These were books that a Dutch merchant would more likely be interested in possessing. At the same time, monolingual lexicographic works of Dutch were probably restricted to elementary abecedaries and similar books for children. After the first period of communication in Portuguese and, probably, a mixture of broken Japanese and Dutch, the Japanese started realizing that among those "lowly" merchants there were individuals who excelled in culture and technical knowledge. The Japanese government began officializing the learning of the language of their trading partners, which incentivized the importation of varied books on Dutch spelling and grammar and made the agents of the VOC actively teach their language to a few Japanese interpreters.

Nonetheless, in light of what I argued about the Japanese research on language, the scholars of Dutch mostly had no direct counterpart, from their own literary tradition, which they could compare to European dictionaries and grammatical handbooks. This is why, I assume, Shizuki approached Marin and Halma's Dutch-French dictionaries as if they were some sort of foreign *jigi*. This explains why Shizuki selected, from Marin's dictionary, all the Dutch words that corresponded to what he called Japanese "auxiliaries" (*joshi*) creating his own "Thoughts on Auxiliary Words" (*Joshi-kō*), to which he also added a table illustrating a reworking of the theory found in Ogyū's *Kun'yaku jimō* – itself a type of *joji-kō* – so as to make it correspond to the morphological parts of speech of Dutch. This also explains why, in *Rangaku seizenfu*, Shizuki does not cite a single grammatical source. Whether Shizuki had or had not access to Dutch handbooks on grammar is not relevant at this point because, I would argue, even if he did, he would not have actively looked for them in the process of learning the language. Unlike his colleagues, in fact, Shizuki was probably not content with applying the traditional *kundoku* methodology to the translation of Dutch texts, and really wanted to reach the "real, original form" (本来の面目) of Dutch. Inspired by Ogyū's approach to Chinese studies, Shizuki also believed that Dutch needed to be understood as a living language, possessing

fundamentally unique rules that one needed to understand in order to then be able to translate Dutch texts. Translation could not just be the mechanical substitution and reordering of units of meaning from one language to the other, anymore. This is the reason why he wrote *Rangaku seizenfu* and why he called it this way. This work is a way to reach the real knowledge of how Dutch functions by witnessing the concrete traces annotated by the "father before you were born".

9.4 How the Japanese learn Dutch

As a consequence of what hitherto argued, Shizuki's works on language were not only the first Japanese sources on Dutch grammar, but they also represent the first Japanese sources trying to make sense of the traditional Greek-Latin theory of grammar. The manuscripts attributed to Shizuki I have been investigating in the present research had, thus, two main purposes. On the one hand, they intended to illustrate the deep "original" theory at the basis of the rules of the Dutch language. On the other hand, they were illustrations of how the Dutch approached the study of languages. Terms like "noun" and "adverb" were as unintelligible to a Japanese scholar of Dutch as much as I assume terms like "empty" (*kyo*) and "function" (*yō*) were to the average reader of the present thesis, before I illustrated them. To believe that any Japanese scholar of the time would purposefully reach out to grammar handbooks to learn Dutch is – to a large extent – preposterous. Even if he did that, as I have already said, in order to read them he must have already learned the language itself. Thus, if handbooks on Dutch grammar were not commonly used by the *rangakusha* until the 19th century, a question begs to be answered: how did the Japanese learn Dutch? If Shizuki's endeavors actually were the first attempts at making sense of that theory, what was the process of learning Dutch grammar like, before Shizuki and his students started spreading grammatical theory? Certainly, those who were lucky enough to have direct contact with the native speakers, managed to learn it somewhat organically by interacting with them. However, I believe a huge amount of work was carried out by the Japanese beyond the encounters on Dejima, particularly by those who translated Dutch books and whose job was not only connected to the bureaucratic commercial practices.

