

List III: Michaelmas Term

HIU33123: *Rangaku*: Defining an Intellectual Movement in Tokugawa Japan

Assessment: End of term 2,000-word essay (100%)



Illustration from Ōtsuki Gentaku's *Kankai Ibun* ('Strange Tales of a Circumnavigation'), 1807

In Japan in the late eighteenth century, an intellectual movement emerged whose scholars used the label *Rangaku*, or 'Dutch Studies,' to describe their work. In 1815, one of the central figures in this group, Sugita Genpaku, completed his memoir, *Rangaku kotohajime* ('The Beginning of Dutch Studies'), which put forward an influential account of the movement's origins and its core motivations, members, concerns, and influence.

On this module, we will examine Sugita's written account alongside other textual and visual sources produced by 'Dutch Studies' scholars in Japan and now available in English. Asking what Sugita's version reveals and leaves out, this module explores what this distinct yet varied body of Japanese sources – ranging from a treatise on European art to an electrostatic generator – can tell us about broader changes in culture, life, and ways of thinking about nature and society in pre-1860s Japan.