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To Learn Three Centuries in Two Years: The Pioneering Japanese Students at Leiden University in the 1860s

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To Learn Three Centuries in Two Years: The Pioneering Japanese Students at Leiden University in the 1860s

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Abstract

This thesis revisits the Japanese student delegation of 1863, which was sent by the Tokugawa Shogunate to the Netherlands. The thesis concentrates especially on the journey of Nishi Amane and Tsuda Mamichi, who studied Western academic disciplines with Leiden University professor Simon Vissering between 1863 and 1865 and introduced this knowledge to Japan for the first time in history. The thesis revisits the case in Chapter 1 from the perspective centered around Nishi, Tsuda, and Vissering, who were long thought to be the most important characters of this trip. In chapter 2, with the help of previously unmentioned primary sources, the thesis revisits the case from the Dutch perspective, a perspective never taken by previous historians. By analyzing these new sources in a broader context, the thesis discovers numerous new insights. The most important insight was the pivotal role of Johannes Josephus Hoffmann, the professor of Chinese and Japanese studies at Leiden University and the translator of the Netherlands Indies Government, within this study trip. This thesis finds that Hoffmann was essential for this historical event to happen, due to his envisioning actions to persuade both the Japanese and the Dutch decisionmakers to conduct this event in the way they did. In addition, the thesis finds that Hoffmann was the central figure in preparing, receiving, optimizing, and coordinating the trip. Therefore, this thesis argues that the current public and scholarly attention, as well as the historical recognition granted to Hoffmann, are remarkably inadequate.

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Introduction

On October 16, 1997, an unusual crowd of Japanese and Dutch officials gathered in front of a historic house at Rapenburg 12 in Leiden, Netherlands. Among them were the mayors of Tsuyama city, Tsuwano domain, and Leiden, plus the ambassadors from both nations and professors from Leiden University. Their purpose was to commemorate two Japanese students, Nishi Amane and Tsuda Mamichi, who were from these Japanese domains and studied western academic disciplines here with the former house owner, Professor Simon Vissering, in the 1860s. A commemorative stone plaque was installed into the wall to honor the groundbreaking journey made by Nishi and Tsuda, while the delegates expressed their keen expectations for further improving the diplomatic and cultural ties between Japan and the Netherlands.[1]

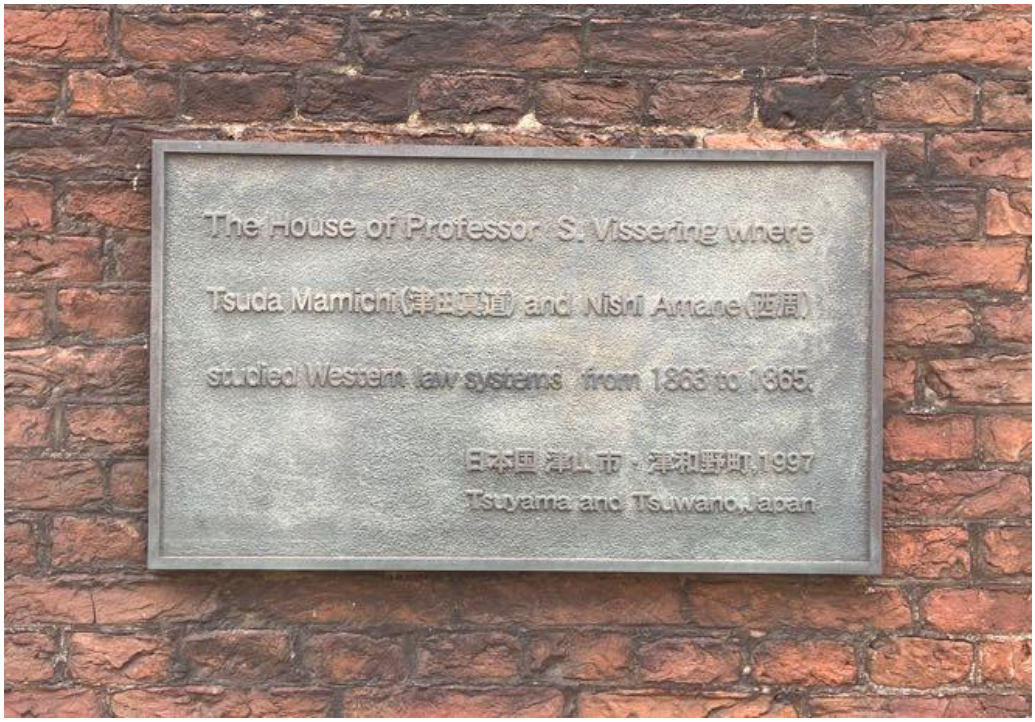

Figure 1 The stone plaque at Rapenburg 12, Leiden, photoed by the author on June 30, 2023

To understand the historical significance of the two students, one must first grasp the historical background of pre-modern Japan. Since the early 17th century, after the Tokugawa clan in Japan subjugated its opponents and tightened its control over the nation, the regime

[1] 津田真道・西周顕彰委員会, *波濤を越えて: 幕末のオランダ留学生、津田真道と西周を顕彰して* [Overcoming the Waves: Honoring Tsuda Masamichi and Nishi Amane, Dutch Students at the End of the Tokugawa Shogunate] (津山: 津田真道・西周顕彰委員会, 1998), 12-24.

known as the Tokugawa Shogunate (1603-1868), or the *Bakufu* in Japanese, was established. The regime gradually adopted the policy of *Sakoku*, which literally means "locking up the country." Under this policy, all types of commercial, personal, cultural, and religious exchanges between the Japanese *Hans* (feudal domains) and foreign nations were heavily restricted. In general, foreigners were not allowed to enter Japan, and the Japanese were not allowed to leave the nation. The Netherlands was the only Western nation permitted to trade with Japan in Dejima, Nagasaki, under strict Japanese regulations for a period of 250 years. Despite the existence of *Rangaku* (Dutch Studies) in Japan as a by-product of this limited exchange, the subjects of *Rangaku* were mostly confined to natural sciences like medicine, botany, astronomy, and other utilitarian subjects such as military techniques. In other words, the significant developments of modern philosophy and social sciences in the Western world since the 17th century were largely unknown to Japanese society and academia.

In 1853, Commodore Matthew Perry's American naval squadron caused the *Kurofune* Incident (Black ship incident), which alerted the Japanese populace to the foreign threat and forced the *Bakufu* to open its ports, ending its *Sakoku* policy. Other great powers, including the Netherlands, soon followed and signed treaties with Japan that allowed the entrance of Western personnel and goods. However, these treaties also increased Japan's risk of becoming a colony of the West. The Black ship incident marked the beginning of *Bakumatsu* (1853-1868, the final years of the Shogunate), during which Japan experienced considerable civil turmoil. To cope with this unprecedented expansion of interactions with Western nations, the *Bakufu* supported Western studies by expanding a former *Rangaku* astronomy book translation office into a large Foreign Books Research Institute (*Bansho Shirabesho*). They appointed a group of Japanese scholars to study foreign languages and researched all Western technologies until the 1860s.[2] Among these scholars were Nishi Amane and Tsuda Mamichi, who both served as assistant instructors of the Dutch language.

During the first half of *Bakumatsu*, a significant confrontation arose between the ideologies of "Kaikoku" (opening the country) and "Joi" (expelling the barbarians). The *Bakufu*'s

[2] Thomas R. H. Havens, *Nishi Amane and Modern Japanese Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 36.

Kaikoku policy put considerable pressure on the regime, as many *shishi* (political activists) who opposed the Bakufu's concessions to Western powers dedicated themselves to the cause of "Joi," driven by their nationalist sentiment. This led to numerous assassinations of *Bakufu* officials and foreigners. One of the most prominent cases was the assassination of Ii Naosuke, the *Bakufu* councilor and de facto head of the government, on March 24, 1860.[3] In addition, intense power struggles erupted between people who supported "Kaikoku" and "Joi" in local *Hans* such as Mito and Choshu. To make things worse, the Japanese emperor Kōmei was in favor of reducing foreign influence and *Bakufu* cannot afford to lose his support as well, because the emperor bore the legitimacy of the Shogunate despite having no actual political power.

It was under this type of acute political, cultural, and international pressure did the *Bakufu* decide to send a student delegation abroad to learn naval and medical techniques, to comprehend international laws, and to purchase a warship, so that its regime and the "Kaikoku" policy can stay stable by being well-equipped and well-informed. At the time, the countries that had the most diplomatic experiences with the Shogunate were the US and the Netherlands. King William II of the Netherlands even once wrote a personal letter to the Shogun suggesting the opening of Japan before the Black Ship Incident. In summary, it is widely believed by the historians that the historically cordial relationships with the Netherlands and the outbreak of the American Civil War in 1861 convinced the Shogunate to send this first ever student delegation to the Netherlands.[4]

A delegation of sixteen students was dispatched, with approximately six of them studying naval tactics, techniques, and related production methods in The Hague and Dordrecht. Two students focused on studying medicine at Utrecht University, while six others focused on production techniques in Leiden. Nishi and Tsuda studied academic disciplines at Leiden University, with Professor Simon Vissering as their special tutor, a renowned Dutch intellectual and economist at the time.[5] Their study of western academics lasted around 2 years from 1863

[3] Ibid, 40.
[4] Toshiaki Ōkubo and The Japan-Netherlands Institute, *Bakumatsu Oranda ryūgaku kankei shiryō shūsei* [A Collection of documents related to the mission of students to the Netherlands by the Tokugawa Shogunate 1862-1868] (Tokyo: Yushodo Press Ltd, 1982), 3-5.
[5] Ibid, pp. 38-39.

to 1865 and was centered primarily around the so called “five subjects”: Natuurregt (natural law), Volkenregt (international public law), Staatsregt (national law), Staatshuishoudkunde (economics), and Statistiek (statistics).[6]

As pioneers of this cross-continental cultural exchange, Nishi and Tsuda faced significant challenges in comprehending, translating, and conceptualizing the knowledge they acquired from Leiden within their own Sino-Japanese philosophical system. After their return to Japan, the Shogunate that dispatched them abroad collapsed within two years, as anti-*Bakufu Hans* Satsuma and Choshu managed to overthrow the regime in the Boshin War, proclaiming the dawn of Imperial Japan. Nonetheless, Nishi and Tsuda published their lecture notes from their time with Vissering, translated fundamental books on international law, and introduced Western philosophical ideas through their own publications. From a broader perspective, they were not only pioneers of the later Meiji Modernization in the intellectual sense but also the first scholars who initiated modern academic disciplines of social science and philosophy in Japan and even throughout East Asia—a region that had been academically secluded from the West for centuries.

Given its historical significance, it is justifiable to expect a proper contemporary commemoration and comprehensive historiography for this significant international exchange. However, that has not been the case. In comparison to the "Choshu Five," the five Japanese students from the Choshu domain who clandestinely studied at University College London in 1863 and later became political leaders in the new Meiji government, the attention given to Nishi and Tsuda has been inadequate. In 2017, then-Prime Minister of Japan Shinzo Abe personally visited UCL to honor the "Choshu Five," marking a much more prominent event compared to the commemoration held in Leiden in 1997, which this paper began with.[7]

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[6] 直树, 狭间, “西周留学荷兰与西方近代学术之移植——'近代东亚文明圈’ 形成史·学术篇” [Nishi Amane’s Study in the Netherlands and the Transplantation of Modern Western Academics--A History of the Formation of the "Modern East Asian Civilization Circle,” Academic Chapter], trans. 袁广泉, *Journal of Sun Yat-sen University (Social Science Edition)* 52, 10.

[7] “Japan's PM reaffirms close ties with UCL in meeting with Provost,” *UCL News*, September 27, 2017, https://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/2017/sep/japans-pm-reaffirms-close-ties-ucl-meeting-provost. The “Choshu Five” were Itō Shunsuke (1841 - 1909) later First Prime Minister of Japan, Inoue Monta (1836 - 1915) later Minister of Foreign Affairs, Yamao Yōzō (1837 - 1917) later created the Ministry of Public Works, Endō Kinsuke (1836 - 1893)

Furthermore, the extent of historiography on Nishi and Tsuda's journey in Leiden is also insufficient: No publicized Dutch historiography can be found on the topic, a few historical literatures are present in English and Chinese, while the majority of the related works are understandably in Japanese. In addition, the themes of these completed works were distributed in a problematic way as well. In short, literatures in English tend to be too broad and encompassing when narrating the issue, and the literatures in Chinese and Japanese tend to be too narrow and plain. For example, the book done by Thomas R.H. Havens in 1971 was the path-breaking English literature that focuses on the life of Nishi Amane, but Havens wrote the book to cover and evaluate Nishi's entire life as an intellectual who contributed to the development of modern thoughts in Japan, while spending few pages on Nishi's crucial years of learning in Leiden.[8]

On the other hand, Chinese authors tend to focus only on the philosophical implications of Nishi study, such as on how Nishi's introduction of positivism reshaped modern Japanese philosophy and how it was received in Japan. These articles tend to be highly theoretical, and some authors still approach Amane's philosophical mindset with strongly subjective Marxist materialist views.[9] On the other hand, Japanese sources delve deep into the primary sources available on Nishi and Tsuda's study mission. However, they often construct their narratives around prominent figures, particularly the two students and their professor Simon Vissering. This approach creates a portrayal resembling heroic legends that expand only in one dimension, with other historical contexts serving to enhance the prominence of these great figures. An example is Watanabe Yogoro's book on Simon Vissering, which provides extreme detail about Vissering's life during that period, including every article he wrote and every address and house he and the two students lived in.[10] While this level of precision is remarkable, such literature struggles to incorporate broader historical trends, logics, or phenomena beyond the personal lives of the research subjects. In addition, they can hardly escape from narrating such an

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later served as the head of the National Mint in Osaka, and Nomura Yakichi (1843 - 1910) later Known as the 'Father of Japanese Railways'.

[8] Havens, *Nishi Amane and Modern Japanese Thought*.

[9] 秀芬, 刘, "中日近代哲学家严复西周同异论析" [Analyzing the Similarities and Differences of Chinese and Japanese Modern Philosophers Yan Fu and Nishi Amane], *Theory Journal*, no. 6 (1990): 40–42.

[10] 與五郎, 渡邊, *シモン・フィセリング研究* [A Research of Simon Vissering] (東京: 文化書房博文社, 1985).

inherently international history from the sole angle centered around one nation-state, namely around Japan and the Japanese perspective alone. This type of approach is bound to overlook significant historical insights. Therefore, although the amount of historiography on Nishi and Tsuda's study trip is already somewhat insufficient, this paper argues that the angles and perspectives of the existing historiography are even more lacking. To improve this situation, this paper employs two main angles to interpret this remarkable historical event—the existing angle that focuses on the main characters and the new "Dutch" angle that was still absent.

To achieve the goals proposed above, this paper incorporates new primary sources that had never been interpreted in the previous literatures, namely the correspondences and documents between the related Dutch governmental officials. These letters were kept under the name "Hoffmann Manuscipten (Hoffman manuscripts)" in the Special Collections of the Leiden University Library. The manuscripts were only transferred to the Library from Sinological Institute in October 2003, which might be a reason why the previous historians neglected them.[11] This paper is structured into two chapters, each with subtitles to further divide the content into smaller points. The first chapter focuses on the existing and prevailing perspective, which centers around the two students, Nishi and Tsuda, their instructor Vissering, their academic exchange, and the impact of this historic exchange on Japanese academia. This perspective incorporates both old and new sources from both the Dutch and Japanese sides, but primarily uses them to support the mentioned individuals and highlight the historical effects of their journey. This will provide a good context for the topic by incorporating many existing secondary sources, while also showing the insufficiency of this perspective through its comparison with next chapter. In the second chapter, this paper will shift its focus to the Dutch perspective, seeking to understand how and why the Dutch state and institutions received the students in the manner they did. It will explore the motivations and intentions behind the Dutch involvement in this unique international affair. Additionally, the chapter will investigate the benefits and gains that the Dutch nation and individuals derived from this historic exchange. By examining the Dutch side of the story, this chapter aims to provide a comprehensive

[11] Hoffmann manuscripten (o.a. brieven i.v.m. Japanse studenten in Nederland 1863) [Hoffmann manuscripts (e.g., letters related to Japanese students in the Netherlands 1863)], Johannes Josephus Hoffmann archive, Leiden University Libraries.

understanding of the broader context and implications of the student delegation from a transnational perspective.

