The double gaze in ethnographic museum exhibitions reflected through the Siebold collection

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Foreword

My interest in Japan has always been a present force in my life. On a personal level, I started with Aikido at a relatively young age and got inspired by the enthusiastic stories the teacher told during or after practice. During my bachelor, I had the opportunity to deep dive into this interest in the form of my bachelor thesis in which I discussed the internationalization of Aikido.

The master's program has given me the opportunity to broaden my knowledge of Japan to topics unfamiliar to me. I was able to learn about new aspects that sparked new interests. Courses on Japanese art, (international exchange of) material culture, and the decolonization of knowledge made me able to continue to build on the knowledge I acquired during my bachelor's. These courses also got me interested in the use of objects in museums and inspired me to start this research for my master's thesis.

I would like to thank my family and Sanne van de Haar for their continued support during my pursuit of my interests and the writing of this thesis. This research would not have been possible without Dr. Doreen Müller's inspiring classes on art and power and Dr. Ethan Mark's enriching classes about democratizing histories. These courses have inspired me the most to continue research combining these topics. For this research, I have spoken with the current curator, Dr. Daan Kok, and the previous curator of the Japan collection at the National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden, Prof. Dr. Matthi Forrer. I would like to thank them for their time and the large amount of information they generously provided me with to improve my research. Lastly, I would like to thank my thesis advisor Prof. Dr. Smits for his guidance and advice during my thesis research. Without his tips, patience, and help to organize my thoughts I am not sure whether I would have been able to complete this research.

I hope you enjoy reading this research.

Floor van Amsterdam

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Introduction

Museums have become an integral part of society and can cover a wide range of subjects. This makes them an interesting and important site to study. Most museums were made with political intentions of community forming or education.[1] Therefore, they should not be perceived as objective representations. It is important to consider the specific narrative of a museum in the context in which it was set up and what it tries to achieve.

In recent years, there has been a growing critique of ethnographic museums, especially regarding the problem of looted artifacts in museum collections and museums' roots in colonialism[2], fostering studies on such museums and their collections. Although this issue is far from resolved, this thesis will focus more on cultural representation and narrative in ethnographic museums. Museums, too, have a history. Taking this truism as cue, this thesis will focus on ethnographic museums and in particular use the permanent Japan exhibition at the Museum Volkenkunde in Leiden, The Netherlands, as a case study, to reflect on how 'Japan' was and is presented to a Dutch audience, in the nineteenth century and today.

To understand current representation and narratives in museums, we should look at the history of ethnographic museums in Europe, including their ties to colonialism. So, for context, I will start with a discussion on the beginning of ethnographic museums in Europe in the 19th century. This will include the founding of the museum Volkenkunde in Leiden, the Netherlands, as this is where the first Japanese ethnographic exhibition was held in Europe[3].

This thesis will answer the research question 'How did and does an ethnographic museum such as the Museum voor Volkenkunde in Leiden present 'Japan' to a Dutch audience, in the nineteenth century and today, and how do Japanese museum exhibitions react to this?'. Although the topic of cultural representation and the decolonization of museums is not new as researchers such as Mariko Murata[4] have already written about this topic, this thesis aims not to only find an understanding of the Western (or Dutch) representation of Japan, but also to analyze Japanese exhibitions about the Siebold collection. By analyzing these exhibitions, this thesis aims to find traces of ideas created by European countries that influenced the Japanese representation of the same

[1] Anderson 1983: 179
[2] Alberge 2019
[3] Effert 2003: 11
[4] For further readings on this topic I would recommend Murata, M. Decolonizing Museums; though exhibits/exhibitions" methods to deconstruct the 'Colonial Technology' Bulletin of the Faculty of Sociology, Kansai University vol.53 (2021, September): pp. 141-167.

event. This analysis will be done through the theory of the 'double gaze',[5] which in this context can be explained as Japanese presenting Japan in an interaction with the gaze of the West. This will contribute to our current understanding of museum exhibitions. Although it is known that museum exhibitions are always made with a certain narrative, influenced by the (political) aim of the museum, this understanding is not broad enough. With the double gaze, this research will look at how Japan's portrayal of its history is influenced by the Dutch representation of Japan in ethnographic museums. This research will focus on objects rather than art because it would make the discussion too broad to fit within one research paper.

This research will also include a discussion of the history of colonial activities and their relation to ethnographic collections. Understanding how the ethnographic collections came to be is vital for perceiving the present use of such collections. Most important will be the analysis of the concept of knowledge is power as was acted out through collecting objects from the colonized by the colonizer. Although Japan was not colonized by European empires, there were still power differences that need to be taken into account. Additionally, collecting strategies in colonies will be compared to collecting strategies and objectives in Japan.

Next, we will discuss museum representations of Japan outside of Japan. This will include reasons for Western interests in Japan and the purpose of Japan-related exhibitions. Important here was Siebold who set up the first ethnographic exhibition about Japan and its continuation in the National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden.

Lastly, non-Japanese representations of Japan will be compared to exhibitions in Japan about the same historical topic such as the trade relations between the Dutch and Japan. Using the theory of the 'double gaze' this research will argue that the cultural representation of Japan in Japanese museums has been influenced by Western ideas.

Although an objective answer is probably beyond the scope of this thesis, this research aims to show that colonial power structures influence cultural narratives at the level of museums and that awareness or framing of museum narratives in this light is useful for understanding how we build knowledge about cultures. This thesis will aim to form a critical analysis of cultural representation in ethnographic museums that will contribute to the decolonization of museums in Europe as well as the decolonization of knowledge.

[5] Starrs 2011

Literature review: ethnographic collecting in the nineteenth century

Before diving into the research question, it is important to look at previous research on similar topics. This gives an overview of the current discussion going on in this field of study and it makes clear what gaps should still be covered in new research. To start, we will have a look at previous research on the topic of ethnographic collecting.

Existing research of interest to this thesis includes Ter Keurs[6] work 'Collecting in the colony' in which he highlights the lack of attention to hybridity[7] in museums. He also discusses the division of collections and ethical policies for collecting. This article makes an interesting comparison to Kommers and Buskens'[8] article 'Dutch Anthropology in Indonesia' about the Dutch 'mission' of acquiring knowledge in their colony as well as the presentation of that knowledge. Additionally, Noor's[9] chapter 'Java as museum' continues the analysis of the Dutch activities and policies in Indonesia around the 19th and 20th century, then known as the Dutch East Indies. The book *Volkenkundig Verzamelen* by Effert[10] connects this discussion to the collecting activities and strategies of the Dutch in Japan during the 19th century. This literature will mainly be used in chapter one to gain a better understanding of how ethnographic collections were formed by the Dutch in order to better understand the context of the Siebold collection.

In his article, Ter Keurs raises three issues in the field of collecting as a part of anthropological discourse. First, he states that there has been inadequate attention to the problem of hybridity in museum collections. Second, there is a need for more research on the division of collections between museums in the Netherlands and Java. He adds that it is likely that some collectors circumvented official policies for regulating collecting activities. Finally, he argues that there should be more attention to the Ethical Policy at the time and its influence on collecting.

Ter Keurs starts with an introduction about the growing criticism of collecting activities in the past and the museum exhibitions they resulted in. He argues that collecting is never a neutral activity, especially in the context of colonialism where it is political. Collecting was also never random, he adds because external circumstances always colored choices as their available options were also not random[11]. He backs up this argument by stating that the local population was sometimes aware of the arrival of the Dutch collectors and prepared objects to sell to them and

[6] Ter Keurs 2009
[7] Hybridity in this context is the concept that there is no such thing as purity in an object, because they usually are influenced by different styles and materials from other areas and (sub)cultures.
[8] Kommers & Buskens 2007
[9] Noor 2016
[10] Effert 2003
[11] Ter Keurs 2009: 147

presented those objects as valuable[12]. He adds that this is more likely for early collections in The Dutch Indies.

