The original Deshima Dagregisters were written by many hands, as is the present publication. The idea to publish in translation the original marginal notes of the Deshima Dagregisters was not conceived overnight. In 1980 Leonard Blussé was invited on a research grant from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science to assist the editors and translators of the Deshima Diary project at Tokyo University. During the four months spent with Professors Kanai Madoka and Katō Eiichi at the Historiographical Institute it often came up how time-consuming the editing and translating of an unabridged and annotated source publication really was. From these talks and from conversations with Dr. Torii Yumiko and Professor Nagazumi Yōko, who both have a wide experience in using the VOC archives, Leonard Blussé received the impression that there was a great demand for a research aid aimed at rendering the general contents of the more than two hundred Deshima Diaries more readily accessible to readers, who did not necessarily have a working knowledge of Dutch.

Upon his return to the Netherlands the issue was taken up with Drs. Marius Roessingh and Dr. Margot van Opstall of the Algemeen Rijksarchief at the Hague and specialists in VOC history. When an attempt was made to calculate how much time it would take to make an index to all the diaries that were written from 1640 onwards, the thought struck that the opperhoofden or chiefs of the factory at Deshima surely must have had their own way of consulting the diaries. At this point Marius Roessingh proposed to do some ‘close reading’ of the regesten or marginalia, which from the 1670’s onwards were added by the factory chiefs as headings to each paragraph in the diaries. It soon became clear that these headings had been designed in order to facilitate the consultation of the diaries, and there was no reason why they should not be used again for that purpose.

Thanks to a generous grant from the Isaac Alfred Ailion Foundation a pilot project was started at the Centre for the History of European Expansion of Leiden University in late 1984 under the joint supervision of Dr. Van Opstall and Leonard Blussé. Two years later, when Drs. A.C.J. Vermeulen presented the first volume of The Deshima Dagregisters; the Original Tables of Contents 1680-1690, both Drs. Roessingh and Dr. Van Opstall had passed away under tragic circumstances. The response to the appearance of this research tool was overwhelming: not only was the first printing sold out within a few months, but also many useful comments were received from readers abroad. Many of these suggestions have been incorporated into the volumes that followed.

As shortcomings of the first two volumes covering the years 1680-1700 were singled out: the absence of dates of the journal in the margin; the frequency of underlined Dutch words, and the absence of characters for Japanese names. When, in 1988, Drs. P.G.E.I.J. van der Velde took over the task of Drs. Vermeulen, a few of these suggestions were immediately incorporated. Dates were added; the number of underlined Dutch words was reduced by replacing the functions which they denoted by the personal names of the people which held these functions; headings, which more or less reflected the rhythm of the life of the inhabitants of Deshima, like ‘Diary kept by opperhoofd ...’ ‘Court Journey,’ etc., were inserted. Other changes concerned splitting the personal names index into a Japanese and a Dutch index, and the rounding off of numbers after the decimal point with the exception of exchange rates.
The most fundamental change, however, reflected the actual use made of the Deshima Dagregisters series. While the series was originally conceived as a research tool for archival use, it turned out that many historians who have no ready access to the Archives in the Hague, or do not have sufficient command of Dutch to consult the original diaries, were using the series as a source calendar. In order to make the series more useful to this group it was decided to replace obscure entries such as 'reasons why,' 'thoughts about the subject,' 'what happened during the meeting,' 'the story concerning X' by the actual reasons, the concrete thoughts about the subject, what in fact happened during the meeting, and what the story was about. Moreover, marginalia were added to those parts of the text for which no original marginalia existed. Although even in its expanded form the series can never supplant the original diaries as a historical source, it has slowly become, in the words of one reviewer, a source in its own right.1

One main defect, however, remained. All Japanese personal and topographical names were still written in their VOC spelling. Although some of these names were readily recognizable, most of the time even the seasoned student of Japanese history had no idea where he was in Japan or whom he was reading about. At that point, Willem Remmelink, the director of the Japan-Netherlands Institute in Tokyo, who had from the beginning materially supported the project and taken care of the distribution of the Leiden edition in Japan, found a way to make good on his earlier promise to revise the index of Japanese personal and topographical names.