It is important to acknowledge that in this period the Japanese people tended to change their name or their spelling frequently, and the same person may have numerous names in different sources. For example, Nishi Amane was sometimes referred to as “Nisi Sioe Suke” or “Nishisinsoeke” in different sources. To minimize confusion, this paper will constantly refer the Japanese characters with their latest, and contemporarily formalized names except when quoting directly.

Chapter 1 Revisiting the case from the perspective of the "main characters"

Simon Vissering and the Thorbeckian Netherlands

In the mid-nineteenth century, Europe was in the middle of significant political, societal, and academic changes that eventually defined the appearance of the modern world. During the Revolutions of 1848, revolutionaries across the continent attempted to institute liberal and democratic governments for their own nation-states and empires.[12] For the context of the Netherlands and this paper, the most related political events were the Dutch Liberal Reform and the enactment of the Dutch Constitution of 1848. As the Professor of Law (hoogleraar rechtsgeleerdheid) at Leiden University from 1831, Johan Rudolph Thorbecke was the key figure advocating the liberal reform at the time.[13] In 1844, on his speech at the university titled "About the contemporary citizenship (Over het hedendaagsche staatsburgerschap)," Thorbecke clearly expressed his visions for a democratic political system with universal suffrage, based on the trend of historical development he perceived. His liberal views quickly made him the nominal leader of this liberal movement. On his election as the Minister of Interior in 1844, he and eight other politicians submitted a constitutional reform proposal named "Proposition of the Nine Men (Voorstel der Negenmannen)." Finally, on March 17, 1848, out of fear for a revolution, King William II appointed Thorbecke as the head of the commission to revise the constitution.[14] Thorbecke eventually became the head of government of the Netherlands and the most symbolic figure of the nation's constitutional history.

Thorbecke's story tied closely to the political atmosphere in Leiden University at the time: when a group of romantic, liberal intellectuals dominated the debate inside the institution, with Simon Vissering being a member of this group.[15] In fact, when Thorbecke resigned his post

[12] Pierre-Yves Saunier and Akira Irie, *The Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). 1.
[13] Willem Otterspeer, *De wiekslag van hun geest: de Leidse universiteit in de negentiende eeuw* [The swing of their minds: Leiden University in the nineteenth century] ('s Gravenhage: Stichting Hollandse Historische Reeks, 1992), 191.
[14] Harm Stevens, "Een stijf Hollands heertje," Profiel, Grondwet, http://retro.nrc.nl/W2/Lab/Profiel/Grondwet/thorbecke.html. Takeharu Ōkubo and David Noble, *The Quest for Civilization: Encounters with Dutch Jurisprudence, Political Economy, and Statistics at the Dawn of Modern Japan* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 47-49.
[15] Otterspeer, *De wiekslag van hun geest*, 10.

at the university for his next career as the Minister of Interior in 1850, Simon Vissering was selected as his successor as the professor of law, which later became "the professor of economics (hoogleraar staathuishoudkunde)" after the separation of economics from the faculty of law.[16] As a former lawyer in his hometown Amsterdam, Vissering was already a member of the pro-liberal "Amstel society" before his career as a professor in Leiden University.[17] It was believed that during the selection of successors, Vissering was everyone's second choice, who was so fortunate to take the post by presenting himself as the compromised candidate between the more radical Thorbecke and the more conservative Board of Trustees.[18] Therefore, compared to the Thorbeckians who emphasized political liberalization, Vissering presented himself as a more moderate figure who focused primarily on economic liberalization. In specific, Vissering supported the theory of "perfectly free operation of the forces of labor and capital" and consequently "state abstinence."[19] On March 23, 1850, in his inaugural speech titled "Oration on Freedom, the Fundamental Principle of Political Economy (Redevoering over Vrijheid, het grondbeginsel der staathuishoudkunde)" Vissering reaffirmed his stance as an economic liberalist.[20]

However, it is important to note that having a priority on economic liberalization by no means excluded Vissering from the "liberalist camp." In the later years of his professor-hood in Leiden, he also published essays like "Our political upbringing (Onze politieke opvoeding)" in 1866 that gave a wonderful example of what liberal politics should be. In addition, Vissering has later even been regarded as "a propogandist for the Thorbecke government," while his liberal economic policy earned great reputation and support thanks to the expanding Dutch economy at the time.[21] Thus, one should not overlook Vissering's liberal mindset, which was very likely being reinforced by its continuous success. In other words, by 1862 when the Japanese student delegation reached Leiden, whatever politically related knowledge Nishi and Tsuda learned from

[16] Ibid, 259. 渡邊, *シモン・フィセリング研究*, 49.

[17] 渡邊, *シモン・フィセリング研究*, 47.

[18] Otterspeer, *De wiekslag van hun geest*, 61-62, 227-228.

[19] Ibid, 227-228.

[20] 渡邊, *シモン・フィセリング研究*, 49.

[21] Ōkubo, *The Quest for Civilization*, 50. Otterspeer, *De wiekslag van hun geest,* 228.

Simon Vissering will coincide with the liberal-oriented Thorbeckian jurisprudence. This argument was also widely supported by the Japanese Historians.[22]

Nishi and Tsuda's determination

In fact, unlike the naval cadets and the medical students in the delegation who were sent with a specific learning objective like shipbuilding, commandeering, or smithing, Nishi and Tsuda did not have a clear pre-instructed study goal. Admirably, the idea of learning the "five subjects," a study goal that was so big and so unheard of for the Japanese academia at the time, was formed entirely through their own will. In comparison, the western knowledges of naval affairs and medicine were already familiar to the Japanese due to the previous Rangaku connections, and the visions and the ambitions of Nishi and Tsuda simply put the other students in the delegation group in shame. In addition, they did not hide their ambitions until their arrival in the Netherlands. From the existing correspondences, either previously mentioned or unmentioned by other historians, one can be sure that they expressed their study intentions for at least two times to the related Dutch officials.

The first letter was written by the Dutch Consulate-General in Yokohama Jan Karel de Wit to the Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies Ludolph Anne Jan Wilt Sloet van de Beele on July 6, 1862.[23] The letter rather resembled a working report to his superior than a personal correspondence. In it, de Wit first told van de Beele that the sixteen-man delegation group will arrive in Nagasaki on July 12, where they will board the first available Dutch ship to begin their trip to the Netherlands, whether directly or through a transfer in Batavia. Then, de Wit stated that the Japanese group had requested the Dutch government on behalf of the Japanese government to make proper preparations to receive the delegation, and such preparations should include the arrangements for accommodations and related educations.[24] De Wit reported that he had agreed to these requests, and he asked for his superior to confirm these requests on behalf of the Dutch government. Then, importantly, de Wit began a report on the

[22] 狭间，"西周留学荷兰与西方近代学术之移植," 9n5.

[23] Jan Karel de Wit to Ludolph Anne Jan Wilt Sloet van de Beele, July 6, 1862, Edo (Japan), call number SKR. 239 (6), Hoffmann manuscripten (o.a. brieven i.v.m. Japanse studenten in Nederland 1863), Johannes Josephus Hoffmann archive, Leiden University Libraries.

[24] From now forward, this paper refers "Japanese government" to the Tokugawa shogunate by default.

professions of all the members of the delegation group. He categorized them into four sub-groups of "officers (officieren)." Five of them: Uchida Masao, Enomoto Takeaki, Sawa Tarozaemon, Akamatsu Noriyoshi, and Taguchi Shunpei were identified as navel students; Ito Genpuku and Hayashi Kenkai were identified as "physicians (geneeskundigen);" and nine unnamed others were identified as "one boatswain (bootsman), one sailor (matroos), one smith (smid), one geometric instrument maker (meetkundige instrumentmaker), one caster (gieter), and 2 ship carpenters (scheepstimmerlieden)." But very intriguingly, when coming to the professions of Nishi Amane and Tsuda Mamichi, de Wit struggled:

> Concerning these I could get no other answer than that they should learn politics (staadkunde).
>
> I have tried to make them understand the comprehensiveness of this word, and I think I must take it for granted that they desire instruction in political history and the law of nations. When I had made clear, as far as I could, what was meant by this, they declared that they were most gladly required to receive instruction on this subject, but still insisted on politics (staadkunde).[25]

From de Wit's confusing words, we can clearly feel the unshakeable determinations of Nishi and Tsuda to learn as much knowledge as possible from this trip, especially on fields related to politics and law. And, given the fact that no other Japanese student ever attempted the same thing before, de Wit's confusion and surprise was surely understandable.

Anyway, Nishi and Tsuda's ego was passed to the Dutch side. De Wit's information about the Japanese delegation group later made its way to the Leiden local newspaper, *Leidsch Dagblad*, on October 30 the same year.[26] Although the newspaper did not mention the origin of the information, the format and the content of the newspaper report matched completely with de Wit's letter.

[25] Ibid. Original words in Dutch: "Omtrent deeze konde ik geen ander antwoord bekomen, dan dat zij staatkunde moesten leeren. Ik heb getracht het veelomvattende van dit woord te doen inzien en ik geloof het er voor te moeten houden, dat zij onderrigt verlangen in de staatkundige geschiedenis en het volkenrecht. Toen ik, zoveel ik vermogt, duidelijk had gemaakt wat hiermede bedoeld werd, betuigde men dat zeer gaarne onderrigt omtrent deze onderwer hen verlangd werd, maar bleef men toch aandringen op staatkunde."
[26] "Buitenlandsch Nieuws," *Leidsch Dagblad*, October 30, 1862.

— De Japanners, die in Nederland onderwijs wenschen te erlangen, zouden den 12 Julij ll. naar Nagasaki vertrekken, ten einde van daar met de eerste gelegenheid, welke een Nederlandsch vaartuig hun zal aanbieden, hetzij regtstreeks, hetzij van Batavia, hunne reis te vervolgen.

Terwijl aanvankelijk als doel der zending dezer personen werd opgegeven het leeren van den scheepsbouw, is sedert het volgende dienaangaande gebleken:

Vijf officieren, met namen Oetsido tsoene dsiro, Enomotokama dsiro, Sawa taro dsaijemon, Akamats Daidsaboeroe en Tagoetsi Siunpe, zullen, zooveel mogelijk, den scheepsbouw moeten leeren. Allen hebben reeds eenig onderwijs in de zeevaartkunde genoten, de eerste (die de hoofdpersoon is), van het detachement der Nederlandsche marine op Decima, de overige op de militaire school in Jeddo.

Twee officieren, Tsoeda Sinitsiro en Nishisinsoeke, moeten zoo als de Japansche Regering het noemde, in de staatkunde onderwezen worden; vermoedelijk zullen zij onderrigt verlangen in de staatkundige geschiedenis en het volkenregt.

Twee geneeskundigen, Ito-Gempak en Majasi Kendai, die gedurende een jaar de lessen hebben bijgewoond van den gouvernements-geneesheer Jhr. Pompe van Meerdervoort, wenschen in Nederland onderwezen te worden op de school, waar de officieren van gezondheid worden gevormd.

De overige personen, wier namen men niet kan opgeven, zijn twee timmerlieden, een bootsman, een matroos, een smid, een gieter en een meetkundig instrumentmaker.

Figure 2 Report about the Japanese group in *Leidsch Dagblad* on October 30, 1862.

The second letter was written by Nishi Amane himself to Johannes Josephus Hoffmann. J. J. Hoffmann was born in Würzburg in 1805, who studied philology there and became an opera singer. After meeting Ph. F. von Siebold (1796-1866) in Antwerp, he went to Leiden to become Siebold's assistant in publishing his works related to Japan. These works included the compilations of Japanese literatures and the Dutch-Japanese dictionary. In 1846 Hoffmann was appointed as the translator of Japanese language for the Netherlands Indies government. In 1855, he was made the first professor of Chinese and Japanese studies at Leiden University.[27] As a master of both languages, Hoffmann was the indisputable pioneer of Japan studies in the

[27] "Johannes Josephus Hoffmann archive," Leiden University Libraries Collection Guides, Leiden University, accessed July 15, 2023, https://collectionguides.universiteitleiden.nl/resources/ubl204.

Netherlands or even the entire Europe, even though he never visited Japan himself.[28] In 1863, he was the key figure to receive the Japanese delegation group, while also being the communicator between the Dutch government and the Japanese students. Hoffmann received Nishi's letter on June 12, 1863. And Nishi, using fluent Dutch, perfectly explained the knowledge he wished to learn from this trip and the reason he chose these specific fields of knowledge. The letter was either mentioned or quoted by almost all the historical works on this topic due to its irreplaceable significance, and this paper will do the same. After a brief notice about the situation of the student group, Nishi articulated the background behind his study intentions:

> The aim is: For a long time, Our Empire was out of communication with all European Powers, except the Netherlands; but as circumstances are progressing for a relationship to exist between Our Empire and the European Powers, Our Government has, for seven years, made friendly treaties with some European Powers. As the various relations exist, as diplomatic and commercial traffic increase, so it is necessary for the Empire of Japan that European arts and sciences to be cultivated, therefore an Imperial School has been founded at Edo (the later Tokyo), whose teachers are from the provinces are chosen and on which different sciences are taught.[29]

Then Nishi began to address the academic drawbacks he perceived in the institute:

> But many deficiencies still exist, as educations in teaching, arts, and sciences are almost unknown, except for a few disciplines such as physics, mathematics, chemistry, botany, geography, history, and the four languages of Dutch, German, English, and French (though only a reading knowledge) have received a certain amount of attention. Then there are more useful disciplines which are totally unknown in Japan, such as statistics, jurisprudence, economics, politics, diplomacy, etc. These disciplines are essential to

[28] 凰展, 菅井, "幕末における日蘭文化交流の一齣--西周と津田真道のオランダ留学をめぐって" [An example of Japan-Netherlands cultural exchange at the end of the Edo period: Nishi Amane and Tsuda Mamichi studying in Holland], *立命館文學* 451~453 (1983): 126-127.

[29] Nishi Amane to J. J. Hoffmann, received on June 12, 1863, in *Bakumatsu Oranda ryūgaku kankei shiryō shūsei*, ed. Toshiaki Ōkubo, 176-178. Original words in Dutch: "Het oogmerk is: Sedert lang was Ons Keizerrijk buiten verkeer met alle Europesche Mogendheden, behalve met Nederland; maar daar de omstandigheden vorderen, dat er eene maatschappelijke betrekking tusschen Ons Keizerrijk en de Europesche Mogendheden besta, heft Onze Regering, sedert zeven jaren, vriendelijke tractatent met eenige Europesche Mogendheden gesloten. – Daar de verschillende betrekkingen bestaan, naarmate het verkeer van diplomatiek en koophandel vermeerdert, zoo is het ook voor het Japansche Rijk noodzakelijk, dat er Europesche kunsten en wetenschappen gekweekt worden, waarom dan ook eene Emperiale school te Jedo gesticht is, waarvan de onderwijzers uit de provincien gekozen zijn en waarop er verschillende wetenschappen onderwezen worden."

> relations with the countries of Europe and for the improvement of many domestic affairs of state and institutions…[30]

By "imperial school," Nishi undoubtfully referred to *Bansho Shirabesho*, or the Foreign Books Research Institute, where he was a scholar. And by "friendly treaties," Nishi was referring to a series of treaties between the Shogunate and some Western nations that gradually ended the Japanese isolation policy and opened up the Japanese ports, starting with the Kanagawa Treaty that was signed with the United States in 1854. These treaties were not necessarily "friendly" because they de facto exposed Japan to the economic exploitation by the West step by step. this trend culminated in 1858, when Japan signed formal bilateral treaties with five countries: Britain, France, Russia, United States, and the Netherlands in the same year. Known as the "Ansei Treaties," they secured the rights for these nations to trade with Japan freely, the rights for their nationals to live in designated port cities with extraterritoriality, freedom of religion, and land rights. These treaties also set up fixed tariffs on all trade goods that essentially deprived Japan from its tariff autonomy.[31] The "Ansei Treaties" were opposed by the emperor, and the *Bakufu* under the leadership of Il Naosuke signed these treaties anyway due to the international pressure without the emperor's formal approval. This caused widespread dissent among the pro-Emperor "Joi" forces, and Il forcefully quelled them by conducting numerous arrests and executions, which came to be known as the "Ansei Purge."[32] The event escalated the Japanese inner turmoil and contributed directly to Il's assassination two years later by "Joi" radicals. In other words, although Nishi understandably chose not to mention the acute troubles faced by his government in the letter, he knew very well that time was of the essence for him and for the *Bakufu*, and Tsuda certainly felt the same. These considerations surely contributed

[30] Ibid. Original words in Dutch: "Doch er bestaan nog vele gebrekken, daar het inrighten van scholen, de leerwijze alsmede kunsten en wetenschappen bijna onbekend zijn, behalve eenige weinige kunsten, welke vakken in de Natuurkunde, Wiskunde, Scheikunde, Botanie, Aardrijkskunde, geschiedan is en de vier talen—Nederlandsche, Hoogduitsche, Engelsche en Fransche, doch alleen in het lezen—een weinige licht hebben vertoond. Dan er zijn meer nuttige wetenschappen, die in de betrekking met Europesche Mogendheden en voor de verbetering van vele insendige staatszaken en inrigtingen noodig zijn, en moeten dezelve binnen het gebied van Statistiek, Regtsgeleerdheid, Economie, Politiek en Diplomatie enz. Gezocht worden, welke vakken echter in Japan geheel onbekend zijn."