Next, Ter Keurs explains the start of the critique of (colonial) collecting that gained momentum around the 1980s. Ter Keurs argues that colonial rule certainly had an impact on social and cultural production within colonies and that these power relations impact the interpretation of objects[13]. For example, Ter Keurs also states that at the time, hybrids were not considered to be good representations of a region's material culture as they were not 'pure.' Ter Keurs adds that data on the methods of collecting is absent, making it difficult to put all objects and knowledge into their context[14].

Representation of 'the Other' was usually typified and standardized and realistic representations were explicitly rejected in colonial texts. The Dutch were often the protagonists in their own stories about the colonies. Ter Keurs also uses this statement to stress the importance of museums in representing 'the Other' as well as discussing the context of their collections[15]. He argues that collecting was never neutral and always political as it is an (unequal) power relation between the collector and the owner or creator. Although both parties influenced the collection, in a colonial context this influence was asymmetrical.

While Ter Keurs offers a broad analysis of ethnographic collecting and museum exhibitions that resulted from them, other researchers such as Farish Noor[16] and Léon Buskens and Jean Kommers[17] specify this analysis as a case study.

In his chapter, Noor[18] focuses on Thomas Stamford Raffles (1781-1826) and his work in Indonesia. Raffles' book *The History of Java* (1817) was written and published after the British occupation of Java in the period 1811-1816, in between two longer periods of Dutch colonial rule in the area. Although Stamford Raffles is not Dutch, his book had a great impact on the Dutch colonial rule of Java and therefore also their collecting strategies. The book thus also indirectly influenced the Dutch collecting strategies in Japan and additionally, the book written by Siebold about Japan was likely inspired by *The History of Java*. The chapter starts with a short historical overview of colonial powers in Indonesia and a justification for the British occupation[19]. Next, he introduces Raffles, the

[12] Ter Keurs 2009: 148
[13] Ter Keurs 2009: 148
[14] Ter Keurs 2009: 150
[15] Ter Keurs 2009: 147
[16] Noor 2016
[17] Kommers & Buskens 2007
[18] Noor 2016: 68-70
[19] Noor 2016: 65-68

main focus of his research, and explains how he ended up in his position in Indonesia. Lastly, he discusses Stamford Raffles' motives behind writing the book and what he aimed to achieve with it.

Kommers and Buskens[20] argue that colonial politics play an important role in the international conversation about colonial knowledge, affecting the portrayal of Indonesian culture. The anthropological research of ethnographic particularism transformed into essentialist conceptions of what Indonesian culture and people were and how they should be dealt with.

All these sources deal with the concept of 'knowledge is power', mainly in the context of colonization. For example, 'Knowing the Native' was essential in the political rhetoric of the Dutch in Indonesia, as they used knowledge about people to acquire exclusive positions that extended their authority. This method was an essential part of colonial state formation[21]. However, scientific knowledge production was regulated by politics. Noor[22] adds to this with the example of the map made of Java for the book by Stamford Raffles. Although the intensively detailed map was presented as scientific, it was fundamentally a map of power and control. It showed every mountain and temple as well as the roads made by the British, showing the desire to show their progress on Java. Noor[23] continues that the mapping process neglected local epistemologies, geographies, and belief systems, stating their epistemic control over the island. Ter Keurs[24] adds that data on the methods of collecting is absent, making it difficult to put all objects and knowledge into their context.

Ethnographic collections in museums

Due to the complexity of the research question of this thesis, the literature review also has to cover multiple topics. The topic of collecting is important because it makes us able to form an understanding of how these ethnographic collections were formed. Additionally, it is equally important to discuss existing research on the topic of ethnographic museums (and exhibitions). Next, we will look at previous research that gives us a better understanding of ethnographic museums and how to critically analyze them. This is necessary in order to compare ethnographic exhibitions in the Netherlands and Japan which will be done through chapter three and four.

Lee[25] states that museums rely on the display of material objects to articulate abstract concepts and ideological positions about the culture in question. Case of Asia often objects stress antiquity, tradition, and refinement and are usually placed in a museum to contract Western society.

[20] Kommers & Buskens 2007: 352
[21] Kommers & Buskens 2007: 354
[22] Noor 2016: 84-85
[23] Noor 2016: 87
[24] Ter Keurs 2009: 150
[25] Lee 2016: 359

Perceived incompatibility with artificial autonomy in the development of artistic traditions in Asia and the West. These ideas representation evolved from a long complex history of East-West relations and ways of thinking about the purposes of museums. She[26] states that most ethnographic museums emerged during West colonial powers, under the rise of nationalism and the establishment of independent nation-states in Asia. Most objects were collected during travels, trade, diplomacy, research, or missionary work.

In his study of the National Museum of Ethnology in the Netherlands Effert[27] explains that the museum struggled with insufficient (storage) space and financial shortage. It was suggested to move the museum to The Hague or Amsterdam; however, this was opposed by the Leiden University as the academics stressed the scientific importance of the museum and the necessity for research of it being located in Leiden[28]. However, at the time there was no chair of general ethnology at Leiden University.

Effert[29] explains that the Dutch Society of Friends of Asiatic Art (De Vereniging van Vrienden der Aziatischen Kunst) was responsible for deciding which of the objects were art. This connects to Lee's main argument about Asian collections in encyclopedic museums. She states that Western museums had a preference for traditional works over works of recent times and presents them as art even though many of those objects were never made to have such particular aesthetic values in their native culture and only became art after being collected and displayed in a museum[30].

Lee[31] argues that common perceptions of Asia are found through the types of objects collected and displayed. Objects are used to display the place of origin. The clustering of objects suggests affinities; artistic, social, political, ethnic, or technological. However, the projected image of cohesion has traits of cultural essentialization through the selection of objects to stand for an entire artistic legacy of a place and time. She states that while the metonymic approach intends to make an unfamiliar subject more accessible to a general audience, it has timelessness if not inertia to the culture being represented. This was intensified by a preference for traditional art over works of recent times even though many of those objects were never made to have such particular aesthetic values in their native culture and only became art after being collected and displayed in a museum. This is in line with the argument made by Karatani[32] about Western perceptions of Japanese art. This

[26] Lee 2016: 359
[27] Effert 1992: 10
[28] Effert 1992: 11
[29] Effert 1992: 11
[30] Lee 2016: 359
[31] Lee 2016: 359
[32] Karatani 2001: 45

is what we should keep in mind when visiting an ethnographic exhibition. Who was involved in determining the cultural meanings of objects in museums and for what audience?

Effert[33] describes multiple attempts by Museum Committees or non-professionals with authority to reorganize the collection of the Ethnographic Museum which put researchers at a disadvantage while praising Josselin de Jong for his attempts to obstruct these plans through articles and criticism.

In another book, Effert[34] explains the emergence of the National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden through the creation of the Japan collection by J.F. Overmeer Fisscher (1800-1848), Jan Cock Blomhoff (1779-1853), and Siebold. He states that these three started an ethnographic collection that was encyclopedic[35]. He explains that their collection came with a catalog based on the order in which they wanted the objects to be shown in a museum exhibit[36]. This was the first exhibition so focused on Japan in the West.

Although Effert discusses all three of the famous collectors, for this research I will only focus on Siebold. He was sent to Japan to obtain knowledge about the utility of Japanese products. Although the Dutch government did not have a particular scientific interest in Japan at the time, due to Siebold's interest in natural history he started researching that as well[37]. Siebold's medical background gave him many privileges in Japan which he used for trade. Siebold stated that he aimed to create a perfect description of Japan and he focused on geographic and statistical overviews[38].

Effert[39] explains that the separation of Belgium from the Netherlands made a huge financial cut in the budget which withheld them from buying Siebold's collection in the first instance. Although the Dutch government eventually bought it, he was later criticized for not creating a catalog and only providing an inventory list[40].