The answer is hidden in Shizuki's works. In *Rangaku seizenfu* and in *Shihō shoji taiyaku*, I have managed to identify three quotes in total that point to the fact that Shizuki must have read some material by the Dutch poet Jacob Cats. By virtue of the overtly didactic purpose of the genre of emblem poetry, these poems were probably very useful for the learning of the language. Dutch emblems always came with pictures illustrating the context – which amplifies the ability of understanding the contents –, they conveyed moral instructions, so the reader could expect its content to contain positive teachings, and, above all, they rhymed, aiding memorization and the learning of phonology. As I have discussed in NESPOLI (2022), the metric of Dutch emblems entailed a combination of rhyme schemes, number of syllables and quality of syllables, affording to Dutch poems a very characteristic rhythm. The knowledge of these patterns – that existed at the time in Japan, as testified by *Sankoku shukushō* – I suppose allowed for the memorization of sounds, words, and meanings. It helped the Japanese speaker overcome the moraic metric of their

language, and embrace the syllabic rhythm of Dutch sentences, based on the alternation of tonic and atonic syllables. At least, this can be claimed in the case of Shizuki Tadao.

9.5 Evaluating Shizuki's manuscripts

What I have just illustrated, however, is a reconstruction of how Shizuki might have feasibly learned Dutch grammar. Nonetheless, I have claimed that Shizuki's most inventive feat was that he learned the theory of grammar. In order to understand how he did that, one must look at the entirety of the present research. One must be aware of the broadest number of approaches to the study of language Shizuki had possibly access to in order to understand how unique his approach was. It needs to be clear that the contents of those Dutch books on grammar were often quite inconsistent, both between different sources and within the same source. Even though the Dutch sources all broadly shared the theoretical background of the Greek-Latin tradition, their employment thereof differed significantly. This fact rules out the implication that Shizuki was studying "a" theory of grammar, while he was actually referring to different representations of it. Furthermore, as I have already mentioned, in order to learn the theory of Dutch grammar, one needed to already know the Dutch language, rather well. This implies that some sort of abstraction concerning the rules of Dutch had already developed in Shizuki's mind, by the time he got to read Séwel's *Spraakkonst*, for example. This implies that Shizuki had already dissected Dutch grammar by means of his own cultural and academic tools, his own Broader Context.

With grammatical studies not really being a well-defined scholarly topic at the time, Shizuki could only draw from the other non-grammatical approaches to language that existed around him. This is why he relied so much on Neo-Confucian translation studies and *kokugaku* poetical studies. It is not just because Shizuki wanted to translate Dutch into Japanese that he studied Ogyū Sorai, but it is also because, with the goal of explaining translation, Chinese studies eventually covered topics similar to the Greek-Latin morphological classes of the parts of speech. In fact, the subject of *jihin* in Ogyū's *Kun'yaku jimō*, although seemingly reminiscent of what the Dutch called "etymology", really was a way for a translator to rationalize Chinese characters and associate them with the implicit morphosyntactic characteristics of the corresponding Japanese word. All this served the practice of translation, it was not grammatical theory in its conception. This is why a Chinese character was called "moving", because in the Japanese translation it required to be relocated according to Japanese syntax. It was not really the Chinese character itself being "moving", rather the character was described as such to visualize how it had to be handled when adapting it into Japanese. Regardless of their history, these labels used by Ogyū and his contemporaries only functioned in the context of translation.

It is only with the research carried out by Shizuki that these translational concepts got "grammaticalized". It is because Shizuki needed any type of Sino-Japanese theory in order to analyze this new subject of "grammatical theory" that he eventually utilized these concepts and terms in the context of grammar. It is because

Japanese syntax prefers verbs at the end of a sentence, that Chinese "moving" characters could be made to correspond to what the Dutch called "verbs", so much so that *werkwoord* is, semantically, reminiscent of the Japanese adaptation as *dōshi*. The practice of *kanbun kundoku* is not really used anymore, thus interpreting "verbs" as those words or characters that ought to be "moved" in the Japanese translation does not make much sense anymore. However, thanks to the grammaticalization of these concepts derived from *kangaku*, the term "moving word" is still being used today as a term to refer to verbs, although certainly with a different meaning.