The simple revision of the index, however, proved to be a major piece of research in its own right and finally led to a complete overhaul of the text. After re-reading the text we decided that the diaries of the years 1700-1740 showed sufficient editorial consistency to be brought out in a definite version, even though some of the years between 1700 and 1710 did not yet fully attain to the standards which had evolved in the course of this project. The text covering the years 1680-1700 would have to be completely rewritten and we decided to leave that for a later occasion. As a result the present ‘Tokyo edition’ covers volumes III-VI of the Leiden Intercontinenta edition.

There are, however, important differences. First of all the Japanese names. The research to identify these names was carried out by Drs. R.C.J. Bachofner. Although the correct names of well-known persons or localities were quickly established, the identification of local notables in Nagasaki, the interpreters and common people, who wander through the diaries, proved to be nightmarishly complicated. We are extremely grateful to Professor Nakamura Tadashi of Kyushu University, who not only provided us with a number of crucial documents, but also had his seminar work on part of the list, which enabled us to double check our own findings. Once the majority of names had been identified we decided to incorporate these into the main text. This greatly improved the instant readability of the text, as if a veil had been lifted. We nevertheless decided to leave those names, which could not be positively identified in a Japanese source, in their VOC spelling. In the index, of course, the VOC form and the Japanese form, if identified, are both given. Characters have been added on a separate list. As in the Leiden edition, the indices of personal names and ship’s names refer to the full texts of the diaries themselves and not just to translated marginalia texts given here. The subject index refers to the marginalia only.

We further decided to reduce even more drastically the number of Dutch words. Accepted translations in English literature on the Tokugawa bureaucracy2 have replaced

expressions as tempelheer (commissioner of the tempels), grootrechter (Kyoto deputy), etc. We kept, however, such quintessential Deshima expressions as dwarskijker (metsuke) and stadsburgemeester (machtoshiyori) etc. We also turned keizer into Shogun and Dairi into Emperor. Contrary to what is sometimes maintained, the Dutch on Deshima were fully aware of the difference between the two. Finally, a greater number of names for piece goods and other merchandize has been turned into their English equivalent, if one could be found. We regret that there was no time to identify cryptic non-Japanese topographical names, especially the ports of origin of Chinese junks. In the glossary and indices, however, all original Dutch names together with their English or Japanese equivalents have been retained in order to help those wishing to consult the original diaries. Last but not least, the text was recast in a different layout in order to fit its enormous length into one volume that still might be carried by a researcher into the archives. The italicized numbers in the margin refer to the page numbers of the original diaries. The boldfaced numbers refer to the dates of the diary entry. The numbers in the indices also refer to the page numbers of the original diaries. In preparing this edition we found out that most of the dates in volume III (1700-1710) of the Leiden edition had been wrongly inserted by a quirky computer. This mistake has been repaired.

In one respect the present edition is less accurate than the Leiden edition. The original marginal notes sometimes run on over more than one page. In the Leiden edition the page break is always scrupulously indicated. In the present layout, however, this would have created many awkward line breaks in the middle of a sentence. Where possible we broke up the sentence into two independent sentences; in other cases we assigned the marginal note to the page on which it started, or, in some cases, to the page on which it ended. We felt that the concerns of readability outweighed those of literal accuracy in this case. In the same way we have somewhat retouched the text by removing stilted expressions and all too literal translations from the Dutch. Since the text had already gone through so many hands, a more thorough rewriting would have necessitated a retranslation of the original text. This, however, would have defeated the original aim of this publication. The marginalia remain a research tool and will never become a novel, although parts of it might be enjoyed as such.

The editors wish to thank all those who have given their time, suggestions and encouragement to this project. To use an expression from old-fashioned Japanese language primers: we pray for your continued patronage, for there are still more volumes to come.

Princeton and Tokyo
December 31, 1991

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