Effert also states that Siebold's lack of interest in ethnology was evident from his collection as the origin and age of the objects in his collection are largely unknown[41]. However, his museum

[33] Effert 1992: 11-13
[34] Effert 2003
[35] Effert 2003: 64
[36] Effert 2003: 73
[37] Effert 2003: 119-20
[38] Effert 2003: 122
[39] Effert 2003: 127
[40] Effert 2003: 135
[41] Effert 2003: 136

exhibition still received a lot of praise with comments like 'Those who have been to this museum can say they have seen Japan'[42].

The argument by Lee of the idea of the clustering of objects in museum exhibitions suggests affinities can also be linked to the ideas discussed by Karatani[43]. Karatani discusses Fenollosa and Okakura's influence on the implementation of museum exhibitions about Japan. He[44] explains the Western (Hegelian) understanding of museums as showing the true essence (Geist) of a nation. Karatani states that Fenollosa took objects with a cultural function out of their cultural context and presented them in a museum as art[45]. This corresponds with the argument by Lee that objects in ethnographic museums were often displayed like art, rather than functional objects[46].

Although Okakura has the same ideas about the Geist of a nation that can be displayed through a chronological arrangement of objects, he tries to give Japan back its agency in the process while using Western thinking[47]. However, Lee criticizes the idea that this projected image of cohesion is true and argues that it has traits of cultural essentialization through the selection of objects to stand for an entire artistic legacy of a place and time[48].

As mentioned before, this research will use the concept of the 'double gaze' as used by Roy Starrs in his discussion of Japanese watching the West watching the Japanese. In his book, Starrs discusses the concept of modernity and how it cannot exist without tradition[49]. However, this creates the question of who gets to define what 'traditional' is for a nation. He discusses the forming of the nation of Japan and how the 'Other' has been an essential part of finding a national essence. This concept of the double gaze will return in both chapters three and four because it is the main concept of our comparison of ethnographic museum exhibitions.

Starrs uses the example of *seppuku*, or ritual suicide by cutting open one's belly. On a rare occasion in history performed by the elite class of the samurai in Japan, Starrs describes how a group of conscripted, non-samurai soldiers in late nineteenth-century Japan's modern army performed *seppuku*, in punishment of their killing a westerner, watched by western diplomat observers[50]. One of the observers reported this event as horrifying but also impressive. The report expressed

[42] Effert 2003: 139
[43] Karatani 2001
[44] Karatani 2001: 44
[45] Karatani 2001: 49
[46] Lee 2016: 362
[47] Karatani 2001: 46-48
[48] Lee 2016: 359
[49] Starrs 2011
[50] Starrs 2011: 43

admiration for these values of 'old Japan'. Starrs[51] sees this moment as symbolic: Japan's modernization in part took place through this concept of the 'double gaze': as the Japanese witnessed this admiration by the West for this gruesome act, they reacted by highlighting *seppuku* as a traditional part of Japanese culture, even though it had been only part of a minority of the elite group of the samurai, which social class had been abandoned at the time.

Starrs[52] argues that one cannot think of the 'Self' without considering the 'Other'. Just as individuals do, nations can never see themselves through their own eyes and need the 'Other' as a mirror through which they try to see and define themselves. This results in a mix of a nation's set of values and the set of values of the dominant 'Other', which could also possibly be a colonizer. Thus, the idea of *seppuku* being very Japanese is enhanced by validation through the 'double gaze'. The 'double gaze' in this context can thus be understood as a sort of internationalization of Western discourse.

[51] Starrs 2011: 50
[52] Starrs 2011: 51

Chapter One: Dutch ethnographic collecting

In this chapter, we will discuss ethnographic collecting activities by the Dutch. To start, we will analyze the Dutch collecting during their colonial rule in the Dutch Indies. However, this will also include Stamford Raffles, the British company man who oversaw Java during the short period of British rule in between longer periods of Dutch colonial rule in the area, because his writings had a big impact on the Dutch strategies. In order to answer our research question concerning ethnographic collections, it is important to start by looking at the process of collecting. To understand contemporary ethnographic museum exhibitions, we should look at how the collection was formed and what strategies, methods, and patterns were used in this process. An important reoccurring concept in the Dutch collecting strategies is the idea that knowledge is power.

A clear example of using knowledge as power is cartography which, just like collecting, in the West is linked to exploration and military power and conquest[53]. Stamford Raffles included a map in his book as a result of the excursions and surveys of his company on the island. It is acknowledged as one of the most impressive maps of Java until today[54]. Although the intensively detailed map was presented as scientific, it was fundamentally a map of power and control[55]. It showed every mountain and temple as well as the roads made by the British, showing the desire to show their progress on Java. The mapping process neglected local epistemologies, geographies, and belief systems, stating their epistemic control over the island[56]. Getting to know Java and being able to make claims about the land and its people was a process that relied on force and violence. The newspapers in Britain gloriously wrote about the victories of the UK over the Dutch and native rulers but left out how violent and brutal these events were[57].

However, the colonized people also had power over what was collected from them[58]. They would often prepare objects for the Dutch while hiding others. He argues that the Dutch were not aware of what was hidden from them and that the natives could and did manipulate researchers and collectors.

There is also much uncertainty surrounding the collecting circumstances in the Dutch colony. Descriptions in museums lacked information about military involvement[59]. Including personal motives of collectors. For example, wanting to send more objects to the museum in Leiden while

[53] Noor 2016: 81
[54] Noor 2016: 84
[55] Noor 2016: 84-85
[56] Noor 2016: 87
[57] Noor 2016: 90-91
[58] Ter Keurs 2009: 148
[59] Ter Keurs 2009: 156

aiming for a position there. The expeditions in which many objects were obtained usually had high costs, both financially as well as in human lives[60]. Those who died were usually forced laborers. Because the circumstances of collecting remain unclear, it is difficult to form a good reflection of history. Violence and use of force or authority to obtain collections can be expected on military expeditions as well as forced labor and casualties of indigenous people. adds that there were sometimes even complaints from collectors about the violent oppression of the colonies in which they were collecting[61]. This gives an indication of the (unequal) power relations that were at play during the period of collecting. Dutch colonial politics immersed in the international conversation about colonial knowledge[62], affecting the portrayal of Indonesian culture. The anthropological research of ethnographic particularism transformed into essentialist conceptions of what Indonesian culture and people were and how they should be dealt with.

Raffles wrote his book *The History of Java* as consolidation and perhaps even justification of British rule over Java. He tried to use the book to transform himself from a capitalist company man to a scholar who gathered knowledge to improve the economy of both the United Kingdom and more importantly, Java[63]. While doing this he referred to the natives as 'degenerate' and started the book with a simple explanation of the Javanese people with essential physical. Additionally, Raffles' racism was already evident from his work in the company which enforced racial distinctions in Java[64].

The Dutch were often the protagonists in their own stories about the colonies. They did this to stress the importance of museums in representing 'the Other' as well as discussing the context of their collections[65]. It shows the emphasis on the need of the colonizer to understand 'the Other' in order to deal with them, rather than for 'the Other' to be understood. This is a significant part of the concept of 'knowledge is power'. Collecting was never neutral and always political as it is an (unequal) power relation between the collector and the owner or creator. Although both parties influenced the collection, in a colonial context this influence was asymmetrical.

Representations of 'the Other' was usually typified and standardized and realistic representations were explicitly rejected in colonial texts[66]. Certain representatives of disciplines started to write literature about how to deal with the natives in daily life[67]. They wrote from a personal perspective in order not to threaten the privileges of the civil servants and their political

[60] Ter Keurs 2009: 156
[61] Ter Keurs 2009: 159
[62] Kommers & Buskens 2007: 352
[63] Noor 2016: 78
[64] Noor 2016: 80
[65] Ter Keurs 2009: 147
[66] Kommers & Buskens 2007: 361-62
[67] Kommers & Buskens 2007: 360

agenda. This is understandable when considering that anthropological research in Indonesia was mainly carried out on military missions and expeditions[68].