[31] Michael R. Auslin, *Negotiating with Imperialism* (Albany: Harvard University Press, 2009), 44.

[32] Ibid, 45-50.

to their strikingly ambitious study goals as they unfolded in the remaining part of the letter to Hoffmann:

> Our goal is to study all these disciplines. Even so, there is a problem, because it is impossible to study such important disciplines in a few short years. Therefore, our intention is that each discipline will not be studied exhaustively, but only in its essentials…
> We would ask you to understand the matters outlined above and to do us the great favor of recommending to us capable teachers.
> As far as time permits, I would like to learn the French language, which plays such an important part in all the sciences, but which is still very difficult to speak for us. I already have some knowledge on English, though I cannot speak it, but I do learn and understand them.
> Moreover, I must visit the realm of sciences, which is called Philosophy that differs from religious sentiment, which the law of our nation does not permit to tolerate, which has been suggested in earlier times by Descartes, Locke, Hegel, Kant, etc.
> This subject seems very difficult to learn; but as it seems to me it will contribute to the civilization of our Empire, I will learn something from it, though the short time may prevent me from doing so…[33]

In other words, a modern analogy for Nishi's study plan will be, a foreign student who never attended primary, middle, and high school, only knowing how to use the language of this country as a non-native, suddenly signed up for seven or eight programs in social sciences, humanities, and foreign languages simultaneously in a university. And to help understand the difficulty of this type of cross-cultural study, a Japanese historian cites the diary of Townsend Harris, the first American consul to Japan and the signer of the "Ansei Treaties" on behalf of the United States: "This is attended with more labor than can be well imagined, for I not only give

[33] Nishi to Hoffmann, received on June 12, 1863, in Ōkubo, *shiryō shūsei*, 177-178. Original words in Dutch: "Daarom is het onze bedoeling, om al de wetenschappen te leeren. Echter, er bestaat eene moeyelijkheid, want het is onmogelijk, om slechts gedurende het verblijf van weinige jaren zoo vele en zulke belangrijke vakken geheel en al te leeren. Mijne bedoeling is derhalve, dat het zakelijke en korte, niet dat ieder dezer wetenschappen van stuk tot stuk orderlijk zullen geleerd worden, hetgeen in de tweede zending, die hierna plaats zou hebben, bij jeugdige leerlingen kan plaats hebben. Ik verzoek Ued, dat het bovenstaande zal begrepen zijn, en dat mijn eene goede meesters zullen verkozen worden. Zoo verre de tijd toelaat, wil ik Fransche taal leeren, die in al de wetenschappen zoo eene groot rol speelt, maar welke bij ons nog zeer moeyelijk wordt gesproken. Ik heb reeds de Engelsche geleerden, hoewel ik die niet kan spreken, maar wel less en begrijp. Overigens moet ik het gebied van wetenschappen bezochten, hetwelk Philosophie of Wijsbeerte geheeten wordt, maar toch van godsdienstige gevoelen, die de wet des Onzes Rijks niet toelaat te dulden, verschilt, hetgeen in de vroegere tijden door Descartes, Locke, Hegel, Kant enz is gestaafd. Dit vakschijnt zee moeyelijk te zijn om te leeren; daar het echter, naar mij dunkt, zal bijdragen tot de beschaving van Ons Rijk, zoo wil ik iets daarvan leeren, alhoewel de korte tijd mij dit welligt zal beletten."

them ideas for which, as they are new, they have no adequate terms, but the interpreter does not understand the Dutch terms when he hears them. Thus I am sometimes employed for hours in trying to convey a very simple idea. It requires an incalculable amount of patience to prevent my throwing the matter up in despair."[34]

Nishi's letter was forwarded by Hoffmann to his friend and colleague, Simon Vissering, whom he believed to be the proper choice for the tutor. And according to Nishi's demands, Vissering took about a month to come up with a detailed memo on his teaching plan, where the idea of teaching the "five subjects" was formed.[35] In fact, according to Vissering's later letters, he was very hesitant to accept this job when he received the offer due to the very same reasons mentioned above: the "ignorance of my pupils in terms of our language," and the "great differences of concepts and ideas."[36] In his teaching memo, he even retained his right to cancel this education any time he wanted if he found it not producing the fruits he wished for.[37] However, his doubts were soon dispelled by Nishi and Tsuda's "great zeal for knowledge," "understanding and clear judgement," and "noble feelings," the kind of spirit that we can already see from the previously mentioned letters.[38]

The study process and its aftermath

During the time interval of about a year between the dates of these two letters, Nishi and Tsuda were on the road from Japan to the Netherlands along with the other students: They arrived Nagasaki from Edo on September 6, 1862, and boarded the Dutch vessel "Kallippus" from there on November 2. However, the ship was stranded near north Java Island, so they transferred to another Dutch vessel "Ternate" in Batavia.[39] Interestingly, the group also visited

[34] 狭间, "西周留学荷兰与西方近代学术之移植," 12n2. Townsend Harris and Mario Emilio Cosenza, *The Complete Journal of Townsend Harris: First American Consul and Minister to Japan* (New York: Doubleday, 1930), 542.
[35] 狭间, "西周留学荷兰," 10.
[36] Simon Vissering to Tsuda Mamichi and Nishi Amane, November 28, 1865, Leiden (Netherlands), in Ōkubo, *shiryō shūsei*, 190.
[37] Note by Vissering, July 16, 1863, Leiden (Netherlands), in Ōkubo, *shiryō shūsei*, 181.
[38] Vissering to Tsuda and Nishi, November 28, 1865, in Ōkubo, *shiryō shūsei*, 190-191.
[39] 狭间, "西周留学荷兰," 9.

Napoleon's final resting place on the island of St. Helena on March 26, 1863.[40] On June 4, they arrived in Rotterdam, and took the train from there to Leiden on the same day. Hoffmann received the delegation group in Rotterdam, and it is said that many Dutch residents came to the dock and lined up in the streets to welcome them. Houses across the town hung the Japanese and the Dutch national flags, while the Dutch greeted them with cheers of "Japanese Hip Hip Horray (Japanners Hieperdepiep hoera)!" [41] Throughout the entire journey, many students in the delegation group, including Nishi, kept a well-organized travel diary that described the daily progresses and encounters of the trip all the way from Edo to Rotterdam.[42] Despite being very intriguing sources, this paper will not follow these travel accounts due to its irrelevancy.

According to Vissering's memo, the tutoring would take place privately in his own house for a courseload of two nights per week, and the language will be in Dutch.[43] At the same time, Nishi and Tsuda will improve their Dutch language skills with a Dutch primary school director Meester van Dijk.[44] During the two-year period of this education from November 3, 1863 to November 1865, Nishi and Tsuda studied with Vissering in his house at Rapenburg 592, which is Rapenburg 12 nowadays.[45] On the other hand, according to Municipal Archives Service in Leiden (Gemeentelijke Archiefdienst te Leiden), Nishi Amane was at first registered at Wijk 7, Hooigracht, Gebuurte No. 27, Huis No. 827 (nowadays Hooigracht 94) on July 21, 1863, and moved to Wijk 7, Nieuwe Rijn No. 97 (nowadays Nieuwe Rijn 94) at some point (the original record was burnt in the Leiden City Hall fire in 1927). Tsuda Mamichi was registered on the same date at Wijk 7, Hooglandsche Kerkgracht, Gebuurte No. 27, Huis No. 1010 (nowadays Hooglandse Kerkgracht 44), and then moved to Wijk 3, Hoogewoerd, Gebuurte No. 6, Huis No. 290 (nowadays Hogewoerd 125) on July 12, 1864.[46]

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[40] National Diet Library, "Students Studying in the Netherlands at the End of the Edo Period," Japan-Netherlands Exchange in the Edo Period, accessed January 12, 2023, https://www.ndl.go.jp/nichiran/e/s2/s2_6.html.
[41] 菅井, "幕末における日蘭文化交流の一齣," 124.
[42] Ōkubo, *shiryō shūsei*, 45-497.
[43] Note by Vissering, July 16, 1863, Leiden (Netherlands), in Ōkubo, *shiryō shūsei*, 181.
[44] 狭间, "西周留学荷兰," 11.
[45] 渡邊, *シモン・フィセリング研究*, 57.
[46] 渡邊, *シモン・フィセリング研究*, 162-166.

During the two-year study, according to Nishi's account of Vissering's oral instructions, the teaching sticked to the very basics of the "five subjects," and the mastery of these subjects required the self-studies of the two students. In addition, the teaching was a single-sided monologue of European system of knowledge, with no contextualization with the East Asian system. Also, Vissering emphasized that natural laws was the most important basis for all other subjects, since other "laws" were derived from the definitions within the natural laws.[47] There were not many sources reflecting how exactly the two-year program went. It was understandable, though, since they were now meeting weekly in person, and both students did not have the luxurious time to write anything other than lecture notes. Nevertheless, Nishi and Tsuda managed to absorb tremendous amounts of knowledge successfully, and they were obviously satisfied with this journey. Their satisfactions were perfectly expressed in Tsuda's letter to Vissering at the end of their studies:

> Fortunately, our lessons in political science have come to an end, as a result of which I have acquired some European political understanding and knowledge. My goal of arriving in Europe has been achieved and for which I can express infinite gratitude to you, Professor.
> Hoping that the so-called science will find a happy entrance into our Japan and that not only the friendship between our Professor Lord and his humble pupils, but also the friendship between European powers and the Japanese empire will last forever, I leave for my homeland.[48]

On the other side, the day after he received Tsuda's letter, Vissering wrote his own farewell letter to Nishi and Tsuda. Contrary to the hesitations he had expressed in the letters two years ago, Vissering's farewell letter was extraordinarily emotional. The letter revealed Vissering's recognition, as well as his friendship with his two Japanese pupils. Therefore, it

[47] Ōkubo, *shiryō shūsei*, 676-677.
[48] Tsuda to Vissering, November 27, 1865, Leiden (Netherlands), in Ōkubo, *shiryō shūsei*, 189. Original words in Dutch: Nu zijn onze lessen over staatswetenschap gelukkig ten einde waardoor ik eenig Europeesche wegenschappelijk begrip en kennis heb gekregen, waardoor mijn doel op aankomst tot Europa wel is bereikt en waarvoor ik aan U Hooggel. oneindig hartelijk dank mogt betuigen. Hopende dat de genoemde wetenschap tot ons Japan gelukkigen ingang vinde en niet alleen de vriendschap tusschen onze Hooggel. Heer en nederig leerling maar ook de vriendschap tusschen Europeesche mogendheden en Japansch rijk oneindig blijvend zal zijn vertrek ik naar mijn vaderland. Zoo hoopende op deze blijvende vriendschap heb ik de eer hiernevens aan U Hooggel. Heer een mijn portret en een paar haas te mogen toekomen ter herinnering aan hem die zich na vriendelijke en beleefdelijke groeten, met meest hoogachting noemt.

deserved an extensive quotation:

> (After realizing your capabilities and the potential fruits out of this tutoring) our numerous and lengthy evening meetings became real hours of pleasure for me. And if anything hurts me, it is that they are now ended.
> This grieves me especially, because in you I have found not only diligent and well-disposed disciples, but also friends. We have met not only with mutual sincerity and respect; but a sincere affection has grown up between us, which will leave me with the sweetest memories as long as I shall live.
> For that affection and friendship which you have shown me and my family so much, I offer you my heartfelt thanks now that the moment of farewell has come.
> At the same time, I call you, my friends, a last farewell.
> Return prosperously and happily to your country, to your friends and to your family.
> Accept the office with courage and strength and discretion for which you have prepared yourself under my guidance.
> Enjoy the great sacrifice which you have made in living for years far from your own in a strange land among strange people and adopting strange manners and customs.
> May the great goal which you have set before your eyes, the scientific development of your compatriots, in order thereby to ensure law and order in the State and to promote prosperity among the people, prove more and more attainable.
> So live happily in Thy house, useful to Thy country, honored in Thy circle.
> And keep a friendly memory of your stay in the Netherlands, of our conversations, of the friends you have acquired here. Receive the assurance that I shall ever call myself with the highest esteem and true affection.[49]

If this unprecedented page of history needs a conclusion with original lines, Vissering's words above were the perfect fit.

However, though, aside from their personal feelings, the real historical significance of this tutoring experience can only be created by Nishi and Tsuda's accomplishments after their return to Japan. This was primarily shown by their academic publications and contributions afterward in regard to their learned subjects. Although covering their personal and academic achievements such as how their knowledge reinterpreted the traditional Chinese philosophies and reshaped the development of East Asian academia is not the main point of this paper—as they have been extensively covered by many literatures such as Ōkubo Takeharu's book, it is still necessary to briefly go over their following stories and actions.[50]

[49] Vissering to Tsuda and Nishi, November 28, 1865, in Ōkubo, *shiryō shūsei*, 191-192.
[50] Ōkubo, *The Quest for Civilization*.

Nishi and Tsuda left Leiden on December 1, 1865, and they arrived in Yokohama on February 13, 1866. At this point, the original *Bansho Shirabesho* was renamed to *Kaiseijo*, although with minimal change in functionalities. Immediately in 1866, Nishi was considered as "the unique figure who was critical for the well-being of the nation" and was reappointed as professor in *Kaiseijo*. Politically, Nishi was promoted to "jikisan," or the direct Shogunal audience, and Tsuda enjoyed similar promotions.[51] Academically, the *Bakufu* ordered Nishi and Tsuda to compile and publish their lecture notes over Volkenregt (international public law) and Staatsregt (national law) with priority.

However, beneath these "good developments" was the deepening crisis faced by the *Bakufu* in a broader scope: In August, the Shogun who commissioned the student delegation to the Netherlands, Tokugawa Iemochi, died without a direct heir. The new and the last Shogun Tokugawa Yoshinobu took office only in the following January in 1867. Twenty days later, Emperor Komei also died, and the young Emperor Meiji took the throne of Japan. On November 9, 1867, Tokugawa Yoshinobu announced the "Taisei Hokan" which transferred its political power back to the emperor, ending the 250-year-old Shogunate, in hope that the Tokugawa clan can still manipulate politics in a new government under the emperor. However, in a dramatic turn of events, the anti-*Bakufu* forces headed by Satsuma and Choshu *Hans* launched a coup in Kyoto and expelled the Tokugawa influence from the new government, and opened fire on the Shogunal army who was trying to recapture Kyoto to unset the coup, igniting the famous battle of Toba-Fushimi on January 27, 1868. The battle ended in favor of the anti-*Bakufu* forces despite the Shogunal army outnumbered its foe by three-to-one, and Tokugawa Yoshinobu fled from Osaka to Edo on board the "Kaiyo Maru," the very same ship that the Naval students bought from the Netherlands. This controversial move essentially ended the Shogunate's control over the nation. Historians commonly define this moment as the definitive end of the Tokugawa clan's rule and the beginning of the Meiji Era.[52]

On the other hand, though, it was also during this extraordinary time did Nishi managed to gain the highest trust of the Shogun. He was promoted to the closest servant to the Shogun,

[51] Ibid, 64.
[52] 狭间, "西周留学荷兰," 12-13.

who lectured the Shogun for five hours everyday and translated all the political documents for him. It was also the closest moment for Nishi to make his political dream come true: After the "Taisei Hokan," Tokugawa Yoshinobu consulted Nishi with the topics about British-style parliamentary systems and the idea of the separation of governmental powers. Regarding this, Nishi was able to draft a political blueprint, the "Gidai sōan," that placed the emperor as the constitutional monarch, and the head of Tokugawa clan as the head of government—a somewhat similar idea if compared to Thorbecke and William III, except for making the head of government hereditary. The draft saw extensive influence from Vissering's teachings about Dutch constitutional politics, as Nishi proposed to limit the power of the monarch while implementing responsibilities on the head of government. A Japanese historian regarded this draft as "an experiment in establishing a limited monarchy suitable for Japan's historical situation, yet informed by the spirit of constitutionalism he had learned from Vissering in Leiden." [53] However, all of these dreams faded away due to the abovementioned political and military failures, and Nishi was also forced to fled from Kyoto to Osaka and then to Edo, preserving his life while losing numerous notes and books he got from Vissering during the process. Tsuda Mamichi, though, was somehow relieved of his duty earlier under the reign of Tokugawa Yoshinobu and did not achieve similar political achievements like Nishi did.[54]

The newly established Meiji Government cannot afford to waste Nishi and Tsuda's abilities in their ambitions to modernize the country. Therefore, the government offered some new posts to them, although their significance was of no comparison to their previous ones. And, only after over five years of silence, Nishi wrote to his ex-professor Vissering again from Tokyo, formerly the Shogunal capital of Edo:

> I have the honor to inform you that I am still alive after having been immersed in an unfortunate state for many years since the outbreak of the great revolutionary war in our country. As I was in the service of the Extaikoen (Ex-Shogun) at that time, I became involved in it.
> Afterwards, I experienced various misfortunes, and now I find myself somewhat restored to my previous state, so I am engaged in translating European works at our Department of War. However, this is not my passion; it is merely a means of livelihood…

[53] Ōkubo, *The Quest for Civilization*, 73-74.
[54] Ibid, 13-14.