Chinese studies, however, were far from being sufficient in the process of describing the grammatical theory of Dutch. One reason is because Chinese is a non-inflecting language. Japanese, instead, makes profuse use of inflection, mostly when it comes to verbs and adjectives. However, in *kundoku*, these grammatical inflections where mostly simply added as *furigana* to the Chinese characters, when needed. This likely led to a rather limited theorization of those elements, in the context of Chinese studies. Nonetheless, during the Edo period, a new current of the study of the classics of Japanese literature started flourishing which, fortuitously, was mostly concerned precisely with this topic. It is likely because of the relevance of inflection in Japanese grammar that made the obsolete use of particles and affixes of the Classics somewhat unintelligible to the early modern eye. It is because of the necessity of understanding this obsolete use of inflections that the "nativists" started compiling works on their interpretation, developing theories concerning their nature, their use and the rules governing them. How to do that is something that scholars such as Motoori Norinaga had to come to grasp with. He decided that a deductive method was the best approach; after all, he wanted to rehabilitate the ancient use of grammar, thus it goes without saying that one needs to describe what this ancient use looked like by consulting ancient sources. These classics of Japanese literature were mostly written in the so-called *waka* genre, "Japanese poems".

Shizuki was finally endowed with a method of analyzing grammatical patters typical of inflecting languages, like Japanese and Dutch. This method, developed by the *kokugaku* school, entailed two practices. The first practice was to deduce grammatical patterns from reliable literary works, specifically poems. Shizuki had access to them, since it is now known he read Jacob Cats and reached a relatively good knowledge of the theory of Dutch poetry. The second practice was to recognize patterns of combined use of certain particles, that Motoori called *kakari*, with certain inflecting predicative elements, called *musubi* by Motoori. On the surface, one might think of the grammatical feature of *kakari-musubi* as a typical (classical) Japanese feature. However, if one abandons the Greek-Latin derived theory of grammar, embracing the conflation of verbal inflection and some parts of speech, like conjunction, into the broad category of "auxiliary" words (*joshi* or *te ni wo ha*), then things do change. One is now able to also describe the patterns of combined use of specific conjunctions with specific forms of Dutch predicates in a relationship that differs relatively little from what theorized by Motoori. This is the goal of *Rangaku seizenfu* and of the twenty-seven sentences found in its chapter titled *Kusagusa no kotoba-zukai*. That chapter should be understood as a Dutch version of Motoori's *Kotoba no tama no o*.

In my persuasion, Shizuki never abandoned this theory. So much so that he keeps referring to the theory of *Rangaku seizenfu*, whose compilation date remains unknown, even in *Shihō shoji taiyaku*. This is remarkable because it is known that the latter has been compiled in 1805, one year before Shizuki's death and, in principle, displays a theory of Dutch verbs that is much more reliant on Séwel's *Spraakkonst*. However, this is also true only to some extent, since the influence form the Table of the Three Times and other concepts, such as *jiseki*, that Shizuki theorized in *Seizenfu*, are still very much present in the interpretation of the content of the Dutch source. It has been reported that Shizuki's works on language were quite difficult to interpret even for his contemporaries. Additionally, even his disciples apparently reworked his theories to adapt them more closely to what they read in Dutch sources. I wonder whether this was not also caused by the fact that most *rangakusha* came from the background of a (Neo-)Confucian education. It could be assumed that the content of *Rangaku seizenfu* was particularly difficult to interpret if one did not master the theories on classical Japanese by Motoori Norinaga, that were arguably rather difficult themselves to begin with. Indeed, this is one of the questions I would like to see answered in future research: in what way have Shizuki's theories been reinterpreted by his successors, and to what extent has Dutch theory been adopted at the expense of Neo-Confucian and, mostly, *kokugaku* theory, in the description of the grammar of Japanese after Shizuki?

