

European 18th century obstetrical pioneers in Japan – Corrected concordance between European and Japanese figures

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In our paper on the influence of European obstetrical pioneers in Japan,¹ we compared in Table 1 the figures in Hendrik van Deventer's *Nieuw Ligt* (edition 1765) and Smellie's *Anatomical Tables* (Dutch edition of 1765) with the woodcuts in Katakuro Kakuryō's *Sanka Hatsumō* (Enlightenment in Obstetrics, edition circa 1830, identical to the first 1799 edition) and stated that Katakura placed Van Deventer's figures in a more or less random sequence. This statement needs correction.

Recently, Professor Mori, head of the library of Nagasaki University, brought to notice that the Japanese woodcut depicted in Figure 1a of this paper¹ bears the number 19 on the upper side of the plate in the original Japanese text, and not the number 8 or 30 as might be expected from Table 1. The writings by Katakura, Van Deventer and Smellie were studied again together with professor Mori and this led to the following conclusions: the page numbers in Katakura's *Sanka Hatsumō* refer to both the left page and the following right page in a backward order (old Japanese writings, up to the Meiji era (1868–1912), were read backwards). In each Japanese paper in those days, the page number was placed in the centre of one piece of

paper and once folded the numbers appear on the left side of the left pages. The pages are in fact double leaves with a blank side both on the backside of the left and the right paper. These bifolia were bound together. Katakura xylographically printed four figures of Van Deventer on one piece of paper. Treatment of the paper in the manner mentioned above resulted in pages with two figures and a page number on the left pages. The last Van Deventer figure (number 38) was printed on the upper half of a right page (Katakura figure number 27 on page number 18). On the lower half of this page, a black rectangle is printed with the same size as the obstetrical prints.

Incorporation of these data in a corrected version of Table 1 leads to the conclusion that the concordance between the two series of obstetrical illustrations is not random at all but complete.

Reference

1. Van der Weiden RMF and Uhlenbeck GC. European eighteenth century obstetrical pioneers in Japan: a new light in the empire of the sun. *Journal of Medical Biography* 2010; 18: 99–101.

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Table 1. Corrected concordance between woodcuts in Katakura's *Sanka Hatsumō* (edition Edo, 1799) and engravings in Van Deventer's *Nieuw Ligt* (edition Amsterdam, 1765) and Smellie's *Anatomical Tables* (edition Amsterdam, 1765).

Katakura (Edo, 1799)	Katakura (Edo, 1799)	Smellie (Amsterdam, 1765)
Figure	Consecutive pages	Figure
Figure number in <i>Sanka Hatsumō</i>	.1 = upper half page .2 = lower half page	Figure number in the <i>Anatomical Tables</i> .
–	二 11.1	XVII
–	11.2	XVI
Katakura (Edo, 1799)	Katakura (Edo, 1799)	Van Deventer (Amsterdam, 1765)
Figure	Consecutive pages	Figure
Figure number on the upper side of the figure in <i>Sanka Hatsumō</i>	Four figures per page: .1 = left upper half page .2 = left lower half page .3 = right upper half page .4 = right lower half page	Figure number in <i>Nieuw Ligt</i> (consecutive sequence)
1	二 12.1	6 (1)
2	12.2	7 (2)
3	12.3	8 (3)
4	12.4	9 (4)
5	三 13.1	16 (5)
6	13.2	17 (6)
7	13.3	18 (7)
8	13.4	19 (8)
9	四 14.1	20 (9)
10	14.2	21 (10)
11	14.3	22 (11)
12	14.4	23 (12)
13	五 15.1	24 (13)
14	15.2	25 (14)
15	15.3	26 (15)
16	15.4	27 (16)
17	六 16.1	28 (17)
18	16.2	29 (18)
19	16.3	30 (19)
20	16.4	31 (20)
21	七 17.1	32 (21)
22	17.2	33 (22)
23	17.3	34 (23)
24	17.4	35 (24)
25	八 18.1	36 (25)
26	18.2	37 (26)
27	18.3	38 (27)