Coeman, Portrait of Pieter Cnoll and his Family
The painting Portrait of Pieter Cnoll and his Family (also known as Cnoll and Lemons), done by the Dutch painter Jacob Coeman (fl. 1651-1676) who seemed specialized in portrait painting (see his Portrait of Johann Maetsuyker, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam) depicted a family scene of the first chief merchant Pieter Cnoll with his wife, two daughters and two Javanese servants.

A few exotic elements adorn the scene, such as the fan and dog held by Cnoll's daughter Catherine (as well as his wife), and the ivory box held by the other daughter Hester.

The family itself with its diverse members demonstrates the cultural mixture in Japan after the first official trade relations of the Netherlands and Japan in 1609: Pieter Cnoll was the first husband of Cornelia van Nijenroode’s (c. 1630-1692?) who was born on Hirado from a Dutch father, Cornelis van Nijenrode, stationed at the Dutch factory, and his Japanese concubine Surishia (as can be observed from her dark hair and flat facial outlines which are characteristic of East Asian ethnographic traits, in contrast to the brown hair, westernized face and high profile nose of her two daughters).

At the age of seven Cornelia was brought to Batavia, headquarters of the Dutch East India Company, where she became a prominent member of Java’s colonial high society. Meanwhile, she kept in touch with her Japanese mother on Hirado. After Cnoll’s death, Cornelia was a wealthy young widow, but made the mistake of remarrying a man named Bitter, who robbed her of her fortune after an almost endless legal divorce case.1

1 The life of Cornelia van Nijenroode see Leonard Blussé, Willem Remmelink, and Ivo Smits (eds). Bridging the Divide: 400 Years, the Netherlands and Japan. Leiden: Hotei; Hilversum: Teleac, 2000, 23.

Consulted Sources:


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