> …Although Tsuda and I cannot actively apply it to the Japanese nation due to the prevailing factions, mostly Satsuma and Choshu, to which we are subordinate. The translations seem to have had some influence on political changes. I have never seen such a nation, even in world history, that has completed so many transformations in a short period of time—everything from forms of government, legislation, military affairs, and even customs, imitating European civilization. However, it seems to me that it is all too superficial.[55]

Despite the civil war claimed many of their lecture notes and the regime change deprived their dreams of applying their learned knowledge, they did not abandon their efforts to spread this knowledge. As mentioned in the letter above, in the consequent years, Nishi and Tsuda gradually translated all the notes about the "five subjects," organized them into book-style formats, and then published them: For national laws (Staatsregt) and Statistics (Statistiek), Tsuda published "*Taisei kokuhō ron*" and "*Hyōki teikō.*" And for international law (Volkenregt) and natural laws (Natuuregt), Nishi published "*Seihō setsuyaku"* and *"Bankoku kōhō."* The translation for the notes of Economics (Staatshuishoudkunde) was not finished by Tsuda.[56] These books exerted influence over the national policies of the Meiji Japan, while being the first academic works in their respective fields to be consulted by the later scholars.[57]

Beside the translations of these more "practically oriented" subjects, a more historically significant contribution made by Nishi and Tsuda, especially Nishi, was the introduction of basic philosophical ideas and the formulation of a modern East Asian academic paradigm. Nishi fully embraced the positivist philosophical ideas that were then prevalent in Europe. That meant, Nishi was able to challenge the long-standing paradigm of traditional philosophy in East Asia

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[55] Nishi to Vissering, December 15, 1871, Tokyo (Japan), in Ōkubo, *shiryō shūsei*, 200-201. Original words in Dutch: "Ik heb de eer UEGH te kennen te geven, dat ik in het leven blijf, nadat ik gedurende vele jaren in een ongelukkigen toestand gedompeld was geweest, sedert in ons land de groote omwentelings- oorlog uitbarstte en, daar ik in de dienst van den Extaikoen bij hem was, ik mij daarin gemengd vond. Daarna had ik de verschillende ongeluk geleden en nu vond ik mij eenigermate in den vorigen toestand hersteld, zoodat ik met de vertalingen van Europeesche werken in onze Oorlogdepartement bezig houd; maar dit is niet mijn lust, alleen om broodwinning. Hoewel ik en Tsuda tot de werkelijke toepassing van hetzelve op Japansche natie kan niet komen, omdat de tegenwoordig heerschende partijen meestal Satuma en Tijausioe zijn en wij daaraan onder- geschikt zijn, echter de vertalingen van dezelve schijnen de meer of min invloed op de staatsveranderingen geoefend te hebben. Ik heb nooit zulk een volk gezien ook in de wereldgeschiedenis, dat in korten tijd vele veranderingen voltooid heeft; alles in staats-vormen, wetgevingen, krijgswezen, zelfs in zeden en gewoonten ter nabootsing van de Europeesche beschaving. Doch schijnt het mij, dat het al te oppervlakkig is."

[56] 狭间, "西周留学荷兰," 14.

[57] Ōkubo, *The Quest for Civilization*, 11.

that was based on theology and metaphysics with Comte's positivist philosophy that was based on logic and experience.[58] In order to make this introduction in his native language, Nishi created more than 240 terms in Chinese to explain these ideas from the very bottom. These Chinese terms included the matching words for "subjective," "concept," "generalization," "definition," "ideal," "extension," "outreaching," "insourcing," "counterevidence," "induction," "deduction," etc. Nishi also gave new meanings to more than 100 existing Chinese words under the context of western thought system. These "refreshed" words included "Rationality," "perception," "proposition," "innate," "acquired," "experience," "phenomenon," "matter," "decomposition," "concrete," etc. These terms are now an irreplaceable part of modern Chinese and Japanese language and serve as the very foundations that allow these countries to use their native languages in higher education institutions.[59]

[58] Ibid, 20.
[59] 狭间, "西周留学荷兰," 25-26.

Chapter 2 Revisiting the case from the Dutch perspective

Due to the absence of Dutch historiography and the overall uniformity of the Japanese historiography to focus solely on Nishi, Tsuda, and Vissering just like the last chapter, every detail of this event began to provide new insights that were never brought up when the matter was viewed from the Dutch side. This chapter intends to bring up these unnoticed indications for discussion. Beside the Japanese sources, almost all the Dutch sources came from the "Hoffmann manuscipts" collection and were never used by historians in academic works. And, as an effort to create a more complete picture of history, logical assumptions that do not necessarily have the direct support of the existing sources will also be discussed in this chapter.

Leiden University in the 1860s

To start with a more practical point, for such a grand plan of traveling, studying, and ship-ordering to be executed between the two nations of Japan and the Netherlands, there had to be some kinds of arrangements to be made in advance on the Dutch side. Unsurprisingly, despite being "students," these Japanese students in Leiden were by no means the same as the contemporary international students who would enroll in the university, rent a house, and participate in classes just like other Dutch students—they did not find their student housing in Leiden by themselves. Before developing into that, it is crucial to understand that Leiden University was a very different institution at then compared to the present. In the nineteenth century, being either a professor or a student at Leiden University was a thing of enormous privilege, and the size of the faculty and the student population was small. The formal language of instruction was Latin rather than Dutch and English, and there was no set tuition because students paid tuition directly to their professors. Professors with more students also tended to earn more. This also meant that students had to find their binding professors in one way or another—a task almost impossible for Nishi and Tsuda to prepare beforehand.

Furthermore, in a broader context, there were not so many universities across the country. In the 1860s, only three universities stood as the primary institutions of higher education in the Netherlands: Leiden University, Utrecht University, and Groningen University, with Leiden consistently being the largest one across the entire nineteenth century. Between

1860 and 1865, Leiden University had a student population of around 590, Utrecht around 490, and Groningen around 200.[60] Among the 590 students in Leiden at the time, around 290 were enrolled in the Laws faculty which Vissering was belonged to.[61] In comparison, nowadays Leiden has a student population of 33,701 according to the official numbers in 2022.[62] Yet ironically, students in the nineteenth century faced the similar kind of housing problems in Leiden just as them today due to the absence of financial aids and the high cost of rents. And it was common practice for Leiden professors to accommodate their students in their own houses.[63] Fortunately for Nishi and Tsuda, they were able to receive special arrangements in terms of their enrollments and accommodations. However, these arrangements were far from smooth and secure if we revisit how they unfolded in the Dutch bureaucratic system chronologically.

Initial Preparations

On November 6, 1862, Dutch Minister of Colonies Gerhard Hendrik Uhlenbeck wrote a letter to the professor and translator of the Netherlands Indies Government, J. J. Hoffmann. In this letter, or more precisely a mandatary instruction, Uhlenbeck at first introduced the fact to Hoffmann that a Japanese student delegation was inbound to the Netherlands. Uhlenbeck did so by clearly mentioning and attaching the aforementioned letter written by the Dutch Consulate-General in Yokohama Jan Karel de Wit to the Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies Ludolph Anne Jan Wilt Sloet van de Beele. Uhlenbeck believed that de Wit had shown a big interest in the matter, and he himself also shared the feeling with de Wit. As a result, Uhlenbeck instructed Hoffmann:

> After consultation with my colleagues, I have the honor to inform you that the government would like you, in view of your position, to take over the management and care of the expected Japanese until they reach the (educational) institutions. They will be placed where they do their studies, while the initial intention is to house them in Leiden.

[60] Otterspeer, *De wiekslag van hun geest*, 412.
[61] Ibid, 415.
[62] "Facts and figures," About us, Leiden University, accessed July 15, 2023, https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/about-us/facts-and-figures.
[63] A.C.J. de Vrankrijker, *Vier eeuwen Nederlandsch studentenleven* [Four centuries of Dutch student life] (Voorburg: Boot, 1939), 91.

> In this way the government would deem best guaranteed the guidance and care which these young people will most need, especially on their arrival and at the beginning of their stay here in the country.
> In confidence in your willingness to comply with this order of the Government, I have the honor to invite you to obtain the required information in time and to make provisional arrangements for the proper housing of these young people.
> Although it does not seem necessary at this time to take preparatory measures regarding the training of these young people, which can wait until they are actually here. I recommend that you give your thoughts on this, and I will gladly hear and learn about your views.[64]

In this letter, Minister Uhlenbeck showed his decent awareness about the student mission, and he deemed it important. He appointed the job of caring, guiding, and managing—essentially all the practical works to Hoffmann, and was willing to supply him with updated governmental information. Even without any context, the level of respect that Uhlenbeck had toward Hoffmann was fully reflected in this letter: Disregarding the sharp gap between the levels of their posts, Uhlenbeck still expressed his willingness to learn from Hoffmann on the Japanese matters. Furthermore, after checking all the available sources and literatures, this paper believes that it was in this letter did the idea of directing the Japanese students to study in Leiden make its first and earliest appearance. In addition to the above, Uhlenbeck noted that the costs of the accommodation and the tutoring fee will be covered by the Japanese government, and he had invited the Netherlands Trading Society (Nederlandsche Handel-Maatschappij) to manage that matter.[65]

From a broader perspective, the high level of respect that Uhlenbeck had given to Hoffmann was likely the result of their constant partnership on the work of training translators.

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[64] G. H. Uhlenbeck to J. J. Hoffmann, November 6, 1862, 's Gravenhage (Netherlands), Hoffmann manuscripten, call number SKR. 239 (8), Leiden University Libraries. Original words in Dutch: "Na overleg met mijne ambtgenoten, heb ik de eer UHG te kennen te geven, dat de regering gaarne zoude zien, dat UHG zich, uit den aard uwer betrekking, wilde belasten met de leiding en verzorging der verwacht wordende Japanners, totdat zij bij de inrigtingen zullen zijn geplaatst, bij welke zij hunne studien zullen maken, terwijl het in de bedoeling ligt hen aanvankelijk te Leiden te doen huisvesten.De regering zou de leiding en verzorging welke die jongelieden vooral bij hunne aankomst en bij den aanvang van hun verblijf hier te lande het meest zullen behoeven, op die wijze het best gewaarborgd achten.In het vertrouwen op Uwe bereidwilligheid om aan deze opdrage der Regering te voldoen, heb ik de eer, UHG uit te noodigen tijdig de vereischte informatiën in te winnen nen en voorloopige maatregelen te treffen voor de betamelijke huisvesting dier jongelieden. Hoeder het niet noodig schijnt thans reeds voorbereidende maatregelen te nemen aangaande de opleiding aan die jongelieden te geven, en waarmede zal kunnen worden gewacht totdat zij werkelijk hier zijn, zoo beveel ik UHG toch aan daarover uwe gedachten te doen gaan en zal ik gaarne Uwe zienswijze daaromtrent vernemen."
[65] Ibid.

As a master of Chinese and Japanese language and the appointed translator of the Netherlands Indies Government, Hoffmann bore the responsibility to train new translators for the Dutch government. The requests for new translators were originated from the different Dutch consuls in Asia, and then managed by the Ministry of Colonies. Moreover, during this period, the demands for translators of Chinese and Japanese saw an increase due to the ever-expanding diplomatic relations between the Netherlands and both nations: Japan opened the country as introduced, while the negotiations for a first formal treaty between the Netherlands and China were also underway (the Sino-Dutch Treaty of Tiensin, 1863).[66] This increasing demand can be seen from the letter written by the Dutch East Indies Governor-General Sloet to Uhlenbeck on February 27, 1862, claiming that he had to send two translators trained by Hoffmann to China instead of Japan due to its greater needs.[67] Therefore, Uhlenbeck undoubtfully had to rely on Hoffmann's unique capabilities for the sake of the Dutch national interest. It was thus reasonable to assume that they formed a tacit work relationship during these issues.

Hence, unsurprisingly, Hoffmann was eager to do the job after receiving Uhlenbeck's instructions. Only fours days later, Hoffmann replied to Uhlenbeck, assuring his willingness to carry out the tasks given to him, and promising to "give preliminary measures right away" regarding the decent accommodations for the Japanese guests, in consultation with the Mayor of Leiden.[68] From then on, Hoffmann began to prepare for the arrival of the student delegation. Even though no correspondences indicated his consultations with the Mayor of Leiden or his negotiations with the local landlords, one can still safely assume that Hoffmann completed the above arrangements according to his promise to Uhlenbeck. In addition, knowing that the incoming students will be studying "science," Hoffmann even had contact with the Becker & Buddingh Company in Arnhem. Becker & Buddingh was a manufacturer of scientific instruments, a company that made a prestigious name later in 1882 after receiving the "Royal (Koninklijke)"

[66] Koos Kuiper, *The Early Dutch Sinologists (1854-1900): Training in Holland and China, Functions in the Netherlands Indies* (Boston: Brill, 2017), 46-255.
[67] Ibid, 70.
[68] Hoffmann to The Minister of Colonies, November 10, 1862, Leiden (Netherlands), Hoffmann manuscripten, call number SKR. 239 (8).

designation.[69] On February 9, 1863, Becker & Buddingh recommended their own institution to the Minister of Colonies as a potential candidate for receiving one or more Japanese students.[70] In response to this offer from Becker & Buddingh, Hoffmann wrote that the Minister of Colonies has noticed the self-recommendation, and Hoffmann himself would inform the institution when the Japanese students arrive.[71] It was unknown whether any students other than Nishi and Tsuda ever went to the institution due to the lack of sources, but this gave a sense of the kinds of preparations being made by Hoffmann in advance.

It is necessary to note, though, that by this time in 1863 Uhlenbeck has stepped down as the Minister of Colonies, and Isaäc Dignus Fransen van de Putte took the office of the Ministry on February 2. The new Ministry, proceeding its predecessor's promise to share governmental information, gave Hoffmann an update on March 2, 1863. This update stated that a credit was opened at the Netherlands Trading Society in Batavia with 25,370 Mexican dollars with Uchida Masao, the head of the student delegation, as the beneficiary. And this credit was purposed to make all the transactions related to the costs of their trip.[72] Moreover, the update informed Hoffmann about the shipwrecking of the ship "Kallipus" near Batavia, provided him with some copies of letters from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and forwarded him the self-recommendation letter from the Becker & Buddingh Company. Except these, no further instructions were given, and the letter was only signed by the secretary general "Peith" instead of the Minister himself.[73] Hoffmann replied a week later that he had prepared a hotel in Leiden to welcome the initial arrival of the delegation. And regarding the preparations for the studies, Hoffmann wrote:

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[69] "Becker & Buddingh (fl. 1855-1906), Arnhem," The Planimetrica Collection, https://planimetrica.jimdofree.com/mathematical-instruments/netherlands/becker-buddingh/.

