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## PRESENTING THE MANUSCRIPT

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### SOME RESULTS OF THE ATTRIBUTION OF “HERBAL ILLUSTRATIONS” FROM THE COLLECTION OF DR. SIEBOLD *FLORA JAPONICA DELINEATIONIBUS*

There is a number of scientific-art collections of man-made depictions of plants in the manuscript collections of the Library of Botanical Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences [1]. These illustrations were made by remarkable naturalists and exceptional botanical artists in the 17th—19th centuries. One of the leading places among them is taken by the outstanding botanical iconography of the prominent explorer of Japan, Dr. Philipp Franz von Siebold (1796—1866). The collection, which Siebold took up for about 40 years, starting from 1824, bears the Latin name of *Flora Japonica delineationibus* [2] and contains 1,054 images. The quantity and scientific wealth of the materials, the artistic features of the images, the unique history of its formation, inextricable and various connections with place and time of birth and many historical personalities — all of these characteristics rank *Flora delineationibus* as an authentic monument of its epoch.

*Drawn Flora* is one complexly built organism, which, in spite of having been studied for rather long [3], conceals many unsolved “secrets”. The iconography of Siebold is heterogeneous in its make-up; several parts could be singled out — they have a certain wholeness and originality of their own, which demand an individual approach for their study. When it comes to particular images, they were made by several dozens of Japanese and European graphic artists, who did not always sign their works. The complicated situation of the establishment of the new Japanese botanical illustration, the widespread copying of the archetypes, obscure ownership history of many works, vague and even tangled circumstances of the admission of drawings into the collection, etc. — not infrequently all of the above notions make the detection of authorship of anonymous images a task with many unknown variables, which at times seems unsolvable. As a result the process of attribution proceeds rather slowly, and the names of illustrators and first owners of some of the works remain unidentified up to this day. With the current state of affairs, any clarification of the circumstances of the making and early ownership of particular images attains special

value. It is worth considering that in a number of cases specific work, which seemingly intends to target “the point fog dissipation”, reveals some common prospects, makes it possible to discover new substantial aspects of the materials and determine historical connections unknown until now. Thus, we believe that the attempt at the attribution of the images, making up the part of the collection referred to as “herbal illustrations”, has led to some interesting discoveries.

In the early 1990s we singled out the mentioned group, numbering 79 pieces, according to the sum total of indications typical for botanical images of the pre-Linnaeus era. These illustrations substantially differed from the “portraits”, created according to the principles of the new botany, the foundation for which was laid by the prominent Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus (1707—1778). In the middle of the 18th century the teaching of Linnaeus began its victorious march across Europe [4] and decidedly changed the status quo. The great reformer introduced a system of plant classification into scientific practice, and he also put forward clear and practical rules and standards of botanical works, which quickly gained foothold in scientific circles. On this new and fruitful basis botany embarked on the journey of studying the plant kingdom with much fervour. By that time (in stark opposition to the preceding time period) plants had become valuable scientific objects in and of themselves in the eyes of Europeans, that is, they were considered of interest *on their own* and independently of the level of their significance in the human life.

The aforementioned news of botanical science began slowly oozing into Japan, and this news was arriving sporadically and in piece-by-piece manner. They came in the country in a somewhat “veiled” form, as some end product of sorts. In other words, the introduction of Japanese naturalists to a new western botany was occurring when they got known some particular books. In these sources achievements of the Linnaeus taxonomy were being employed, but this foundation, however, was not explained in any way. So, “the rules of the game” remained unknown.