

PREFACE

A True Gentleman

I first met Blussé-san in the 1970s, at the meetings of the Nichiran Kōshōshi Kenkyūkai (the Japan Society for the Studies of Japan-Netherlands Relations) taking place at the Nichi-Ran Gakkai (het Japan-Nederland Instituut) in Yushima, Tokyo. The core members of the study group were current students of Iwao Seiichi at the University of Tokyo: Bitō Masahide, Kanai Madoka, and Morioka Yoshiko. Nagao-ka Shinjirō, a former student of Prof. Iwao at Taihoku (Taipei) Imperial University was another active participant. At that time, Blussé-san was working for the Diplomatic Record Office of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Not all members of the study group had studied German, and lacking a good structural foundation, their translations from Dutch to Japanese contained some errors. I joined this group of researchers under the recommendation of Prof. Iwao. Although I was much younger than the rest of the members, I was better equipped with language skills, from German courses at the College of General Education (the University of Tokyo) under the postwar School Education Act.

Being interested in overseas Chinese, Blussé-san had gone to meet Prof. Iwao, who had written *Nan'yō Nihonmachi no kenkyū* (Studies on Japanese trading communities in the "South Seas"). By that time, Blussé-san had studied both Chinese and Japanese and was perfectly capable of reading, writing, and speaking the two languages. Impressed with Blussé-san's linguistic competence and naturally friendly manner, as I remember, Iwao-sensei asked him to join the Nichiran Kōshōshi Kenkyūkai. I heard that Blussé-san had complained that the group's translations were full of mistakes, which may or may not be true. I have fond memories of Iwao-sensei's amity towards Blussé-san due to his intelligence as well as honesty and the encouragement he gave Blussé-san to strive hard to achieve his goals.

By the time Blussé-san left Japan, overseas travel for Japanese had been gradually liberalized. Many Japanese researchers flocked to the National Archives, The Hague with letters of reference addressed to Blussé-san. Though some of them had no Dutch language experience, I heard that Blussé-san always greeted them his gracious hospitality.

In 1986, my husband, Akira, was invited as a fellow to All Souls College, Oxford University for six months. On this occasion, Blussé-san made arrangements for Akira to spend another six months in the Netherlands, as a NIAS (Netherlands Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences) fellow. After everything had been arranged, Akira was diagnosed with cancer. I was concerned about Akira's condition particularly because he had only one kidney, the other having been removed due to a previous bout with tuberculosis. It seemed obvious that

he would have to stay in Tokyo, where he would be extremely busy presiding over various committees as a head of the Department as well as a chief of the board responsible for writing university entrance examination questions. With that in mind, his doctor advised me, to the contrary, that it might be better for him to spend his time just doing what he really loved to do. So we took his advice and decided to go abroad.

By the time we were ready to move from Oxford to NIAS, Akira's condition took a sharp turn for the worse. He was soon hospitalized at the Leiden Academic Hospital (present-day Leiden University Medical Centre). Thanks to Blussé-san's arrangements, Akira was attended by a doctor who had practiced judo in college and therefore had an interest in Japanese culture. Every afternoon, the doctor visited Akira wearing a pair of suits instead of a white coat. Since Akira had no problem communicating in English, he was able to chat with his doctor and enjoy his company.

Akira and I decided to return to Japan as soon as his condition stabilized. According to the plan, an ambulance would take Akira directly from the hospital to the airport and his doctor would drive me to the airport. Blussé-san offered to take me, but I told him that that was not necessary. On that same day, Blussé-san gave me a ride home to Wassenaar. When he dropped me off and was about to leave, I broke into tears. Blussé-san patted me gently and reassuringly. That night, just before bedtime, Blussé-san phoned me and said that he was sorry about what had happened earlier. I was deeply moved by his heartfelt concern, which was something befitting only a true gentleman. Nowadays, whenever Blussé-san and I meet each other, whether in the Netherlands or Tokyo, the friendship that was formed at that moment always enables us to enjoy ourselves all the more.

Blussé-san has always been dedicated to supporting foreign researchers visiting the Netherlands. This book is a collection of articles written by some who worked directly under his supervision, as well as some whom he graciously assisted in conducting research at certain times during their academic careers. I am always delightfully struck by his constant and tireless efforts to help and encourage younger generations of scholars "to strive hard to achieve their goals."

NAGAZUMI Yōko