[70] Mister Becker & Buddingh to the Minister of Colonies, February 9, 1863, Arnhem (Netherlands), Hoffmann manuscripten, call number SKR. 239 (8).

[71] Hoffmann to Mister Becker & Buddingh, March 9, 1863, Leiden (Netherlands), Hoffmann manuscripten, call number SKR. 239 (8).

[72] For clarification, Mexican dollar was a widely circulated silver coin currency at the time. Due to its good quality and the unique monetary structure of Japan during that period, Mexican dollars flowed into Japan in mass quantities. For related works, see A. Piatt Andrew, "The End of the Mexican Dollar," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 18, no. 3 (1904): 321–56, https://doi.org/10.2307/1884074.

[73] Ministry of Colonies to Hoffmann, March 2, 1863, 's Gravenhage (Netherlands), Hoffmann manuscripten, call number SKR. 239 (8).

> As the measures to be taken for the furthering of each one's objective will depend on the progress each has already made, I trust Your Excellency will agree that these young people must first be acquainted.
> As far as the measures to be taken are concerned, I will always proceed in consultation with the leading men of each trade practiced by the Japanese.[74]

Hoffmann's report demonstrated his capability to formulate this unprecedented study program, while also revealing his strong personal motivation to optimize its quality for the Japanese students as best as possible. In addition, this also showed that Hoffmann oversaw the formulation of the teaching plans for all the disciplines that the Japanese were going to study, not limiting to the ones chosen by Nishi and Tsuda. However, a noticeable thing about these correspondences was that the new Minister of Colonies Fransen van de Putte never left any words on paper regarding these matters himself. The only letter sent from the Ministry to Hoffmann resembled a news update with no subjective will, not to mention that it was only signed by his secretary. In addition, the tone used in the correspondences between Hoffmann and the new Ministry under Fransen van de Putte, as shown in the letter above, was much less familiar than the tone once used between Hoffmann and Uhlenbeck. These signs may indicate that Hoffmann and the new Minister did not cooperate or coordinate well, a hidden problem that will soon be manifested.

Confusion and Mismanagement—Hoffmann's reactions

Until this moment, it seemed that everything was in order: Decent preparations were being made on the Dutch side by Hoffmann, and the ship "Ternate" was steaming through the oceans towards the Netherlands with the Japanese students. However, real confusion and mismanagement only came after the arrival of the Japanese student delegation. On June 4, as mentioned in chapter one, the Japanese delegation reached Leiden, and was housed in a hotel in Breestraat that Hoffmann prepared for them. In the following couple days, Hoffmann and two of his disciples toured Leiden with the group. They visited "orphanages, hospitals, universities, elementary schools, zoos, botanical gardens, museums, and Churches," and Hoffmann also

[74] Hoffmann to The Minister of Colonies, March 9, 1863, Leiden (Netherlands), Hoffmann manuscripten, call number SKR. 239 (8) Original words in Dutch: "Daar de ter bereiking van ieders oogmerk te nemen maatregelen afhangen zullen van de vorderingen, die ieder reeds gemaakt heeft, zal, naar ik vertrouw, Uwe Excellentie toestemmen, dat men deze jonge lieden eerst moet leeren kennen. Ik zal dan wat de te nemen maatregelen betreft, steeds in overleg met de voornaamste mannen van elk vak, dat de Japanners beoefenen willen te werk gaan."

invited the group to the mayor's hall.[75] During their time in Leiden, under the command of the Dutch Minister of Navy Willem Johan Cornelis Huyssen van Kattendijke, "doctor" Pompe van Meerdervoort visited the group twice on June 6 and June 11 to discuss their training. Then, after some discussions with Hoffmann, it was decided that Nishi and Tsuda were to stay in Leiden, while the other students were to be relocated to the Hague.[76] According to the Japanese accounts above, the receiving process was usual and unsuspicious from the guest's perspective. But according to the Dutch accounts, the reality behind this process was far more complicated, and the Japanese students may have just evaded a terrible study experience.

On June 10, a vital letter was sent from Hoffmann to the Minister of Colonies, Isaäc Dignus Fransen van de Putte. In this letter, Hoffmann wrote that he was very surprised when he read the newspaper saying that in the Hague, a house at Hooge Nieuwstraat was rented to house a portion of the Japanese group, but he received no instructions about this at all. [77] Hoffmann then quoted word by word the governmental instructions given by the former Minister of Colonies Gerhard Hendrik Uhlenbeck on November 6, 1862, to Fransen van de Putte. Regarding this new arrangement, Hoffmann believed that the Japanese naval students will surely find their way to their naval tutor, Pompe van Meerdervoort, under the direction of the Minister of Navy. However, Hoffmann noticed that this new arrangement also meant that the two "physician" students will have to stay with the large group. In response, Hoffmann voiced his firm objection:

> … (the two medical students) will now continue to speak their native language among themselves and practice Dutch only to a limited extent. In my deepest conviction, the Japanese should be individually housed in decent families, preferably led by men who specialize in the field in which the Japanese wish to be educated. Those who wish to pursue Medicine should stay in Leiden, where the necessary institutions for their studies exist and where they can acquire comprehensive knowledge of the science. Far be it from me to judge the capabilities of Jhr. Pompe van Meerdervoort, but it is certain that he knows next to nothing about the Japanese language and is therefore unable to provide the necessary explanations when needed. Therefore, I respectfully turn to Your

[75] Toshiaki Ōkubo and The Japan-Netherlands Institute, *Zoku Bakumatsu Oranda ryūgaku kankei shiryō shūsei* [A Collection of documents related to the mission of students to the Netherlands by the Tokugawa Shogunate 1862-1868, Vol. 2] (Tokyo: Yushodo Press Ltd, 1984), 275.
[76] 菅井, "幕末における日蘭文化交流の一齣," 124-125.
[77] Hoffmann to the Minister of Colonies, June 10, 1863, Leiden (Netherlands), Hoffmann manuscripten, call number SKR. 239 (9A).

> Excellency to prevent the Japanese from being gathered together in one house. If the Netherlands wishes to gain the reputation of having been benevolent to the beloved sons of Japan, then they must be placed in good families and learn to exercise their freedom. This is what the Japanese themselves desire, while the news that there were plans to house them together in one house has disappointed their expectations.[78]

From this letter, Hoffmann again expressed his eagerness to improve the study experience of the Japanese students. Unlike the tones of letters written by other Dutch people, Hoffmann seemed to really place himself in the position of the Japanese, seeking to improve their benefits wholeheartedly. However, in this letter Hoffmann was voicing for two "medical students." There were four possibilities: It is possible that Hoffmann was referring to Ito Genpuku and Hayashi Kenkai, or he might confuse the two medical students with Nishi and Tsuda, or he may have no awareness of the existence of both, or he simply meant Nishi and Tsuda by saying it. Nevertheless, at this moment when Hoffman wrote this letter to the Minister of Colonies, it was June 10, 1863. On the other side, the date Hoffmann received the letter directly from Nishi stating their intentions of study was June 12, 1863. Therefore, Hoffmann had no clear conception of Nishi and Tsuda's learning objectives yet. At this moment, the only available information that related to Nishi and Tsuda was the rather vague letter from the Consulate General de Wit and the subsequent report on *Leidsch Dagblad* that were mentioned in the previous chapter. But, even if this was the case, from both information sources, one can still easily see that Nishi and Tsuda's learning subjects were much broader or even unrelated to the medical students. Anyway, the actual people Hoffmann was referring to remain a mystery.

From Hoffmann's letter, it was also evident that Hoffmann already knew Pompe van Meerdervoort well beforehand. Johannes Lijdius Catharinus Pompe van Meerdervoort was

[78] Ibid. Original words in Dutch: "zij zullen nu voortgaan met onderling hunne moedertaal te spreken en zich wei nigin het Hollandsch oefenen. Naarmijne innigste overtuiging moeten de Japanners afzonderlijk in fatsoenlijke gezinnen worden gehuisvest, aan welker hoofd, zoo veel mogelijk, mannen staan die specialiteiten zijn in het vork waarin de Japanners zich willen opleiden. Die zich toe wil len leggen op de Geneeskunde, moeten te Leiden blijven, waar de voor hunne studien noodige instellingen zijn, en waar zij de wetenschap in haren ruimsten omvang kunnen leeren kennen. Verre zij het van mij de bekwaamheden van Jhr. Pompe van Meerdervoort te willen beoordeelen, maar dit is zeker, dat die Heer van de Japansche taal zoo goed als niets afweet en dus niet in staat is hun ophelderingen te geven daar, waar zij noodig zijn. Ik wend mij daarom met den meesten eerbied tot Uwe Excellentie ten einde te verhoeden, dat de Japannezen in een huis worden vereenigd. Wil Nederland den roem inoogsten weldadig te zijn geweest voor de liefste zonen van Jaan, dan moeten zij in goede gezinnen geplaatst worden en hunne vrijheid leeren gebruiken. Dit is het, wat de Japannezen zelf wenschen, terwijl het berigt, dat men van plan was, hen in een huis te zamen te huisvesten, hen in hunne verwachting heeft teleurgesteld."

graduated from National Academy for Military Medicine in Utrecht (Rijks Kweekschool voor Militaire Geneeskundigen) and became a naval surgeon in 1849. He traveled to Nagasaki in 1857 and began to treat local patients as well as to train local disciples for medical practices. Later he opened a western style hospital there with 124 beds, while also providing education for young physicians with systematic western curriculums. In other words, Pompe van Meerdervoort helped to initiate the development of modern medicine in Japan. After five years, in 1862, he embarked on his journey home along with two of his students, Ito Genpuku and Hayashi Kenkai, exactly the two medical students in the delegation group who were coming to the Netherlands to study medicine.[79] It is said that when the ship "Kallipus" was stranded near Batavia, Pompe van Meerdervoort lost most of his materials about the stories of his five-year stay in Japan despite the fact that he still finished the book on that topic successfully afterward.[80] Therefore, although there are no direct sources about it, Hoffmann must have learned about Pompe van Meerdervoort's plan to return with two of his students by other means due to their familiarity.

Hoffmann's request to the Minister of Colonies likely did not work at first, because there were no sources showing the Ministry's response to the previous letter. Furthermore, on June 19, Hoffmann reached out to another person regarding this matter, N. W. van Lockhorst. Even though no relevant sources nor information can be found at all regarding this mysterious mister, the content of the letter indicated that Hoffmann was likely seeking his help to strengthen his previous appeals. In this letter, Hoffmann mentioned that by the time the letter was written, he received words from the leader of the Japanese delegation, Uchida Masao, that they have reached a small house in the Hague where Uchida and a part of the delegation group will stay in the future. But after this, Hoffmann began to push his opinion again with a different phrasing:

> "Leiden," (Uchida) said, "a place for study—The Hague, a place for pleasure." The same declaration has been repeatedly and elaborately heard from Professor Vissering, Dr. Sicheren, Dr. Inckel, Dr. de Graaf, and especially from both physicians.
>
> Therefore, after the newspapers reported that a house had been rented for the Japanese in The Hague—a house that Jhr. Pompe van Meerdervoort showed us on June

[79] "Pompe van Meerdervoort (1829-1908)," Index 19th Century, History of cultural contacts Europe - East Asia Wolfgang Michel (Michel-Zaitsu), http://wolfgangmichel.web.fc2.com/serv/eujap/19thc/pompe/.
[80] P. C. Molhuysen, P.J. Blok, and F. Kossmann, *Nieuw Nederlandsch biografisch woordenboek, Dl. 7* [New Dutch biographical dictionary, Vol. 7] (Amsterdam: Israel, 1974), 1007.

> 8th and that the Japanese referred to as "hanahada wazui" (very poor)—on June 10th, I addressed a letter to His Excellency, the Minister of the Colonies, in order to prevent, if possible, the national interest that the Netherlands and Japan have in this mission, and the honor that the Dutch nation must uphold in the eyes of the world, from being sacrificed to the interests of a single individual, Mr. Jhr. Pompe van Meerdervoort.
>
> As I have not received official notice that the instructions given to me by the Government on November 6, 1862, have been revoked, although Mr. Jhr. Pompe van Meerdervoort assured me verbally on June 10th that my dismissal had already been issued, I have continued to act in accordance with the spirit of the instructions given to me.[81]

It was indeed quite an enigma why and how Hoffmann was suddenly expelled from his proper responsibilities if that really was the case. Or, as Hoffmann claimed in the letter with a suspicious tone, it might also be a mere verbal statement given by Pompe van Meerdervoort, who may or may not has the according affirmation from the Minister of Colonies. Nevertheless, there were no direct sources to support both assumptions. After stating his defiance against this decision anyway, Hoffmann's "continued actions" were:

> (In Leiden) the instruction in the Dutch language has already begun, suitable accommodations in decent houses have even been found for the lower-ranking individuals, and with the help of the residents of this city, whose trust and affection I enjoy, I have no doubt that I will succeed in meeting the expectations placed upon me by the government.[82]

[81] Hoffmann to N. W. Lockhorst, June 19, 1863, Leiden (Netherlands), Hoffmann manuscripten, call number SKR. 239 (9B). Original words in Dutch: "'Leiden,' heeft hij gezegd, 'plaats voor studeren--Haag, plaats voor pleizier,' Dezelfde verklaring heeft Prof. Vissering, Dr. Sicheren, Dr. Inckel, Dr de Graaf van hem en vooral van de beide genees heeren herhaaldelijk en breedvoerig vernomen. Daarom heb ik, nadat de couranten melden, dat er een huis voor de Japanners te 's Hage gehuurd was--een huis dat Jhr. Pompe van Meerdervoorse ons den 8 Junij liet zien- en dat door de Japanners genoemd werd: hanahara warui (zeer slecht) mij bij mis five van den 10 Junij U. aan Zijne Excellentie den Minister van Koloniën gewend om, zoo mogelijk te verhoeden, dat het nationale belang, dat Nederland en Japan bij deze zending heeft, dat de eer, die de Nederlandsche natie in het oog der wereld daarbij moet in oogsten opgeoffers worde aan het belang van een enkel persoon, den Heer Jhr. Pompe van Meerdervoorde. Daar ik officieel nog geene kennis draag, dat de mij van wege de Regering gegeven instructie van den 6 November 1862 is ingetrokken, alhoewel mij Jhr. Pompe van Meerdervoorde den 10 Junij mondelijk de stellige verzekering gaf, dat mijn ontslag reeds was uit gevaardigd, ben ik voortgegaan met overeenkomstig den geest der mij gegeven instructie te handelen."

[82] Ibid. Original words in Dutch: "Het onderwijs in de Hollandsche taal is reedt begonnen, gepaste woningen in fatsoenlijke huizen zijn zelfs voor de minderen gevonden, en, gehol hen als ik word door de ingezetenen dezer stad, wier vertrouwen en toegenegenheid ik geniet, twijfel ik niet het minst, dat ik er in slagen zal, aan het in mij gestelde vertrouwen der Regering te beantwoorden."

Due to the absence of the whereabouts of the receiver, it was hard to figure out the exact purpose of this letter. But on its cover page, there was a response to Hoffmann written and signed by N. W. Lockhorst on the same day:

> Respected Professor,
>
> I have just had a visit from Mr. Van Bell, who showed great interest and inquired whether I have received a response from Your Worshipful. He now seems very supportive of your case and requested me to ask you today, if possible, to promptly provide your answer to my letter of the 15th of this month, as he would like to have it by tomorrow morning in order to discuss it with the Minister.[83]

Therefore, it seemed that Hoffmann was mobilizing his friends to advance his cause to "the Minister," which was presumably the Minister of Colonies Fransen van de Putte. There were no more sources to indicate the development of this effort, no information regarding "my letter of the 15th of this month," but it was certain that Hoffmann did make the effort.