The recurring themes in these articles are the concept of 'knowledge is power', the motivations behind collecting, and influences on the collection, both by the collector as well as the seller. Understanding 'the Other' in order to gain more from them and maximize their own benefits. These discussed concepts can be compared to the Dutch collecting activities in Japan in the 19th century, which we will look at next.

[68] Kommers & Buskens 2007: 362

Chapter Two: Collecting in Japan: Siebold

Next, we will look at ethnographic collecting by the Netherlands in Japan. The two collecting tactics in Java and Japan can be compared because they were both carried out for the Dutch government during the same period in history. Through this comparison, we will gain a better understanding of how the Japanese ethnographic collection was creates and can later be better understood in current exhibitions.

The Netherlands and Japan have a long and special trading history which resulted in the first European public ethnographic exhibition about Japan in the Netherlands[69]. Between 1640 and 1854, the Dutch had an exclusive trading relationship with Japan which had closer their borders to the rest of the world. A small number of Dutch people were allowed to live on the artificial island of Deshima in the bay of Nagasaki[70]. From this island, they continued to trade with Japan and the Dutch also started collecting objects and information about Japan.

In the early nineteenth century, three men especially, among them Philipp Franz von Siebold (1796-1866),[71] were sent to Japan by the Dutch government also to collect a large amount of art, literature, and objects during their stay, which they brought back to the Netherlands. Although not all objects were obtained legally, as certain maps for example were prohibited to be obtained by the Dutch to prevent espionage, looting is not known to be a much-practiced method of collecting at that time in Japan. Therefore, this research will not cover looted artifacts, but rather the cultural representation through the artifacts in museums.

This research will focus on Siebold because of his major[72] contribution to the Japanese ethnographic collection in The Netherlands. Additionally, this collection is credited as the foundation of the National Museum of Ethnology in the Netherlands[73].

Philipp Franz von Siebold grew up in Würzburg, Germany where he later also studied medicine at the University. During his study, he lived with a professor who mentored him in his studies of anatomy, botany, and physics[74]. Siebold wanted to do natural history research in faraway lands and had Brazil in mind. However, a friend of his, Franz Harbaur, who worked at the Dutch health inspection, offered him the opportunity to apply for the position of military doctor in service

[69] Effert 2003: 11
[70] Kouwenhoven & Forrer 2000: 15-16
[71] The other two were Jan Cock Blomhoff (1779-1853) and J.F. van Overmeer Fisscher (1800-1848).
[72] In this context major indicates the quantity of objects in Siebold's collection
[73] Volkenkunde n.d.
[74] Kouwenhoven & Forrer 2003: 11-12

of the Dutch government in the East Indies. He got accepted and in 1822 the Dutch government assigned Siebold as a surgeon in the East Indies.

However, after a couple of months, he was relocated by the governor-general of the Dutch East Indies to Japan to work as a surgeon physician on Deshima[75]. Additionally, he received the task to obtain information on the laws and the form of state of Japan. His stay resulted in the exchange of knowledge about Japan and the West(ern medicine).

The governor general stated that the reason Siebold was chosen for this task was not only his capability as a physician but also his potential as a researcher and ability to obtain sought-after information[76]. However, Siebold was more interested in natural history than anthropological research[77]. This commission by the Dutch government was not only politically motivated but also intended to gain a better understanding of the people and culture of the country with which the Netherlands maintained exclusive trade relations. Due to this research becoming too broad, this thesis will not include an in-depth discussion of this exclusive trade relation[78]. Since Japan was interested in Western science, Siebold would be very useful for acquiring trade contacts. Additionally, the newly assigned Dutch chief Johan Willem de Sturler in Deshima also planned to have Siebold treat Japanese patients and teach Western methods of treatment to Japanese physicians in gratitude for the goodwill the Japanese had granted the Dutch for the past two centuries[79].

The Japanese physicians and scholars pretended to be assistant interpreters, as entering the island of Deshima was prohibited for everyone without good reason except prostitutes and translators. However, as the city governor noticed this, he arranged a permit for physicians as well to give them access to education[80]. This resulted in Siebold's house attracting many scholars who were taught about many disciplines in Dutch, the scientific language at the time (and place). However, he likely spent more time teaching than treating actual patients[81]. It is also unclear what the quality of his work was since he had very little experience besides his studies.

[75] Kouwenhoven & Forrer 2000: 9
[76] Kouwenhoven & Forrer 2000: 13
[77] Effert 2003: 119
[78] For more information on this topic, see Kouwenhoven, Arlette, & Forrer, Matthi. *Siebold en Japan: zijn leven en werk*. Leiden: Hotei. (2000)
[79] Kouwenhoven & Forrer 2000: 13
[80] Kouwenhoven & Forrer 2000: 20
[81] Kouwenhoven & Forrer 2000: 21

It is often stated that Siebold introduced Western medicine in Japan, but this is not true. Already in 1774, a book[82] on anatomy appeared in Japan which was a translation of a Dutch study by Johan Adam Kulmus (1689-1745). This study is regarded as the start of *rangaku*, Dutch sciences, in Japan[83]. However, Siebold did introduce new knowledge on the topic of Western medicine such as cataract surgery.

Because of his medical practices, Siebold was granted permission to leave the Deshima more often than other Dutchmen to treat Japanese patients and to find medical herbs in the area[84]. Additionally, due to the success of his teachings, he was granted permission in 1824 to establish a medical school in Nagasaki where he could teach those who weren't allowed on Deshima. Around this school as well as his house on Deshima he constructed a botanical garden in which he grew medical herbs that he imported from Java.

Japanese were forbidden to trade or gift books or materials with political, historical, or geographical contents to foreigners. Likewise prohibited were objects with religious, strategic, or ritual connotations, including related toys. Siebold, like his predecessors, had his students write about such prohibited topics as a part of their studies to obtain a 'physician degree'[85]. Because these texts were written in Dutch, not many supervising officers were able to understand the contents of these papers and those who did understand were likely willing to stay silent in exchange for some commodities.

Siebold was very much respected and even regarded as more talented than the other Dutch by some Japanese[86]. They valued his eagerness to learn about Japan. This opinion is well reflected in Kouwenhoven and Forrer's[87] book about Siebold and Japan. It is a positive summary of his activities is Japan and Europe. However, this positive attitude is likely due to the non-academic target audience of the book. Effert's dissertation[88] on the other hand is more critical about the motives behind collecting activities in Japan and does not center only around Siebold, but also other actors. He discusses the motivation and considerations made by collectors and people who handled the

[82] *Kaitai shinsho* 解体新書 ('A new book of anatomy').
[83] Kouwenhoven & Forrer 2000: 13
[84] Kouwenhoven & Forrer 2000: 24
[85] Kouwenhoven & Forrer 2000: 26
[86] Kouwenhoven & Forrer 2000: 30
[87] Kouwenhoven & Forrer 2000
[88] Effert 2003

collection in the Netherlands as well as their biases which creates an overview of personal motives as well as the political situation.

In 1823, Siebold sent a letter to the governor of Batavia requesting a draftsman, clerk and a physician to take over his work so he could completely focus on his word as a natural historian[89]. However, the former chief of Deshima thought Siebold's request for another physician was going too far as previous physicians never requested something similar. In 1825, two men were sent to Deshima, a pharmacist and someone in charge of drawings. With this, the chief sent a message urging Siebold to create an ethnographic collection[90].

