

Media release

A diary written by a young Swiss 150 years ago unveils many historical facts in Japan – translation of first volume of Brennwald Diary completed

Tokyo, June 29, 2011 – DKSH Japan K.K. (Head office: Minato-ku, Tokyo: President Dr. Peter Kaemmerer), the leading provider of Market Expansion Services, with the Yokohama Archives of History (located in Naka-ku, Yokohama, Kanagawa Pref.: Director Kazuo Ueyama) today hold a workshop regarding the Brennwald Diary Translation Project to commemorate the completion of the translation of the first volume.

The Brennwald Diary is a journal, consisting of 548 pages divided in five volumes, that Casper Brennwald wrote from 1862 to 1878. The translated first volume covers the period from December 1862 to August 1863. As the diary covers political events, social conditions, and trading transactions of raw silk, it is considered as a historical treasure in Japan.

At the workshop held at the Yokohama Archives of History today, eight project members including Naosuke Takamura, the ex-director of the Yokohama Archives of History, and Takeomi Nishikawa, deputy director of the Yokohama Archives of History, attended to present the historical facts and stories found in the diary during the translation process. From DKSH, Dr. Joerg Wolle, President & CEO of DKSH Group, and Dr. Peter Kaemmerer, President of DKSH Japan K.K., participated to express their gratitude to the project members for the hard work.

Dr. Joerg Wolle said: “It is very fascinating that the Brennwald diary is considered as historical treasure of Yokohama and that it is carefully studied by Japanese historians. I personally believe it is important that the diary will be preserved as historical evidence of Yokohama and not as company history only. I would like to thank the city of Yokohama and the project team for their constant research and studies.” And he added: “I personally like Japanese history and am interested to learn from the historical facts how our predecessor kept his passion for market expansions and committed to the industry and culture in Japan in those days. Nihon SiberHegner is a long-known name especially in Yokohama, however presumably with the same passion that Brennwald had, our company decided to become a real global company in 2002 to provide Market Expansion Services globally and help companies to grow their business in new and existing markets.”

Takeomi Nishikawa introduced historical facts from the diary in the following five areas: 1) Process for conclusion of the treaty of commerce between Switzerland and Japan, 2) Swiss merchant network in East Asia, 3) Varied commercial activity by Siber-Brennwald trading house, 4) Daily life of the foreign delegates in Japan, and 5) Derivation of Japanese commemoration days started in this period.

The translated Brennwald Diary is printed as a booklet and has been open to the public at the Yokohama Archives of History since May 11, 2011.

Outline of the Brennwald Diary translation project

The Brennwald diary is a journal and consists of 548 pages in five volumes that Casper Brennwald wrote over 16 years from October 1862 to February 1878. It covers political events, including the Japan-Swiss commerce treaty, social conditions, and trading transactions of raw silk, tea, etc. Casper Brennwald (a co-founder of DKSH Japan) was a member of the trade mission organized by the Swiss government in 1862 and was sent to Japan as Department of Commerce official. The journal also offers insights into the cosmopolitan nature of correspondence in those days conducted mainly in German, but also in French, English, Italian, and Dutch. Casper Brennwald arrived in Japan at the young age of 24.

The diary and related materials have been kept by the families of the company founders in Switzerland and the Swiss Confederates Archives. DKSH Japan cherishes the fact that the opening of Yokohama Port to foreign trade and the establishment of the company took place almost at the same time. Thus wishing to make a contribution to a historical discovery, DKSH, with the cooperation of the Yokohama Archives of History, started to translate the Brennwald diary in its entirety in March 2008.

The members of the translation team of the Brennwald diary are: Katsuhiko Ikawa, a professor of the Faculty of Literature at Japan Women's University, Naosuke Takamura, Ex-director of The Yokohama Archives of History, Taketomi Nishikawa, Deputy director of The Yokohama Archives of History, and seven others. The chief translator is Aya Ikuma (currently residing in Germany), who has been involved in the translation of many historical documents. The members get together periodically and verify historical background and translated words based on the translated text.

Profile: The Yokohama Archives of History

The Yokohama Archives of History was inaugurated on June 2, 1981, on the memorial day of the opening of Yokohama Port to foreign trade. It was founded principally to accommodate materials collected for the compilation of "The History of Yokohama" in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the port opening. This facility collects materials related to the history of Yokohama and makes them available to the general public for viewing and presentation through exhibitions and publications. The Archives aims to improve its collection of materials focusing from the mid-19th century to the Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923. Presently, it has collected over 250,000 materials including written records of official and private documents, newspapers, magazines, photographs, and Ukiyoe woodblock prints. The Yokohama Archives of History plays the role of "memory device of the modern city of Yokohama" to pass down the historical progress of Yokohama to the next generation.

Profile of DKSH

DKSH is the leading Market Expansion Services Group with a focus on Asia. As the term "Market Expansion Services" suggests, DKSH helps other companies and brands to grow their business in new or existing markets.

With 610 business locations in 35 countries – 20 of them in Europe and the Americas – and 22,500 specialized staff, it is one of the top 20 Swiss companies ranked by sales and employees. In 2010, DKSH generated annual gross revenues of CHF 10 billion.

About DKSH Japan K.K.

As one of the first foreign trading companies in Japan, DKSH Japan K.K. (until March 31, 2009 known as Nihon SiberHegner K.K) was established as Siber & Brennwald in Yokohama in 1865. For many years, the company was the largest exporter of raw silk and played a key role in making Japan into a raw silk kingdom. It also contributed to the installation of Japan's first gas lights, imported watches and machinery, and later also chemical and pharmaceutical raw materials. And in the following more than 140 years, DKSH Japan experienced and overcame difficult times such as the Great Kanto Earthquake and the Second World War.

Today, DKSH Japan has developed its business in Japan in three key areas, Luxury & Lifestyle, Performance Materials, and Technology.