However, according to Japanese accounts, the student group was already separated in Leiden on June 13, with Nishi and Tsuda along with some other technical students decided to stay in Leiden, and the others relocated to the Hague. By June 17, the group in the Hague were also divided up with students living into different houses, due to the exact reasons given by Hoffmann, "the inability to practice Dutch when being housed together."[84] If the Japanese accounts were true, then both Hoffmann's letters did not really affect his actions: Hoffmann simply did the job first before any approvals can arrive. In that case, he must have had numerous debates with Pompe van Meerdervoort, in which Hoffman defended his arrangements "in accordance with the spirit of the instructions." On July 21, 1863, Nishi and Tsuda were formally registered at the Municipality of Leiden.[85]

Currently, regarding the two medical students Ito Genpuku and Hayashi Kenkai that were mentioned in the letters above, the details of their journey were very confusing due to the

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[83] Lockhorst to Hoffmann, June 19, 1863, Hoffmann manuscripten, call number SKR. 239 (9B). Original words in Dutch: "Hoogleleerde Heer, Ik heb daar zo een bezoek gehad van den Hr. van Bell, die mij met veel belangstelling kwam vragen of ik reeds antwoord van wGel had bekomen. Hij scheen nu uwe zaak zeer toegenegen, en heeft mij verzocht U nog heden te verzoeken, zo het mogelijk is per omgaande Uw antwoord op mijn schrijven van 15 dezer, daar hij dit gaarne morgen ochtend had, ten einde er met den Minister over te spreken."

[84] 菅井, "幕末における日蘭文化交流の一齣," 125.

[85] 渡邊, *シモン・フィセリング研究*, 162-163.

extreme lack of sources and historiography on them. Japanese diaries claimed that the two lived together in a boarding house in Haarlem after the group was divided in the Hague, but it is unknown where they lived later during their studies, how they found their way to their medical education in the Netherlands, and who they studied with.[86] There is even a confusion on where they actually studied, between the claims that they studied at Utrecht University or the Nieuwe Diep Naval Hospital.[87] This paper believes that it was more likely that they finished their studies at Utrecht because this was brought up by a much more convincing source.[88] In addition, several letters indicated that Ito Genpuku visited Utrecht again in 1872, and was sending some books back to Japan, likely medical books.[89] Utrecht University always had a superb reputation in the field of medical science worldwide, and it is reasonable to guess that the medical students made their way there somewhat through their subjective wills, just like Nishi and Tsuda.

Nonetheless, the journey of the two medical students is not the subject of this paper, and the only related and convincing fact about them was: they did not live nor study in Leiden, nor did they stick in the Hague with their former tutor, Pompe van Meerdervoort. Also, Nishi and Tsuda were successfully placed in "the place for study," Leiden. This meant that Hoffmann's goals to send the different Japanese students to their most suitable study places prevailed. From the phrasing of these two letters, it was not hard to sense the fierce personal rivalry between Hoffman and van Meerdervoort. Hoffmann constantly doubted van Meerdervoort's capabilities and defied the governmental arrangements that van Meerdervoort brought to exclude him from the matter. Again, it was unknown how this rivalry unfolded. But as van Meerdervoort's fellow and a master of the Japanese language, Hoffmann might have dissatisfactions to van Meerdervoort long before this delegation matter. It was also said that in 1863, van Meerdervoort published a book *Notice sur le Yama-Mai*, specifically to respond to a

[86] Ōkubo, *Zoku Bakumatsu Oranda ryūgaku kankei shiryō shūsei*, 277.
[87] "日本最初の留学生 ~ 伊東方成、三十にして立つ!（平成 24 年 3 月）," Sagamihara City Museum, https://sagamiharacitymuseum.jp/blog/2014/01/20/h23_rekishi/.
[88] Ōkubo, *Bakumatsu Oranda ryūgaku kankei shiryō shūsei,* 39.
[89] Letters from Ito Genpuku, July 14, 1872 and August 3, 1872, Utrecht (Netherlands), in Ōkubo, *shiryō shūsei*, 202-203.

writing by Hoffman regarding the importation of Japanese silkworms, which was potentially a part of their rivalry.[90]

Behind the Confusions in the Ministry of Colonies

Other than this personal rivalry between the two leading figures of Dutch who probably knew Japan better than most, the confusing arrangement made by the Dutch government also urged us to reconsider the issue entirely. Firstly, there is this question that should have been asked earlier: Why was everything being administered by the Ministry of the Colonies? From a contemporary perspective, if a country is going to send a formal delegation of students to another country that's important enough for governmental concern, it will surely go through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, this was not the case in this paper's context. From the start of the mission, we saw the Dutch consulate general in Japan reporting directly to the colonial governor of the Dutch Indies and the Minister of Colonies regarding the itinerary of the delegation group, and it was also the Minister of Colonies who issued instructions to all the related officials. Did this mean the Netherlands still treat Japan as an "uncivilized" nation or even a potential colony? Based on the evolution of Dutch foreign relations with Japan, this was likely not the case. As mentioned, for two centuries Dutch presence in Japan existed in the form of the special mission in Decima, Nagasaki. In 1858, the "Ansei Treaties" allowed five western nations to deploy their permanent diplomatic personnels in Yokohama, which for the Netherlands was the consulate general.[91] Until the end of 1862, the Dutch consulate general in Yokohama was subjected to the administration of the Ministry of Colonies. In fact, Jan Karel de Wit was the last consulate general to take orders from the Minister of Colonies. When the famous Dutch diplomat Dirk de Graeff van Polsbroek was appointed as de Wit's successor as the consulate general in 1863, the post was transferred to the Ministry of Foreign affairs.[92]

Therefore, the reason why the whole affair was arranged by the Ministry of Colonies was most likely due to practical concerns. Ever since the Dutch East Indies Company managed to secure the shogun's favor as the monopolized trading partner in the 1600s, the Dutch presence

[90] Molhuysen, *Nieuw Nederlandsch biografisch woordenboek, Dl. 7*, 1007.
[91] Auslin, *Negotiating with Imperialism*, 44.
[92] Kjeld Duits, "2. Dirk de Graeff van Polsbroek," People, From Dejima to Tokyo, https://www.dejima-tokyo.com/articles/54/dirk-de-graeff-van-polsbroek.

in Japan had always been an extension of the colonial interests of the Dutch Colonial Empire. In other words, it was a "subdivision" of the Dutch East Indies in all but name that only had concerns with trade profits instead of more in-depth diplomatic issues. Therefore, during the short period of time between 1858 and 1863, especially when the traditional relationship between the Netherlands and Japan was drastically changing, this intermediate choice was then understandable. The Ministry of Colonies, unsurprisingly, prioritized the development, or the exploitation of the colonies overseas as its primary task. And this might have been a reason why the new and unfamiliar ministry was so bad at coordinating issues at home as observed by Hoffmann.

But even if this was the case, the second question comes into the light: "Why did the Ministry of Colonies arrange the delegation matter so poorly, that not only the Japanese students were disappointed, but also Hoffmann even had to read newspapers to know about the governmental changes in the arrangements that himself should be responsible for?" Through a revisit on the Dutch high politics, this paper believes that the political turmoil surrounding the Ministry of Colonies at the time was the main reason behind its poor performance.

As mentioned above, when the governmental instructions for Hoffmann were given in November 1862, the Minister who gave these instructions was Gerhard Hendrik Uhlenbeck. Born in Colombo, British Ceylon in 1815, Uhlenbeck perceived himself as Dutch instead of as English. After receiving his military education in the Netherlands and being appointed 2nd Lieutenant of Engineers, Uhlenbeck devoted himself to the posts in the Dutch East Indies as early as 1838. During more than 20 years of service in the Dutch East Indies primarily as a public infrastructure officer, Uhlenbeck was both naturalized and liberalized: He was finally granted Dutch citizenship, and he also took part in the liberal movement in Batavia in 1848. In 1861, he found his position under Thorbecke's cabinet as the Minister of Colonies during his leave to the Netherlands and took office formally from February 1862. He exercised his very liberal political view quickly after he became in charge. Of all his political moves, one of the most noticeable actions was his firm defense of the bill that abolished slavery in the Dutch West Indies. His radical proposals were always fiercely objected by the conservative Dutch politicians, and even

pushed some of his liberal fellows to the opposite side gradually. The final moment of his career came when Uhlenbeck tried to regulate the cultivation system (Cultuurstelsel) in the Dutch East Indies, a system that forcedly required a portion of its agricultural products to be exported, bringing huge profits for the Netherlands while harshly decreasing the living quality of the natives. In a confusing political struggle, more and more senators went against Uhlenbeck's initiative, as he rebutted his opponents sharply. Even Prime Minister Thorbecke chose to refrain from voicing to support Uhlenbeck's reforms, and started to favor Isaäc Dignus Fransen van de Putte as the moderate candidate next in line that can take Uhlenbeck's post. Uhlenbeck in this process also critized van de Putte's objections as false. Therefore, it is reasonable to say that Uhlenbeck and Fransen van de Putte were political opponents. In the end, Uhlenbeck's proposal was rejected by 30 to 4 in the Senate, and he resigned his post as the minister of Colonies, which took effect from January 1863.[93]

It was on his post did Uhlenbeck plotted the itinerary of the Japanese students by instructing Hoffmann to receive them in Leiden in November 1862. By June 1863 when Hoffmann perceived the confusing governmental arrangements, the person in charge of the Ministry of Colonies was Fransen van de Putte. Given the frustration that Uhlenbeck might had when his political initiative was harshly rejected and himself forced to resign, it was unlikely that he would properly acknowledge his political opponent about the information as "small" as the arrangements about the incoming Japanese student delegation. From Uhlenbeck's point of view, that issue was already been taken care of under the capable hands of Hoffmann anyway. Hence, the confusing shift of arrangements was explainable. Giving the control of the matter to Pompe van Meerdervoort who happened to be returning home along with his Japanese students seemed to be a reasonable choice for Fransen van de Putte, if Pompe happened to report to him on his arrival as the first carrier of news. The Japanese students, although unsurprisingly, did not perceive this Dutch political turmoil at all. It was during this critical moment came Hoffmann to save the entire trip.

[93] Molhuysen, *Nieuw Nederlandsch biografisch woordenboek*, 1349-1353.

The Financial Affairs

From this trip, even though the knowledge taught by Professor Vissering to his two Japanese pupils seemed so invaluable, few historians noticed that the trip and the lessons did have prices. And all these affairs about fees and payments, unsurprisingly, were also arranged by J. J. Hoffmann from an intermediatory position. A day before Hoffmann wrote his letter to N. W. Lockhorst, on June 18, a note was provided to Hoffmann from a person of unknown identity, presumably a friend of Hoffman's:

> I have received your letter and read it. Upon separation, I wish you happiness and success. I approve of the arrangement made with Prof. Vissering, as well as the agreement with Van Dijk regarding the price of the lesson. I also approve of the arrangements made regarding housing, with a price of 1200 guilders for Mr. Tsuda and 1200 for Mr. Nishi. Tsuda will move into his accommodation on July 1st. Uchida wishes for this to happen as soon as possible.[94]

The sum of 1,200 guilders for each person was an unreasonably huge amount for just "housing." For better understanding, 1,200 guilders in 1863 was about a year's earning of a university professor at the time. And in contemporary values, 1,200 guilders in 1863 was equivalent to the purchasing power of around 30,854 euros in 2021.[95]

Fortunately, one can cross-reference this information with the letters written from Uchida Masao. As the head of the Japanese delegation, Uchida was responsible for the finance of the group, which was also proved by his abovementioned beneficiary status at the Netherlands Trading Society. On June 19, Uchida wrote to Hoffmann in Japanese, claiming that with the help of a Dutch-named person (presumably the one who provided the above note to Hoffman), the fees for "house rent," "firewood," "eating," "kerosene," and "miscellaneous" were agreed to be 1,200 guilders a year for "everything combined" for Tsuda Mamichi, "and the same

[94] Unknown person to Hoffmann, June 18, 1863, Hoffmann Manuscripten, call number SKR. 239 (9C). Original words in Dutch: "Ik heb uw brief ontvangen en gelezen. Na onze scheiding wens ik u voorspoed en geluk. Ik keur goed wat is afgesproken met Prof. Vissering, evenals wat is overeengekomen met Van Dijk met betrekking tot de lesprijs. Ik keur ook goed wat is gedaan met betrekking tot de woning en de prijs van 1200 gulden voor de heer Tsoeda en 1200 voor de heer Nisi. Tsoeda zal op 1 juli zijn intrek nemen in zijn woning. Uchida wenst dat dit zo spoedig mogelijk gebeurt."

[95] "Value of the Guilder versus Euro," historical prices and wages (hpw), International Institute of Social History, https://iisg.amsterdam/en/research/projects/hpw/calculate.php.

applies to Nishi Amane."[96] Thus, it seemed that the 1,200-guilder sum included a year's cost for everything.

Although whether the tuition fee was included or not was not directly mentioned in the letter, from a logical and statistical sense, it was likely included. First, it was unlikely for this Dutch person to agree an amount for tuition fees from Vissering and van Dijk, and then turn to Uchida without mentioning it. Second, according to the letters sent from Hoffmann to Vissering in the following years, Hoffmann transferred money to Vissering two times on behalf of Uchida. The first time was on July 31, 1863, for a sum of 1,000 guilders.[97] The second time was on July 9, 1864, also for a sum of 1,000 guilders.[98] Since the dates of these two identical transactions happened to be exactly a year apart, it resembled "the tuition fee payments for Nishi and Tsuda for the 1863-1864 academic year and the 1864-1865 academic year." In addition, these two payments were unlikely to be any kind gifts or bribes from Uchida. Because, in 1866, Uchida sent a sum of 300 guilders in addition with a chest of Japanese goods as gifts for Vissering via Hoffmann, in order to thank Vissering for his instructions for Nishi and Tsuda.[99] Vissering, however, rejected the money while accepting the goods with gratitude, because he "has never contracted this in advance with the Japanese gentleman."[100] Therefore, the collective costs for Nishi and Tsuda's study for a year was around 2,400 guilders, with 1,000 guilders attributed to Vissering's tuition fee, and 1,400 guilders attributed to all other costs such as the living expenses and the instruction fee for Meester van Dijk.

Hoffmann and the "Bunkyū delegation" in 1862

A noticeable phenomenon in Hoffmann's letters was, despite only being a translator and a university professor, he was appealing the national interests of the Netherlands to the highest government officials. In the ordinary sense, the Ministers of the nation should have the best conception of the national interests. However, as shown in his letters to Fransen van de Putte and N. W. Lockhorst, Hoffmann was emphasizing that the Netherlands will not be able to "reap

[96] Uchida Masao to Hoffmann, June 18, 1863, Hoffmann Manuscipten, call number SKR. 239 (9D).
[97] Hoffmann to Vissering, July 31, 1863, Leiden (Netherlands), in Ōkubo, *shiryō shūsei*, 182.
[98] Hoffmann to Vissering, July 9, 1864, Leiden (Netherlands), in Ōkubo, *shiryō shūsei*, 185.
[99] Uchida to Hoffmann, September 26, 1866, 's Hage (Netherlands), and Hoffmann to Vissering, October 2, 1866, Leiden (Netherlands), in Ōkubo, *shiryō shūsei*, 194-195.
[100] Vissering to Hoffmann, October 18, 1866, Leiden (Netherlands), in Ōkubo, *shiryō shūsei*, 196-197.

the honor of benevolently receiving the dearest sons of Japan" if the delegation was housed together with Pompe van Meerdervoort. It showed that Hoffmann always bear the national interest of the Netherlands in his mind. Under this context, this paper quotes Hoffmann's intriguing words that he wrote in the remaining part of his letter to N. W. Lockhorst:

> It was after a long conversation with Simodske Kami, the first envoy, that he wrote from Paris to Edo in April of last year, to direct the Japanese, who wished to go to Europe to read arts and sciences, to the Netherlands, and not to France, or England.
>
> Arriving here, part of the detachment has sacrificed its liberty to piety towards a questionable apprenticeship, a well-done misplacement in the character of these worthy young men, but I hope His Excellency the Minister of Colonies will be persuaded that this piety will not be detrimental to both physicians.[101]

By "Simodske Kami," Hoffmann was referring to Takenouchi Yasunori, the governor of the Shimotsuke province. Since "Kami" can be translated to "governor" in English, "Simodske Kami" was essentially Takenouchi Yasunori's post, or an honored noble title.