Siebold had a different mission and way of collecting than his predecessors which can only be understood in the post-napoleon war political situation in Europe[91]. During this war, the Dutch colonies in Southeast Asia had a period of British occupation. At the time, Thomas Stanford Raffles (1781-182) had ruled over the Dutch Indies and acquired a better understanding of the area the Dutch had gotten in the two centuries prior. The success of his book The History of Java, which included a report of his natural historical collection, incited the Dutch to perform serious research on their colonies. This was likely the reason Siebold was asked to research the natural history of Japan[92]. Siebold even wrote in a letter to the Dutch government that during his first years in Japan, he had almost exclusively collected things related to natural history. It was only during the Hofreis he started to get interested in forming an ethnographic collection to describe the daily lives of the Japanese as well.

The hofreis

Although Siebold's' botanical collection was already flourishing in 1825, he started to focus on his ethnographic collecting only around 1826, the year he went on the *hofreis*[93]. For as long as the Dutch have had their exclusive trading relations with Japan, the chief was expected to visit the shogun in the capital city of Edo to pay their respects and give an update on their activities every year. After 1790, the *hofreis* was reduced to once every four years because it was such a long trip[9495]. This voyage was the only time these foreigners were able to see more of Japan and therefore it was the most important time to make precious additions to the ethnographic collection. A large part of the

[89] Kouwenhoven & Forrer 2000: 30
[90] Effert 2003: 120
[91] Forrer 2000: 166
[92] Forrer 2000: 166
[93] Kouwenhoven & Forrer 2000: 33
[94] The trip from Deshima to Edo and was around 2800 kilometers and took approximately three months
[95] Kouwenhoven & Forrer 2000: p33

Japanese ethnographic collection in the Netherlands was collected during the *hofreis*, giving it a great significance.

In 1826, Siebold was chosen as one of the two Dutchmen that were allowed to accompany the trading post's director to Edo. Kawahara Keiga (1786-1859) was appointed to make drawings during their travels. Furthermore, some of Siebold's students also joined them on their trip to Edo, during which they would prove to be very useful in acquiring additions to Siebold's collection[96]. Siebold was very well prepared for the trip himself as well. He brought instruments such as barometers and microscopes to continue his research along the way. Unfortunately for him, the Dutch were not allowed to stray from the assigned route, but this did not stop him from reporting on as many things as he could, from landscapes to the physical appearances of people[97]. His guards were probably convinced of his scientific intentions and often were not as strict with him. However, it is also stated that he paid an unannounced visit to an important magistrate, which earned Siebold a year of house arrest.

Siebold's fame had already spread beyond Nagasaki, which was especially visible during the *hofreis*, a trip made to Edo to pay respect to the shogun. His arrival at a village would be announced beforehand, so when he arrived people were waiting along the road to request his aid in treating people[98]. However, this would often result in misunderstandings, as the interpreters often didn't exactly understand what Siebold was saying and improvised part of the answer themselves.

Siebold stated that he did not want to discriminate the people he treated, because he wanted to help everyone. Instead of money in exchange for treatment, he asked for something to add to his collection[99]. This is part of the reason why he obtained so many objects during the *hofreis* as well as a way in which he received some extraordinary animals and materials. However, this process was not documented very well and resulted in uncertainty surrounding which objects were gifted and which were bought, as well as the antiquity and place of origin of some objects[100]. Back in Deshima, Siebold dedicated an entire floor of his house to storing his collection. It started off with mainly plants and herbs which seeds he tried to cultivate, but soon animals such as fish, birds, mammals, and insects were added[101]. Siebold also collected coins and books, which was a common

[96] Kouwenhoven & Forrer 2000: 33
[97] Kouwenhoven & Forrer 2000: 33-34
[98] Kouwenhoven & Forrer 2000: 30
[99] Kouwenhoven & Forrer 2000: 30
[100] Effert 2003: 123
[101]Kouwenhoven & Forrer 2000: 30

feature of collectors in the 18th century. Only during and after the *hofreis* would he start to obtain ethnographic objects more often.

Another benefit of the *hofreis* was that Siebold was able to buy things directly from those who produced them. Because the route between Nagasaki and Edo was predetermined, he could place an order on the way to Edo and pick it up on his way home[102]. Besides collecting objects, flora, and fauna, Siebold tried to document everything that happened in his journal.

When they arrived in Edo, they had to wait for some time before they were allowed an audience with the shogun. During this wait, they tried to meet up with other important people who were interested in the Netherlands such as the imperial physician, officers, and merchants[103]. When they were finally called upon to pay their respect to the shogun, Siebold described it as a festive event where unfortunately only the chief of Deshima was allowed to see the shogun. But afterward, the three delegates from Deshima were expected to also meet up with other dignitaries for the rest of the day[104]. While the other members of his party were discussing topics such as copper, Siebold tried to connect with scholars who showed him their work and took him to libraries. This is where he received much information about acupuncture, the Ainu language, and geography.

The 'Siebold incident'

In 1828, when Siebold had sent a ship with a part of his collection to Batavia when it got caught in a typhoon causing it to wreck on the beach of Nagasaki. Although most of the collection was still intact. It caught the attention of Japanese authorities who came to investigate and found forbidden wares onboard[105]. These forbidden wares were mainly maps and descriptions of the country. This event is often referred to as the 'Siebold incident'. Siebold was suspected of espionage and was eventually exiled from Japan. It is said that during his interrogation, Siebold never told the names of any of his accomplices, which earned him a lot of respect among the Japanese.

Although Siebold's collection is extraordinary, it is also important not to overstate his accomplishments. He is often praised for his good connections in Japan, while these connections were often recommended to him by his predecessors like Cock Blomhoff[106]. Additionally, it was not Siebold, but Blomhoff who should be credited for starting the new era of ethnographic collecting with the encyclopedic approach which can also be seen in Siebold's collection[107]. There is something

[102] Effert 2003: 71
[103] Kouwenhoven & Forrer 2000: 34
[104] Kouwenhoven & Forrer 2000: 37
[105] Kouwenhoven & Forrer 2000: 44-46
[106] Effert 2000: 123
[107] Effert 2000: 64

to be said for people who argue that Siebold's collection is not the 'best' Japanese collection in the National Museum of Ethnology, as Overmeer Fisscher had knowledge and a very large budget compared to Blomhoff and Siebold. Siebold is said to have benefitted and learned from the knowledge about Japan and collecting provided by Overmeer Fisscher[108].

Furthermore, it is also stated multiple times by Effert[109] and Kouwenhoven and Forrer[110], and Siebold himself who is quoted in these articles that he was primarily interested in natural history and not ethnology. Dr. Matthi Forrer was so kind to provide me with a document written by Siebold in 1828 for his higher-ups in Batavia, in which Siebold reports on his spending during his time in Japan, clearly showing his preference for natural history. Another research done for the International Symposium 'Siebold's vision of Japan'[111] states the distinction between commissioned paintings made of flora and fauna, which were made by first-rate painters, and illustrations of the rest of Japan which were often done by apprentices. This clearly shows Siebold's bias in his budget. When Siebold sold his collection, criticism also arose because he had not written a catalog, but only an inventory without a clear provenance and age of the objects[112]. This was probably because objects interested him less.

Lastly, Siebold's actions which resulted in the 'Siebold incident' resulted in damaged relations between the Netherlands and Japan and a decrease in trade. Some of his close contacts were convicted and their fate after Siebold left is unclear. However, it can be said that Siebold ruined the reputation he and his predecessors had built up, making it near impossible for his successors to form a comparable collection.

This chapter has given an overview of Siebold's activities during his time in Japan. He was commissioned by the Dutch government to gather information through an ethnographic collection in order to improve trade between the two countries. This is similar to the Dutch tactics in Java, except without colonial rule. However, this chapter also shows the sloppiness of Siebold in his collection due to personal interests. Next, we will look at what happened with Siebold's collection when it arrived in the Netherlands and how it ended up in the National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden, the Netherlands.