9.6 Final conclusions and prospects for future research

The present research has provided additional knowledge regarding the study of Dutch in Japan, during the Edo period. Specifically, I have managed to expand the understanding of the following main topics, in order of appearance:

- Identification of additional sources used by Shizuki;
- Additional philological analysis of the manuscripts;
- Understanding of the context of compilation of Shizuki's Dutch sources;
- Analysis of the morphological and morphosyntactic contents of Halma's dictionary;
- Analysis of the morphological and morphosyntactic contents of Marin's dictionary;
- Analysis of the morphological and morphosyntactic contents of Séwel's grammar;
- Reconstruction of the history of several topics and terminology, within the Japanese thought on language;
- Analysis of the morphological and morphosyntactic contents of Ogyū Sorai's work;
- Analysis of the morphological and morphosyntactic contents of Motoori Norinaga's work;

- Understanding of Shizuki's adoption of Ogyū's categories in the description of the parts of speech;
- Understanding of the interaction between these categories with the contents of Shizuki's Dutch sources;
- Understanding of Shizuki's adoption of Motoori's theory and methodology of language-analysis;
- Understanding of Shizuki's definition of the category of *joshi*;
- Understanding of the methodology of poetical exegesis by means of which Shizuki deduced grammatical patterns, inspired by Motoori and the *kokugaku* school;
- Discovery of previously unattested Dutch poetical sources (Jacob Cats), Shizuki used to deduce grammatical rules;
- Understanding of Shizuki's theories of combined use of Dutch conjunctions and verbal conjugations, in what could be called a "Dutch *kakari-musubi*".

In addition, there are many questions that still require to be answered, in the context of the introduction of grammatical theory in Japan, and on the bibliography (and biography) of Shizuki himself. ŌSHIMA (2019) laments that a proper and exhaustive philological research on the manuscripts of Shizuki is still lacking. It is not at all clear which of the works attributed to Shizuki have actually been compiled by the scholar himself, and how many and which of them really are original reinterpretations of some of his students. Furthermore, as I have demonstrated with the identification of the citations from Jacob Cats, for example, there must have been a more thorough penetration of Dutch literature, art, and physical books than what until now understood. Who knows how many, and which Dutch books have spread in Edo Japan, whose traces can only be pointed out by carrying out attentive research of the contents of certain manuscripts one would not have expected to contain such citations.

This leads me to also point out that there is no doubt whatsoever that the research that was being carried out by the Japanese during the Edo period – called *rangaku* – was concerned with issues profoundly intimate to Dutch culture, language, and literature. They were also received as such by the Japanese themselves. There is no doubt that what the Japanese were studying was a combination of the knowledge and technical practices developed throughout Europe. However, the Japanese were studying that specific combination, by means of that specific language, enjoying that specific literary and artistic production that only the Dutch could have ever brought to the archipelago. There is no doubt that in order to study the Japanese *rangaku*, one needs to also pursue Dutch studies.

The opposite is also true. The sole knowledge of Dutch studies and, perhaps, some basics in diachronic variations of Japanese, is far from being enough to pursue the study of *rangaku*. I hope I have demonstrated the incorrectness of the idea that the Japanese were quite passively receptors of Dutch knowledge. Shizuki's perception of his own knowledge of the theory of Dutch grammar was so refined that he even

corrected Dutch sources when he disagreed with them. He even went so far as to rework their entire theoretical framework so that it could fit his own theories, based on the combination of *kangaku* and *kokugaku*. He did that while still providing a rather faithful description of Dutch grammar. How can one understand anything of what is claimed by Shizuki without knowing what he had read from Ogyū and Motoori? Yet there seems to still be a lack of knowledge when it comes to the history of the approaches to the study of language in Japan. This is why I decided to carry out research on these sources in a much deeper way than I had originally expected. This allowed me to shed some light on these theories, and I hope it will incentivize further research in this direction. There are many issues concerning the use of specific concepts and terminology that are still to be answered. Because I believe that the grammaticalization of these concepts is a phenomenon of the second half of the Edo period, one does not need to pursue this research from a purely linguistic approach, rather, perhaps, with a more philosophical and philological set of tools. For example, it would be interesting to see research on the origin and history of the two concepts of *shizen* 使然 and *jinen* 自然 and how they got grammaticalized, adopted by Shizuki as Japanese correspondence of "active" and "neuter" verbs respectively, and ultimately substituted by the *jita* dichotomy of *kokugaku*.

To conclude, the research on *rangaku* is far from complete. There are still so many obscure aspects of this approximately 250-year long scholarship that, if made clear, could lead to so many discoveries in the most varied fields of knowledge. In doing so, it is strictly necessary to possess academic skills in both Japanese and Dutch studies, beyond being able to read both languages.