Takenouchi was the head of the "Bunkyū delegation," a Japanese diplomatic group which visited Europe between 1861 and 1862. this thirty-eight-person delegation was purely a diplomatic mission that spent a year visiting countries including France, Britain, Prussia, Russia, and the Netherlands. The primary mission for them was to delay the opening of the trade ports at Hyogo, Niigata, Edo, and Osaka as long as possible, but they also bore the missions to "investigate the situations of the barbarians" and to find a good destination for Nishi and Tsuda's in-depth study.[102] In June 1862, the "Bunkyū delegation" reached the Netherlands. Dutch King William III issued a decree in that month stating: "For the first time a company of His Majesty the Taikoen (Shogun) van Nippon visited the previously friendly Netherlands, a commission has been appointed by his majesty the king for the reception and conduct of that

[101] Hoffmann to Lockhorst, June 19. 1863, Hoffmann Manuscripten, call number SKR. 239 (9B). Original words in Dutch: "Het was na een lang onderhoud met Simodske Kami, den eersten gezant, dat deze in April van verleden jaar van Parijs uit naar Jedo schreef, om de Japanezen, die naar Europa wilden om kunsten en wetenschappen te leezen, naar Nederland, en niet naar Frankrijk of Engeland te zenden. Hier aangekomen, heeft een gedeelte van het detachement zijne vrijheid aan de pieteit jegens eenen vraagezen leermeerles opgeofferd, eene schoone rek in het karakter van deze zoo achtenswaardige jongelieden maar ik hoop dat zijne Excellentie de Minister van Kolonien wel zal bewerken, dat deze pieteit niet ten nadeele van de beide genees kundigen strekke."
[102] 菅井, "幕末における日蘭文化交流の一齣," 108-109.

country."[103] In this decree, J. M. Groot van Lynden was named as the president of the committee, J. W. Donker Caertiens as the East Indian Chief Attendee in Japan and Siam, G. C. C. Pels Rycken as the captain of the sea, N. C. Mulder as the emergency advisor from the Ministry of Colonies, and J. J. Hoffmann as the professor, and translator of the Japanese language for the Netherlands Indies Government.[104]

Before going further, a critical point that must be mentioned about this delegation was that, contrary to what Hoffmann claimed in his letter, existing historiography agreed that the "Bunkyū delegation" opposed the idea of sending Nishi and Tsuda to the Netherlands.[105] Their main supporting evidence came from Terashima Munenori, a member of this delegation who later accumulated much more fame than Takenouchi Yasunori by becoming the Foreign Minister of Imperial Japan and "the father of Japanese telegraphs." In his letter on September 25, 1862, Munenori wrote:

> Regarding the issue of Nishi and Tsuda to shift from visiting America to visiting the Netherlands…during my visit to Europe, I have come to know that there are no exceptional books available for purchase in Dutch. Even their own countrymen read mostly French and German books. Children also study French and German, and with no feels of shame for not knowing Dutch. Therefore, there are only a few writers in Dutch, and naturally, the availability of books in the Netherlands is scarce…Moreover, when we go abroad, there is not a single person who knows Dutch…In terms of influence, when compared to Britain, France, and Prussia, the Netherlands cannot match up to even 1%...Once in England and France, when we mentioned that we write and study in Dutch between conversations, many scholars raised their eyebrows upon hearing it, as if it was shameful to read Dutch books. Therefore, Tsuda and Nishi must never reach the Netherlands. On top of that, the Dutch are known for their timidity, as well as their high costs of living. They regard learning as lowly and contemptible, and associating it with common people. Therefore, both abovementioned people should never come to this country, and all the other countries are good. London is a very good choice, but Paris has the cheapest and the most plentiful published books.[106]

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[103] Decree by Willem III, Hoffmann Manuscripten, call number SKR. 239 (5). Original words in Dutch: "heeft voor het eerst een gezelschap van zijne majesteit den Taikoen van Nippon het voorende bevriende Nederland bezocht. Door zijne majesteit den koning is tot de ontvangst en het geleide van dat ze Lantschap een Commissie benoemd."
[104] Ibid.
[105] 狭间, "西周留学荷兰," 8.
[106] Terashima Munenori to Unnamed person, September 25, 1862, Russia, in Ōkubo, *shiryō shūsei*, 487-488. Original words in Japanese: "西、津田米行不相調して蘭行に辨すべき由被仰聞候得共、此節歐中巡視の上始て知る事あり、骨て和蘭へ参り 書を買んとするに、全備せる奇書一本も無之、且本國の人といへとも皆

Despite Munenori's interesting observations, his letter was in fact written a bit late: By September 25, Nishi and Tsuda were already on their journey from Nagasaki to Batavia. Therefore, some historians suggest that the objection came too late to alter Nishi and Tsuda's destination.[107] However, if one took Hoffmann's words into account, this argument might can be overturned.

Firstly, given the fact that the "Bunkyū delegation" only reached the Netherlands after visiting France and Britain, it should not be hard for the Japanese delegates, who were closely evaluating national powers, to find out immediately that the Netherlands was far weaker than France and Britain, just as Munenori did.[108] Therefore, as the official translator and a person who understood the situations of both Japan and the Netherlands, Hoffmann should be able to perceive and understand this sense of disappointment and scornfulness from the Japanese. This was also why Hoffmann wrote "not to France, or England" in the letter—the Japanese guests must have talked a lot about the advanced national powers of France and Britain with Hoffmann all along. Then, going back to interpret Hoffmann's beginning words if we deem it as trustworthy: after "a long conversation," Hoffmann managed to convince Takenouchi Yasunori to write a letter in April from Paris to Edo, directing Nishi and Tsuda to come to the Netherlands for study.[109] This meant that Hoffmann was already accompanying the delegation, or at least in touch with Takenouchi personally in France as early as April.

Sadly, after going through all the available diaries written by the Japanese delegates, there were no direct evidence to support that this was the case. For the only time Hoffmann was clearly mentioned, he was characterized as a "physician" who accompanied the group in

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佛書獨書等を讀、小児と雖も佛語獨語 を學ひ、蘭語を知らさるを不恥、故に蘭語にて著述する者偶ありといへとも、買て見る者なき程なれは自然書 も減し、其國外に出れは蘭語を知る者壹人もなく、實に微入申候、故に蘭には格別の書無之、強て尋れは 佛書抔を持來り、書買も自ら嘆居申候、又此地の諸學校に至り見れは書生の讀書は皆他國の書なり、其の他のハブリーキ等も甚小にして見るに堪へす、蘭の諸事を英佛獨に比すれは百分一より下るへし、故に生等帰朝 の後は再び初學の者に蘭をむるの意なしと存居候、曽て英佛の間にて我等蘭書を牘めりと云時、學者是を 聞て眉をひそめしこと多ければ後は是を恥て蘭書を読むといはす、故に津田、西決して和蘭へ到るへからす、 其上蘭人の性客にして膽小、國にして物質貴し、生等始て其學と人の賤きを知り、右兩氏決して此國へ到 るへからす、其他の皆佳なり、龍動甚宜し、但書の價巴里斯最廉にして著書最多し." 菅井, "幕末における日蘭文化交流の一齣," 109.

[107] 狭间, "西周留学荷兰," 8.

[108]武松, 大塚, *遣外使節日記纂輯第二* [A Summary of Envoy Diaries, Vol. 2] (東京: 日本史籍協会, 1929).

[109] Hoffmann to Lockhorst, June 19. 1863, Hoffmann Manuscripten, call number SKR. 239 (9B).

the Netherlands after they finished visiting the unique Dutch windmills. It was said that Hoffmann gave them in person the formal welcome letter of the Dutch King William III. In addition, Hoffmann gifted them with the moveable types that were sculpted with the names of all Japanese delegates, as well as a self-printed copy of an concurrent announcement from the authorities of the Chinese Taiping Rebellion.[110] Hoffmann was a master researcher in the Chinese language and he kept many self-copied manuscripts of the Taiping documents himself, some of them were still possessed by the Leiden University Library.[111] Since all Japanese nobles and samurais at this period were also masters of the Chinese language, this gift was more than reasonable. In fact, the Japanese delegates were all astounded by the exquisite quality of this gift, and Hoffmann's name had the unique honor to be recorded and praised in the diary as a foreigner.[112]

Another possible explanation why Hoffmann did not appear much in these diaries was the strict restrictions between the *Bakufu* officials. The daimyos (or landed nobles) and samurais in Japan had an impenetrable barrier in terms of power level under the *Bakufu* system, as the samurais cannot even talk directly with any daimyos except from going through this level system layer by layer. Within this context, the "Bunkyū delegation" was composed by three daimyos (including Takenouchi) and more than thirty samurais. Therefore, when they were abroad, the heading daimyos were likely to have the privilege to be housed separately and to receive guests privately, without the notice of the remaining members of the group. Still, with essentially no available sources from Takenouchi himself, including the letter in April that Hoffmann claimed, it is hard to cross-proving Hoffmann's statement from this angle.

However, this cross-reference can actually be achieved without the help of the Japanese accounts. After Hoffmann died in 1878, a eulogy was given upon his funeral. Within his eulogy it was said:

> The arrival of Japanese envoys in the Netherlands, England, and France in 1862, as well as the presence of Japanese individuals in Leiden and elsewhere in our nation, provided

[110] 大塚, *遣外使節日記纂輯第二,* 392-398.
[111] These manuscripts include "太平体制," "天条书," and "天父下凡诏书."
[112] 大塚, *遣外使節日記纂輯第二,* 392.

> ample opportunity for studying the spoken language. This was particularly advantageous since the Japanese residing in Europe represented both the educated elite and the lower social classes.
>
> The bustling activities surrounding the arrival of the diplomatic mission, the various troubles that ensued, the journeys to London and Paris, and the ceaseless official correspondence were far from being sources of pure enjoyment for a scholar seeking solitude. However, the trip to Paris in May 1862 brought some pleasure as it offered the chance to reunite with colleagues, such as Stanislas Julien and Leon Pagès, whom he had corresponded with for many years.[113]

According to the eulogy, Hoffmann travelled to London and Paris during this period, either due to his official job or his personal intentions to meet his colleagues. Nevertheless, he had plenty of chances to do what he claimed.

This then profoundly changes the existing historical interpretation that the "Bunkyū delegation" in general opposed sending Nishi and Tsuda to the Netherlands. The person who wrote the abovementioned fiercest objection letter, Terashima Munenori, despite his later fames, was only a translator in the group at the time. The only person Hoffmann needed to convince was Takenouchi Yasunori, the head ambassador and the highest noble in the group. If Takenouchi wrote to Edo that Nishi and Tsuda should go to the Netherlands, the trip was undoubtedly set into motion. This then means, that it was not due to any delays in communication did Nishi and Tsuda "accidentally" departed for the Netherlands—it was also rather illogical that such an important delegation can make such an error by miscommunicating with Edo on a pre-determined objective. On the other hand, this suggests that the credits for making Nishi and Tsuda's trip to the Netherlands a reality in the first place were now attributed almost entirely to J. J. Hoffmann as well, in addition to his credits to properly receive Nishi and Tsuda on the Dutch shores.

The Dutch Role in the Japanese *Bakumatsu*

Now, shifting back from the microscopical discussions on Hoffmann's efforts to make the study trip up and running. A rather broad but important question has yet to be answered for this paper: How did Nishi and Amane's trip fit into the national interests of the Netherlands

[113] H. Kern, "Levensbericht van J.J. Hoffmann" [Eulogy to J. J. Hoffmann], *Jaarboek van de Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen* (1878): 13-14.

during the Japanese *Bakumatsu*? To comprehend this question, one must shift its focus back in time to the 1840s.

In the beginning of this decade, Britain used its military power to forcefully open the gates of China in what was later characterized as The Opium War. With the Treaty of Nanjing being signed in 1842, Britain obtained Hong Kong and the rights to trade with China freely in five designated trade ports. In 1844, as a direct consequence of this unprecedented change in East Asia, King William II of the Netherlands wrote a letter directly to the Shogun, suggesting him to open Japan up for international trade. Contemporary historians believe that, rather than being a real suggestion that truly hoped Japan to end its seclusion for good, the letter was a forced move acting on behalf of the self-interests of the Netherlands. This was because the Netherlands was at then fearing that Britain would, after China, continue to go to war with Japan over the issue of free trade. Therefore, the sending of the letter lowered the risks for the Netherlands to lose its amicable relations with either Britain or Japan, by decreasing the chance that the Netherlands to be forced to take sides.[114] Therefore, before the Americans forced the opening of Japan in the 1850s, the Netherlands wished to maintain the 250-year-long monopoly over the Japanese trade despite its rather weak national power. In 1858, translated by J. J. Hoffmann, the "Ansei Treaties" was signed between these two nations. This marked the Netherlands' choice catch the tide by joining the other great powers to grasp trading profits under the new reality of an opened Japan. However, by doing this, the Dutch became another enemy of the "Joi" forces.

Choshu *Han* was a typical feudal domain that was engulfed in the "Joi" sentiments in the early 1860s. The lordship of Choshu was held by the Mori clan, a clan that had long been excluded from the central politics of Japan due to its failure in the power struggle with the Tokugawa clan in the 1600s. As a result, Choshu's stance had always been anti-*Bakufu* during *Bakumatsu.* When the *Bakufu* went down the road of "Kaikoku," Choshu was able to use its geographical advantage to block the pivotal Shimonseki Strait from western shipping. On July 11, 1863, roughly around the time when Nishi and Tsuda got settled in Leiden, Dutch steam-frigate

[114] Matsukata Fuyuko and Adam Clulow, "King Willem II's 1844 Letter to the Shogun 'Recommendation to Open the Country,'" *Monumenta Nipponica* 66, no. 1 (2011): 118-119.

"Medusa" under the command of Captain Casembroot steamed into the strait. On board the ship was the previously mentioned Dirk de Graeff van Polsbroek, who was on his way to Yokohama to become the new Consulate-General. Even though American and French ships have already been fired upon earlier by the Choshu forces, Casembroot chose to believe that the longstanding friendship between the two nations will prevent the Choshu cannons from roaring. However, Choshu forces fired the cannons with heavy firepower, and "Medusa" escaped with thirty-one holes, four killed, and five wounded. Van Polsbroek himself narrowly escaped from death.[115] After the incident, van Polsbroek exercised his power to use Dutch forces to quell the resistance of different local Japanese "Joi" forces in accordance with Britain, France, and the US, including the later retaliation against Choshu and the bombardment of Kagoshima against the Satsuma *Han*.[116]

In short, the Dutch actions in this period indicated that, its logic had always been to maximize the commercial profits from Japan. It showed neither deliberate ambitions nor unchanging stubbornness. Unlike Britain and France, which began to extensively support the opposing Japanese factions with military aid (Britain with Satsuma-Choshu and France with the *Bakufu*), the Dutch appeared to be rather shortsighted and concerned about the trade profits only.[117] Of course, that was mainly due to the insufficient national power of the Netherlands, but this attitude may have also discouraged the then chaotic Dutch Ministry of Colonies to make proper arrangements for students like Nishi and Tsuda, Ito and Hayashi, who obviously cannot provide any short-term yields. Hoffmann, on the contrary, took a step away from this kind of view. By calling them "the dearest sons of Japan," Hoffmann saw something much further and much deeper.[118] Although he did not mention it exactly by the word, he obviously perceived the immense cultural and intellectual effects that will be generated through this knowledge exchange. It was a concept that was so envisioning and ahead of age for the concurrent scope of

[115] "The Battle of the Straits of Shimonoséki July 16, 1863," On Deck!, Navy & Marine Living History Association. http://www.navyandmarine.org/ondeck/1863shimonoseki.htm.
[116] Kjeld Duits, "2. Dirk de Graeff van Polsbroek," People, From Dejima to Tokyo, https://www.dejima-tokyo.com/articles/54/dirk-de-graeff-van-polsbroek.
[117] Gordon Daniels, "The British Role in the Meiji Restoration: A Re-Interpretive Note," *Modern Asian Studies* 2, no. 4 (1968): 291–313.
[118] Hoffmann to Lockhorst, June 19. 1863, Hoffmann Manuscripten, call number SKR. 239 (9B).

affairs between Europe and East Asia, when most of these affairs were still be seen as "colonial matters" by the West.

A one-way education?

Despite all the previous discussions about how Nishi and Amane's trip was planned, conducted, and optimized, they did not change the basic appearance of the trip. No matter how Smart Nishi and Tsuda were, and how envisioning Hoffman was, the trip was still a one-way "transportation" of "western knowledge" to East Asia—and it might really be the case. However, this paper proposes that, despite its tininess, Nishi and Tsuda was able to induce "Asian effects" the other way around by permanently influencing the Vissering family.