[108] Effert 2000: 123
[109] Effert 2000
[110] Kouwenhoven & Forrer 2000
[111] National Museum of Japanese History, & International Symposium 2015: 12
[112] Effert 2000: 135-36

Chapter Three: Ethnographic museums in the Netherlands: *Volkenkunde*

This chapter will discuss the founding of the National Museum of Ethnology[113] in the Netherlands. Now we understand the origin of the ethnographic Japanese collection, we will look at how it is used by the museum in an exhibition. This will provide us with an understanding of the first half of the 'Double Gaze': the gaze of the West in their ethnographic museum exhibition.

In July of 1830, Siebold arrived back in the Netherlands. Because collections of previous collectors in Japan were taking up most of the available space in museum depots, Siebold stored most of his collection at home where he organized and processed it[114]. In 1832 he opened up his collection for the public to see and similar to his time in Japan, his house became a gathering place for scholars.

Siebold's first intention for his collection was to create a trade exhibition, as he did not see the utility of ethnology[115]. This resulted in an encyclopedic exhibition of Japan that was credited for being so good that the visitors could say they had visited Japan. Siebold already stated his plans to extend his museum to more than just Japan and wanted to create a general ethnographic museum[116].

In 1837, the Dutch government finally bought Siebold's collection, but it stayed under his management until 1859. Siebold's collection was the foundation of the Ethnological Museum in Leiden, which was part of the National Museum of Antiquities from 1859 until 1864 when it became part of the National Museum of Ethnology[117]. However, in the 1880s there were multiple reports of the housing not being suited for a museum. The director, L. Serrurier (1847-1901), opted for the museum to be moved to The Hague or Amsterdam due to a lack of storage space and funding[118]. Although the Minister of Internal Affairs agreed, the Senate of the University of Leiden successfully opposed this proposal. They argued that the academic value of the Ethnographical Museum was vital to the university.

Serrurier could not accept the circumstances of the museum and left in 1896. J.D.E. Schmeltz (1830-1909) succeeded him. Schmeltz then continued to negotiate with the government on the

[113] This museum will also be referred to as museum Volkenkunde, the current name of the museum
[114] Kouwenhoven & Forrer 2000: 48, 52
[115] Effert 2000: 137-139
[116] Effert 2000: 129
[117] Effert 2000: 11
[118] Effert 1992: 10

shape and functioning of the ethnographical museum and concluded the collection largely was a 'piled-up chaos'[119]. During these negotiations, the museum could barely be visited by the public.

In this period, the study of ethnology was still a developing discipline, and the academic study of the collection was regarded as an important function of the museum[120]. It was argued that ethnology could provide the nation with knowledge in its favor, stressing the importance of the discipline and therefore stressing the importance of the Ethnological Museum staying in Leiden. In the 1920s De Josselin de Jong joined the museum debate and wrote critique of *De Vereeniging van Vrienden der Aziatischen Kunst*[121], a society that claimed authority in the distinction between art and amateur crafts. However, this source does not provide much information on the effects of these articles on the situation. De Josselin de Jong spoke often of 'the suffering of the National Museum of Ethnology' and argued that the society valued artistic values over academic understanding[122].

In 1931, the Academic Hospital's building became available to the museum, but due to a national economic crisis, it could not welcome the public until 1937[123]. To this day, the museum is still housed here. After the Second World War, a period of systematic collecting started, which was expressed through exhibitions that try to convey the atmosphere and location of the exhibited objects and provide knowledge about these regions.

In the 1990s the museum underwent a large renovation and the cramped collection was moved to big warehouses, photographed, and digitalized. In 2014 the museum fused with the Africa Museum and the Tropenmuseum, becoming the Museum of World Cultures[124]. Since this fusion, there has been more attention to the makers of the objects instead of the people who collected them.

Current Japan exhibition

The National Museum of Ethnology still has a permanent Japan exhibition (July 2023). It clearly pays tribute to the roots of the collection which lie in the Dutch presence on Deshima. Already in front of the exhibition hall, stands a large banner, promoting the newly restored folding screen by Kawahara Keiga that

Figure 1: The scale model of Deshima

[119] Effert 1992: 10
[120] Effert 1992: 11
[121] The Society of Friend of Asiatic Art
[122] Effert 1992: 11
[123] Volkenkunde n.d.
[124] Volkenkunde n.d.

shows the bay of Nagasaki with in the center the island of Deshima and Dutch ships. As one enters the Japan room, the visitor immediately comes eye to eye with a very large scale-model of Deshima and an explanation of the special trade relationship between Japan and the Netherlands. Behind the scale model plays a soundless film, showing what the reconstructed island of Deshima in Japan looks like in the present.

On the right of the scale model, is a showcase on the floor showing objects from the Dutch which were found on Deshima. This includes coins, shells, bones, pipes, ceramic spoons, bowls, and cups. A sign explains that in 1996, Nagasaki started to reconstruct the town of Deshima back at its original place. This 'tableware of the Dutch' was found during the construction work around the house of the chief. They date from the period that Blomhoff was the Dutch chief. On the face of it, these archeological finds are not about Japan and its culture, but they do underline for the visitor that 'Japan' here needs to be appreciated in the context of Dutch-Japanese relations.

When you continue into the room, as advertised, it shows the 8-panel folding screen of the bay of Nagasaki. The folding screen is the most recent addition to the Japan exhibition. On the website of the museum is a blog about the restoration process of the screen and the museum is clearly very proud of this project. The folding screen is enormous and I would argue it is even more of an eye-catcher than the scale model because of its size and placement about a meter above the ground, towering over the visitor. The sign next to it does not provide much information, but a QR-code to view the 'Deshima experience'. This code sends you to a website that starts with an introduction video about Deshima, showing the folding screen and the current bay of Nagasaki. It then has multiple options to choose from to get more information: Arrival in Nagasaki, Life in Deshima, Chinese influences, The *hofreis,* and the painter Kawahara Keiga. The website offers much information about the trade relationship between Japan and the Netherlands and shows objects which were collected by the Dutch and more paintings which depict the daily lives of the Dutch and Japanese at the time.

Figure 2: The restored folding screen by Kawahara Keiga

Not just the screen itself, but also the restoration process gets much attention in the exhibition. There is a short video showing the restorers at work while explaining what materials and

techniques were used during the restoration. There is also a sign that explains why the folding screen had to be restored and which company they had commissioned to do this.

Left to the folding screen are painters' supplies, a lacquer box, and a painting of a painter's studio interior by Kawahara Keiga, the same artist as the folding screen. The sign explains what materials are used in the objects and explains the common use of these objects with the painting as an example of a setting in which they were used.

On the other side is a wooden model of a Chinese ship. The sign explains that the trade with China was actually more important for Japan than trade with the Netherlands for Japan because it was much more frequent. Additionally, the sign also explains the *hofreis* which the Dutch delegates performed every four years. However, it does not state anything about the collecting activities along the way.

Facing the showcase of the folding screen is a showcase with a samurai harness, warrior dolls and weapons. On the side right of the harness hangs an assortment of tsuba, handguards used on katana, with a variety of designs. Very little is explained about these objects besides the short text for the children's interactive activity. On the wall facing the tsuba is a short explanation of the class society that existed in Japan since the end of the 16th century. Here it is explained that the warrior class was a form of nobility that could be inherited and that this class came with certain cultural expectations such as knowledge of Chinese literature, calligraphy, and tea ceremony besides fighting. Around the corner of this text are some cups and utensils which explained to be used in tea ceremonies. Additionally, a sign explains how a tea ceremony is performed.

Moving on, there is a showcase full of netsuke, a usually decorated piece of weight to hang things on people's belts due to the lack of pockets. It includes an elaborate explanation of why they were first made as something simple and useful and how they became more decorated and showed a sense of personal style and liking.

Behind the folding screen is a showcase with lacquerware and ceramics. There is a sign praising the 'high-minded craftmanship' of Japan. Above it is a text written in a large fond that roughly translates to 'We Japanese prefer ponderous splendor to superficial brilliance'.