To start with, the level of bond and friendship that was built between the two students and the Vissering family was undoubtful. As quoted, Vissering wrote "for that affection and friendship of which you have shown me and my family so much, I offer you my heartfelt thanks" in his farewell letter. Due to the location of instructions to be Vissering's house and the timeslot to be in the evenings, Nishi and Tsuda must have had extensive contact with Vissering's family members in the two-year learning process. Also, it was during the studying period, did the Vissering family took a heavy hit: According to the records at Erfgoed Leiden en Omstreken (Leiden Heritage and surroundings), Simon Vissering's younger son, Eduard Vissering, died in Leiden on January 25, 1864, at the age of one year and five months.[119] As weekly visitors to Vissering's house, Nishi and Tsuda very likely shared the grief with the family, which may have contributed to the formation of their bonds. Even after Nishi and Tsuda's return, they continued to refer to Vissering's family members frequently in their correspondences.[120] Especially in a letter in 1873, Nishi wrote to Vissering that "I wonder that your son has been so advanced in Chinese and Japanese languages, and I hope to see him here in Japan afterwards."[121]

By "your son," Nishi was referring to Willem Vissering (1851-1931), Simon Vissering's eldest son. Willem Vissering was later registered at Leiden University as a student of law on 25

[119] "Overlijdensakten 1864," Personen, Erfgoed Leiden en Omstreken, https://www.erfgoedleiden.nl/collecties/personen/zoek-op-personen/deeds/37adf359-608a-bf2d-a703-b4156e81d49e.
[120] Nishi to Vissering, February 6, 1866, Edo (Japan), in Ōkubo, *shiryō shūsei*, 193-194.
[121] Nishi to Vissering, February 23, 1873, Tokyo (Japan), in Ōkubo, *shiryō shūsei*, 205-206.

September 1869. He also became a student under J. J. Hoffmann as a trainee for translator. His doctoral thesis comprised a translation and study of a book on Chinese economics and was entitled: *On Chinese Currency: Coins and Paper Money*, for which he received his doctorate in Law on June 27, 1877. Despite his plans to work at the Dutch Consulate General in Yokohama, his personal reasons forbid him to do so, and he became a lawyer in Amsterdam, just like his father once did.[122] When Nishi and Tsuda visited his home, Willem was around 13 years old—a perfect age to build up a life interest. And, due to the absence of any signs of Asian interests before Nishi and Tsuda's arrival in Simon Vissering's previous works, one can only conclude that Nishi and Tsuda help facilitated Willem's Asian interests, perhaps along with the help of J. J. Hoffmann.

However, Vissering family's connection to East Asia did not end here. Gerard Vissering (1865-1937) was Simon Vissering's youngest son. He also studied law at Leiden University and later also became a lawyer in Amsterdam. Gerard later became the director of Amsterdamsche Bank in 1900 and then being appointed as the President of the Javasche Bank in 1906, the central bank of the Dutch East Indies. In October 1911, he was appointed as an adviser to the rank of second-degree mandarin by the Chinese imperial government to reform China's monetary system under the guideline of his own work, *On Chinese Currency*. However, just like how Nishi and Tsuda failed to save a collapsing regime by reforming at the last moment, the Chinese Empire collapsed in the next year. In 1912, Gerard Vissering was appointed as the President of De Nederlandsche Bank, a position he held until 1931. He is most remembered for his tenure in this role.[123]

Since it is now impossible to know how exactly Nishi and Tsuda interacted with the Vissering family in their house at Rapenburg 12, to what extent did the life trajectory of Willem Vissering and Gerard Vissering was reshaped by them was also unknown. Therefore, this paper merely provides a possible line to connect these dots of history.

[122] Kuiper, *The Early Dutch Sinologists (1854-1900)*, 80-81.
[123] "Vissering, Gerard (1865-1937)," Resources, Huygens Instituut, https://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/bwn1880-2000/lemmata/bwn3/vissering?MenuSize=S.

Conclusion

Needless to say, Nishi Amane and Tsuda Mamichi's journey to Leiden was an extraordinary page of history. Both students were able to overcome an enormously big cultural gap, while still managing to successfully bridge up over two centuries of academic gap between East Asia and the West. It was achieved through their unparalleled talents of learning, incomparable skills of adapting, and Simon Vissering's patient and nuanced ways of teaching. But more importantly, the immensely strong motivations behind the two students were the real backbone that supported them to complete the journey. Under the phenomenon that Japan was being outcasted by the superior military and political strengths of the western great powers, Nishi and Tsuda was able to extend their thoughts beyond the superficial and practical knowledges of war and production, to the fundamental disciplines and ideas that shaped the western society. For the *Bakufu,* their study result may not be more useful than the big warship that the naval students have purchased from the Netherlands, but their long-lasting influence was able to penetrate the barriers of regimes and nations.

However, the barriers of regimes and nations were able to disrupt the proper distributions of historical credits given to them. After the Battle of Shimonseki, the "Choshu Five" hastily ended their secret studies in University College London and returned to Choshu to struggle with the "Joi" sentiment in their domain. They did not achieve any notable academic achievements from this trip, yet they were able to secure prominent positions afterward thanks to the successful overthrow of the *Bakufu* by Satsuma and Choshu. Their successful political careers earned them the esteemed title of "Choshu Five." Today, if there has to be a choice, tourists or celebrities will likely choose to visit their monument in UCL instead of Vissering's house in Leiden, despite the vast difference between the true achievements at both spots. On the other hand, people with a nationality other than Japan will also be less likely to honor these spots. Figures like Simon Vissering and von Siebold had long been more familiar to the Japanese than they did to the Dutch or Germans. Perhaps the barriers of nations are too strong to be broken when things are to be traced backward.

Even though credits were given to the deserved people and the deserved place, such credits can quickly be concentrated to the people who were able to claim it. In the case of this paper, such credits were claimed by the professor and his two disciples, but were deprived from Johann Joseph Hoffmann, the person who did not participate in the teaching directly. As the real facilitator and director of this historic event from the start to the end, Hoffmann did not get what he deserved.

In a parallel way of comparison, the student delegations sent abroad by the *Bakufu* during its final years was by no means restricted to the one that came to the Netherlands, and students who had motivations as strong as Nishi and Amane were by no means few. A Japanese historian listed three cases in which the study did not go well: In the first case of Russia in 1866, conflicts broke out between the Russian consul Goskevich I. Antonovich and the Japanese students. The head of the student mission Sakuemon Yamauchi wrote that the academic guidance has not been provided as expected and he was "unaware of any arrangements concerning the accommodation requests made by the exchange students for the purpose of language improvement." In the second case of Britain, there was a lack of communication between the exchange students and their liaison, Reverend L.W. Loyd, a chaplain attached to the navy. Student Kaoru Hayashi wrote that he believed Loyd was taking advantage of their tuition fees for his own glory, who refused to separate accommodations for the students and indulged in luxuries and parties. In the end, the written and verbal disputes between the student group and Loyd developed into an audit in front of the British Foreign Minister. In the third case of France, a group of Britain-loving Japanese students quarreled with the French trainer Lieutenant Colonel Viret with nasty words every day.[124]

Thus, only in the case of the Netherlands did the *Bakufu* students saw a harmonic and effective experience. The Japanese historian attributed this credit to the "good and understanding" relationship between Japan and the Netherlands, without any references to Hoffmann.[125] Quite on the contrary, this paper shows that the Dutch government was almost going to make the same mistake of not providing separate accommodations, not assigning the

[124] 菅井, "幕末における日蘭文化交流の一齣," 119-120.
[125] Ibid, 120.

appropriate tutors, and not having a good communication regarding the Japanese students. All these mistakes were able to be averted thanks to the vision of a single person, J. J. Hoffmann.

Now, if one reviews the stone plague placing ceremony in 1997, all the speeches made by the Dutch and Japanese guests focused on either the story of the three "main characters" or the expectations for a better inter-governmental and international relationship.[126] And on the plague, there was no Hoffmann's name. Perhaps for governments and tourists, emphasizing the leading figures or the "heroes" can always achieve the maximum yield of political gains, profits, and joy. but history itself is always much more complicated. For every picture of history to be finished, it was always drawn by a lot while only signed by a few.

[126] 津田真道・西周顕彰委員会, *波濤を越えて,* 12-24.

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Appendix

Figure 3 Pirsch, Adolf. Portret van Simon Vissering, hoogleraar Staatshuishoudkunde en Curator te Leiden, 2000.

Figure 4 A group photo of the students, 津田真道関係文書 47-3, National Diet Library. Back row from left is Ito Genpaku, Hayashi Kenkai, Enomoto Takeaki, and Tsuda Mamichi. Front row from left is Sawa Tarozaemon, Akamatsu Noriyoshi, and Nishi Amane. Uchida Masao and Taguchi Shunpei were absent.

Figure 5 Portrait of J.J. Hoffmann, honorary professor of Chinese and Japanese Languages at Leiden, Portretcollectie van de East Asian Library, Leiden University Libraries.

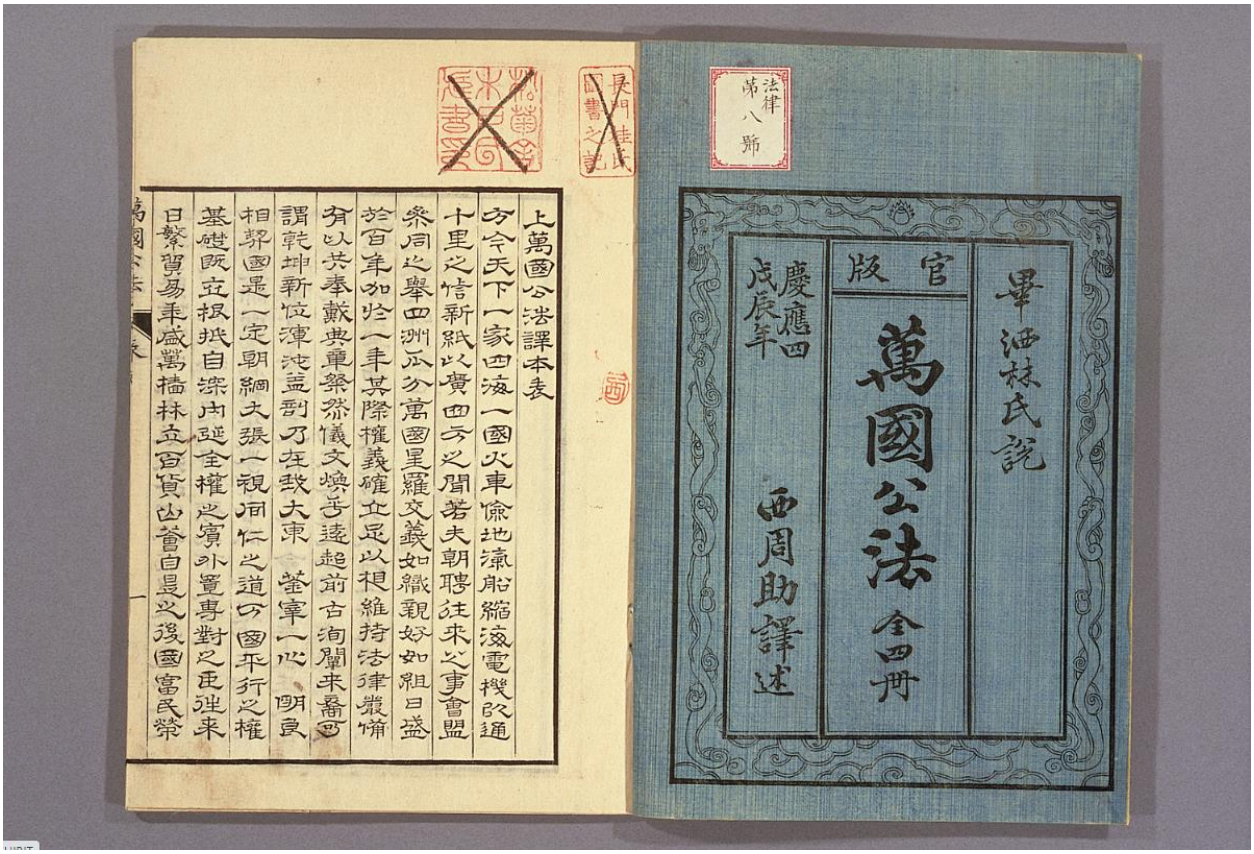

Figure 6 Simon Vissering, Bankoku kōhō, trans. Nishi Amane, 西周関係文書, 186, National Diet Library.

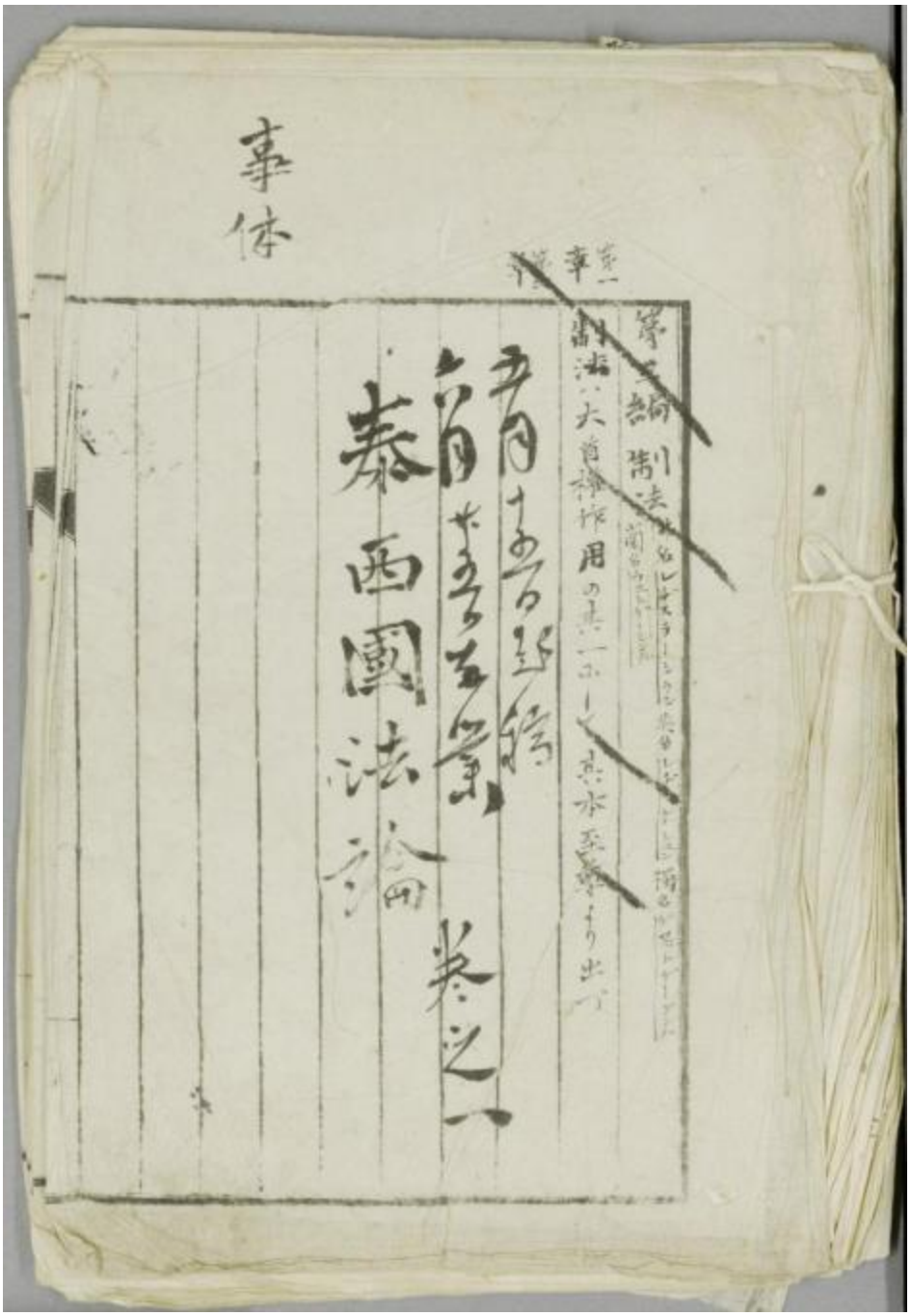

Figure 7 Simon Vissering, Taisei kokuhō ron, trans. Tsuda Mamichi, 津田真道関係文書 5, National Diet Library.

Figure 8 Portrait of Gerhard Hendrik Uhlenbeck, Dutch Minister of Colonies (1862-1863), De Lavieter & Co.

Figure 9 Portrait of Pompe van Meerdervoort, Japanese medical history