In the Japan exhibition is also a corner about Ainu, an indigenous minority in Japan. Above a showcase with weaponry, pieces of clothing, utensils and boxes is a short introduction about this ethnic group and the recent revival of their culture which had been oppressed in Japan for a long time.

The three main contributors of the collection, Overmeer Fisscher, Blomhoff, and Siebold, all have their own small showcase to introduce them to the visitor. Blomhoff is presented as the chief of Deshima. It is explained that he was keen on getting scale models and was the first to get in contact with the painter Kawahara Keiga, a painter who worked a lot with the Dutch traders since then. Overmeer Fisscher is presented as the warehouse manager. It is explained that he was very keen on finding the best objects to illustrate Japanese culture and had a personal preference for handcrafts such as lacquerware and wickerwork. Siebold is presented as the physician. It is explained that he was sent to boost trade with Japan with his teachings of Western medicine. The text states that Siebold made himself known in Japan with his practices and teachings in medicine which became the foundation of the basic modern medicine in Japan as well as his daughter becoming the first female physician in Japan, it states that he collected a lot during the *hofreis*, but it does not state any specific focus or interests. The text provided by each collector is comparable in size to the text written for one of the other showcases about objects. However, more information about individual objects can be found as tablets can be found throughout the exhibition. The tablets show pictures of the objects in the showcases near it and visitors can tap on an object to view more information about it.

Figure 3: The showcase which is paired with the information about Siebold

However, knowing the history of issues with storage space, the exhibition seems to tell an incomplete story about Japan as well as about the collectors. Volkenkunde's intention to give more information about the producers than the collectors is very present in the Japan exhibition. Unfortunately, the origin of most objects was not documented very well,[125] resulting in mainly stories about the production process. Lee (2016, p359) also stated the difficulty of modern museums having to deal with their colonial history in their current representations of foreign regions. This might be part of the reason why this exhibition tries to focus on the production process and artists rather than

[125] Effert 2003: 123

the collector. However, it makes a strange contrast with the objects in exhibition focusing so much on Deshima and the story of the Dutch people in Japan. It should be acknowledged that in many present-day museums, a division exists between curators, who have specific content expertise, and exhibition designers, the people who determine what the exhibition looks like. This can make it more difficult to understand the intention of an exhibition as different parties have different perspectives on the matter.

The Japan exhibition is different from the other exhibitions in the ethnological museum. The exhibitions about other regions show objects from different ages and explain mainly about the dominant culture and production methods in that region. Meanwhile, the Japan exhibition delves deep into the relationship between the Netherlands and Japan. The standard Japan exhibition emphasizes the presence of the Dutch in Japan, unlike standard exhibitions about other countries or regions which focus more on the locals of that place. The Japan collection also functions like a time capsule, because it consists of many objects dating from, or collected in, a relatively short period of time, namely the first decades of the nineteenth century. Most objects were collected during the hofreis, meaning 1818, 1822, and 1826. Because the Dutch merchants would usually buy products directly from the producers during this trip, the objects were often not or barely used. They all went more or less to the same stores as they were recommended to them by their guides who sometimes would be paid by the stores to advertise for them. Additionally, it even shows Dutch objects found in Japan. So, the Japan exhibition has a very strong contrast against the rest of the museum.

To connect this to the concept of the ‘Double Gaze’, we will conclude by defining conceptions within this exhibition. The exhibition clearly revolves around Dutch history in Japan and the connection between these two countries through the island of Deshima. A somewhat romanticized story is told about their special relationship being driven by the Dutch interest in Japan, covering up most negative parts about carelessness and true motives for profit. The exhibition is largely romanticized and political events and circumstances surrounding the collection are barely talked about. Although the Siebold incident is mentioned, Siebold does not seem to be judged for it. These things are important to keep in mind when we will compare this to the ethnographic exhibitions in Japan. Lastly, the new strategy of the museum that aims to focus on the producers rather than the collectors is evident in the exhibition but somehow clashes with the stories of the shown objects.

Chapter Four: Siebold exhibitions in Japan

Not only Dutch, but also Japanese museums have shown an interest in the Siebold collection. Since the late 20th century there have been multiple exhibitions in Japanese museums using the Siebold collection. Because there have been so many exhibitions on Siebold, I will only name a couple of them which are either relevant to this research or have value in showing the variety of interests in the Siebold collection. In 1980, the Seibu Museum of Art organized an exhibition[126], including the paintings which Siebold had commissioned and brought to the Netherlands. In 1990, the Nagasaki Prefectural Art Museum organized an exhibition[127] about Siebold and especially his activities and experiences during the *hofreis*. In 1996, there were multiple exhibitions about Siebold. One about what Siebold collected in Japan which was shown in the Edo-Tokyo Museum in Tokyo and National Museum of Ethnology is Osaka. Another about how Siebold wanted to show Japan to the outside world which was exhibited in the Sakai City Museum. In 2002 there was an exhibition about the botanical art Siebold collected which was shown in several museums in Japan including the Agawa Museum of Art as well as the Odayaku Grand Gallery in Tokyo. In 2016 the Edo-Tokyo Museum showed an exhibition[128] that tried to go back and understand how Siebold had intended his collection to be presented in a museum.

The catalog of the exhibition[129] held in 2016 in Japan as stated above, states that it was Siebold's ambition to provide a comprehensive introduction to the culture of Japan for the West. It also states Siebold's active engagement with the organization of ethnographic exhibitions in Europe. He argued against depot exhibitions and only wanted a selected meaningful part of the objects on public display[130]. This was because he wanted to prevent museums from becoming a show stage and rather stay focused on scientific research. The catalog[131] also states that through these exhibitions Siebold hoped to prepare the West for meeting Japanese people and to recognize them as equal parts of the international community.

The exhibition in the Nagasaki Prefectural Art Museum[132] focuses more on the journey of Siebold from Deshima to Edo through objects in the collection made along the way. It represents

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[126] *Kawahara Keiga ten* 川原慶賀展、*Kawahara Keiga Exhibition 1980*

[127] *Nagasaki Dejima kara no tabi* 長崎出島からの旅。ヨーロッパ睡る日本の宝。シーボルト・コレクション、*The voyage from Deshima, Nagasaki. Japanese treasure lying in Europe. The Siebold Collection 1990*

[128] *Yomigaere! Shiiboruto to Nihon hakubutuskan* よみがえれ！シーボルトの日本博物館、*Revisiting Siebold's Japan Museum*, 2016

[129] Kokuritsu Rekishi Minzoku Hakubutsukan 2016: 3

[130] Kokuritsu Rekishi Minzoku Hakubutsukan 2016: 191-192

[131] Kokuritsu Rekishi Minzoku Hakubutsukan 2016: 192

[132] Siebold Council & Nagasaki prefectural Art Museum 1990: 3-5

Siebold as an important scholar who contributed to the modernization of Japan and amazed Japan with his energetic activities at the time. Although his true objective of gathering information is also briefly touched upon, it is clearly stated that he did not obtain illegal documents out of ill intentions, but purely out of interest in Japan as a whole[133]. Ernst Storm[134], the director of the national museum of ethnology in Leiden at the time, also stated in the catalog that the permanent exhibition of the Siebold collection was a symbol of the special relationship between the Netherlands and Nagasaki.

In 2014, a symposium was organized by the National Museum of Japanese History to report the findings on the Siebold collection in Europe as part of a bigger research project on materials collected in Japan throughout the 19th century that now reside overseas. Besides an overview of objects brought to Europe by Siebold, the report also includes a critical analysis of the objects which is compared to the way they were presented at the time. For this comparison, the National Museum of Japanese History focused on the final exhibition organized by Siebold himself in 1866. After his return to the Netherlands from Japan, he was involved in the making of exhibitions about Japan using his collection. This symposium, similar to the exhibition catalogs discussed before includes a lot of admiration for the variety and rarity of the object in the collection[135]. As well as admiration for Siebold's efforts in representing Japan in Europe through these highly valued objects.

However, the report also includes criticism of the quality as well as the knowledge presented with the objects. For example, some of the paintings were made by second-rate painters and raw textile materials without much value in Japanese society[136]. Additionally, he presented garments that were only used in ritualistic or theatrical contexts without explaining this context. There is also a case where Siebold modified clothing garments to make them look like pieces of the Buddhist altar and presented them as such[137].

However, for these misrepresentations of Japan, we should also keep in mind that Siebold was more interested in natural history and the flora and fauna of Japan than in the culture and arts of the country[138]. So, this could also be a desire for financial rewards as well as his focus on natural history over culture. As any researcher, Siebold had to reason why the objects he had collected were of importance in order for him to get funding for his research. Exoticizing and

[133] Siebold Council & Nagasaki prefectural Art Museum 1990: 10, 17
[134] Siebold Council & Nagasaki prefectural Art Museum 1990: 5
[135] National Museum of Japanese History 2015: 12
[136] National Museum of Japanese History 2015: 297, 351
[137] National Museum of Japanese History 2015: 355
[138] Effert 2003: 119

idealizing would certainly have been in his favor. This argument is backed up by the statement by Effert[139] where Overmeer Fisscher, one of the other persons sent to Japan to obtain information and objects, asked Siebold to estimate the value of his collection. Effert writes that although Siebold saw overlap with his own collection, he recommended to sell the collection for a high price since that would also raise the value of his own collection.

In line with my previous suggestion for ethnographic exhibitions about Japan through the Siebold collection, this report also states that this collection should not be viewed as a representation of Japan, but as Japan filtered through the eyes of Siebold[140].

The double gaze

In his book, Starrs[141] describes how the concept of *seppuku* became a national tradition in Japan through the 'double gaze' of the Japanese who identified themselves through the admiration of the West. It is obviously not the case that the Siebold collection became a form of traditional Japanese culture, but there is a clear romanticization of Siebold's interest and passion for Japan which can be compared to Starrs' theory of the double gaze.

The Dutch government had sent Siebold to obtain as much information as possible from Japan, because they had learned in Indonesia that knowledge was power, and that knowledge could boost their trade and thus their profit. Siebold was mainly interested in natural history, but also collected objects for an ethnographic collection. Back in the Netherlands Siebold wanted to show Japan to the Dutch people. However, as reported in the catalog of the 2016 exhibition, the exhibitions by Siebold exoticized Japan and often stated untrue information. The exhibitions in Japan often focus on Siebold's teachings of Western knowledge and his passion for Japan.

The political background of Siebold's actions is neglected for the most part in Japanese exhibitions, romanticizing Siebold's love for the country and his Japanese side of the family. There seems to be a preference for a problem-free presentation of the Dutch-Japanese history. Although Japanese exhibitions often do mention the 'Siebold-incident', it usually does not affect his good reputation, but rather emphasizes the sadness he felt when he was forced to leave his beloved Japan.

The sensationalizing of the objects in the Siebold collection is not only done in Europe but can also be seen in Japanese exhibitions about the Siebold collection. Interestingly, the context in which the Siebold collection took shape does not get much attention, nor do the more

[139] Effert 2003: 96
[140] National Museum of Japanese History 2015: 357
[141] Starrs 2011

problematic effects of the so-called Siebold Incident. That what caught the attention and admiration of the West also received recognition as being admirable by Japan. This shows again the argument which was also stated by Starrs[142] that one identifies themselves, and thus maybe also their history, through the 'Other'.

Not unlike Starrs'[143] discussion of the double gaze when discussing *seppuku*, this thesis does not intend to generalize the thought of all 'Japanese' on Siebold. The double gaze as discussed is recognizably present in this public museum exhibition. The admiration in the narrative seems to be amplified similar to how Starrs' describes *seppuku* has evolved through the double gaze. Museums are usually made with a certain political intention of community forming or education[144]. The National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden was founded to teach about other cultures, of which Japan was one of the first to be included. Japanese exhibitions using the Siebold collection show Western admiration for Japan which is certainly present in a way in the Dutch museum.

[142] Starrs 2011: 51
[143] Starrs 2011
[144] Anderson 1983: 79

Conclusion

This research about ethnographic exhibitions that make use of the Siebold collection started with a discussion of Dutch collecting in the Dutch Indies. We concluded that these activities were focused on 'knowing the native', in large part in order to improve colonial rule. In chapter two this strategy was connected the collecting activities in Japan as commissioned by the Dutch government. It focuses on the German physician Siebold who was tasked to collect information in Japan for the Netherlands. Even though he was mainly interested in natural history, he managed to establish a large (ethnographic) collection during his time in Japan. This collection became the foundation for the National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden.

In chapter three, the history and challenges of the National Museum of Ethnology in the Netherlands were discussed. This includes a discussion of the current Japan exhibition in the museum, which is a mix of objects that tell stories about the Dutch in Japan, and informative texts in the museum that try to focus on the producers and production process of the objects even though the collectors often poorly documented this.

The final chapter discusses exhibitions in Japanese museums using the Siebold collection. It discusses different focuses and narratives in the museum exhibition catalogs using the texts and images of the objects. Finally, this chapter connects the Japanese museum exhibitions to the theory of the 'Double Gaze' by Starrs (2011). This thesis aimed to formulate an answer to the question: How did and does an ethnographic museum such as the Museum voor Volkenkunde in Leiden present 'Japan' to a Dutch audience, in the nineteenth century and today, and how do Japanese museum exhibitions react to this? This research shows that in Japanese ethnographic museum exhibitions using the Siebold collection, the 'Double gaze' is present as the Western admiration seen in Siebold's work is amplified by the museums in Japan and again identifying this phenomenon through the 'Other'. The developments in museum studies of the past two decades that critically look at ethnographic collections through the lens of colonial heritage (and that are generally also present in discussions and presentations within the Ethnographic Museum in Leiden) seem less visible in the case of the Japan exhibition. One reason for this will be that Japan was never colonized by the Dutch and the historical situation is arguably different from for example Indonesia, even if the larger nineteenth-century framework applies to Siebold as well. However, it is interesting to see that in Japan, too, the tendency appears to be to present a more non-problematic and even romantic narrative on the basis of the Siebold collection.

Discussion

It should be acknowledged that this research only took into account the academic perspective of curators and not the perspectives of other people involved in the making of a museum exhibition. Curators do not design an exhibition by themselves, but multiple parties are involved in the process such as exhibition builders and marketing teams. These different parties have different jobs to fulfill and therefore want to have an exhibition look a certain way, making it impossible to present everything along the lines curators intended. The discussions in this thesis should be understood as a one-sided view of the complex interdisciplinary context of this topic. Further research into the different disciplines that relate to this topic would be beneficial in shaping a better understanding of it.

My research could be improved by talking with more people, for example, curators of the discussed exhibitions in Japan but also exhibition builders. Additionally, reading about an exhibition in a catalog is different from actually paying a first-hand visit to an exhibition.

This thesis could benefit from further interdisciplinary research, and I am very curious about the future findings on this topic. Museums are very interesting spaces because of their important role in public education and representation and there is still so much research to be done to understand the authority and impact of museums on society. people should be encouraged to think about museum exhibitions critically. Who was involved in the making of this, what are they trying to teach me and why do they want to teach people that, these are questions that should be further discussed when analyzing museum exhibitions.

Additionally, it would be interesting to have further research into similar case studies with different cultures or areas. It would be interesting to investigate how the double gaze could be evident in different cultural dynamics other than Japan or Western countries. I look forward to future discussions and findings on this topic.

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All pictures shown in this research were taken by Floor van Amsterdam at the National Museum of Ethnology Volkenkunde, Leiden, August 2023.