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Banner calligraphy
Huai Su 懷素 (737–799), Tang calligrapher and Buddhist monk

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FORGOTTEN FOIBLES: LOVE AND THE DUTCH AT DEJIMA (1641–1854)

Frits Vos

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When, on August 24, 1609, the shōgun Tokugawa Ieyasu granted a group of Dutchmen a permit allowing them to trade on Japan a settlement — ‘factory’ in Dutch — of the East India Company was set up on Hiratojima1 to the West of Northern Kyūshū.

In the following three decades the Japanese policy of seclusion from the outside world was gradually tightened. In 1623, for instance, the Portuguese were placed under careful restriction and surveillance; one year later the Spaniards were banished from Japan, and no Japanese Christian was permitted to leave the country.2 In 1636 the Portuguese were consigned to Dejima, an artificial fan-shaped islet at Nagasaki which had been created by digging a ‘canal’ across a small peninsula which extended into the Bay of Nagasaki. On 22 October of the same year all Japanese women married to Portuguese3 and persons of mixed blood (even those whose grandfathers had been Portuguese or Spaniards) were deported to Macao.4 In the autumn of 1638 Portuguese commerce was still permitted, with certain restrictions, but in July and August 1639 the seclusion policy was fully implemented and only the Chinese and the Dutch were thenceforth allowed to have trade relations with the Land of the Rising Sun.

Similarly, in 1639 the Japanese government decided to send away all Dutch residents married to Japanese women and to banish children of Dutch descent and their mothers in Hirato and Nagasaki. The Dutch ship Breda leaving Hirato in October of the same year for Batavia took on board four Dutch families and three single women (widows or left by their husbands) with their four daughters.5

1 Although Hiratojima, the Isle of Hirato (‘Firando’ in old Dutch itineraries), and Dejima are generally transcribed as Hirado and deshima, we shall render these geographical names here in accordance with the local pronunciation.

2 Cf. G.K. Goodman, The Dutch Impact on Japan (1641–1853) (Leiden, 1967), p.11. In 1636 these instructions were reinforced and included the provision that no Japanese residing abroad were allowed to return. For the Japanese settlements in S.E. Asia vide Iwao Seiichi, Nanyō Nihon-machi no kenkyū (Iwanami shoten 1966), and cf. Murakami’s article quoted below, note 5.


4 Accounts differ, but it seems that four galliots conveyed 387 persons with their property to Macao. See, however, Goodman, p.11.

5 Vide N. Murakami, ‘The Japanese at Batavia in the XVIIth Century,’ in Monumenta Nipponica II (1939), pp.355–73. Murakami has carefully studied the faits et gestes of these and other Japanese or half-Japanese residents at Batavia. Very interesting is his list of ‘Marriages of Japanese Residents, Registered at the Church of Batavia, 1619–1656,’ in ibid., pp.365–70.
François Caron (ca. 1600–73), at the time Chief of the ‘factory’ at Hira-tojima, was married to a Japanese and had five children, but he got special permission to stay with his family on the island until he left in February 1641.6

On July 24, 1641, the Dutch settlement was moved to Dejima at Nagasaki.7 The first and fifth of the ‘Regulations concerning Dejima-machi’ which were posted at the small stone bridge connecting the islet with the shore read:

It is forbidden:
1. For women to enter with the exception of whores (keisei no hoka onna
tru koto)8
5. For Dutchmen to go outside Dejima without permission
(kotowari nakushite Oranda-jin Dejima yori soto e izuru koto).9

Although these regulations date from 1666, it will become clear from the following that the principles as such have been in force since 1641.

It is a moot point when prostitutes were allowed to visit Dejima for the first time. According to the Kiyō hiroku, ‘Confidential Records of Nagasaki’,10 the first visits coincided with the establishment of the licensed brothel quarter in Nagasaki (1642). From a passage in Valentijn’s monumental work we learn that these visits had become an established custom in 1649. The entry in question is entitled ‘Request of the Opperhoofd11 with regard to the whores’ and reads:

Since, on pain of corporal punishment, no decent women are allowed to come to us, the Opperhoofd requests that this may consequently be forbidden (at least during the time of commerce), [and] that common prostitutes (openbare juffers) may also be kept away, even though this would cost His Honor a great deal of money. The young servants of the Honorable Company, however, called this a praiseworthy action for persons advanced in years, deserving of a red letter in the almanac, but who seem to have forgotten that they were young themselves once.12

From the addition ‘at least during the time of commerce’ we many infer that Snoek did not make this request on purely moral grounds. It is a well-known fact that the Dutch used the harlots to smuggle fine goods into the city to be sold at high prices, partly from the commendable motive to cover the high fees and expensive presents requested by the ladies in question in return for their services.13

The prostitutes were procured by one of the Commissioners for Victualing (kaimono-tsukai). In the event of misconduct they were undressed, smeared with ink all over and chased off the island.14

An important exception to the — then unwritten — rule that no other women except prostitutes were allowed on the island was made in 1662 when 170 refugees from Formosa were permitted to take up their quarters at Dejima. Among them were three Dutch women, sixteen children, and some female slaves.15 This was, however, an exceptional act of temporary hospitality and reflects great credit upon the humanity of the Japanese authorities concerned. In the first half of the nineteenth century some Dutch women, Mrs Titia Cock Blomhoff (1817) and Mrs Mimi de Villeneuve (1829), came to Dejima to join their husbands but were resolutely turned back.16

Maruyama

As Maruyama was the licensed brothel quarter which provided the lonely Dutchmen at Dejima with sweet companions to while away their idle
hours, it is important to devote some attention here to its history and characteristics.

In the Bunroka era (1592–96) already, when Nagasaki had started to prosper as a business centre many ‘freelance’ prostitutes came from Hakata and at first they were scattered all over the city. In 1642 the Chief Administrator’s Office (bugyō-sho) collected these women and assigned them to Yorai-machi and Maruyama-machi, commonly called together ‘Maruyama’ or simply ‘Yama’. As Maruyama was actually a combination of two sub-wards, it was formerly also called Nichō-machi. Because of the closing of the country the majority of the brothels of Hakata were moved to Maruyama.

According to Hatakeyama Kizan’s Shikidō okagami (1678) there were 25 cities in Japan where licensed quarters had been established. Maruyama was considered to be no less than the Shin-Yoshiwara at Edo (modern Tōkyō), Shimmachi at Ōsaka, and Shimabara at Kyōto.

In former days revellers entered Maruyama over the Shiambashi ‘Rumination Bridge’ which is said to have derived its name from the fact that those intending to visit the gay quarter might reconsider there asking themselves: *iko ka, ikume ka* (‘Shall I go or shan’t I in Nagasaki dialect’). Shiambashi survives as the name of a streetcar terminal between Kajiya-machi and Moto iko ka, ikume ka, ‘Shall I go or shan’t I in Nagasaki dialect’.

20 Shiambashi survives as the name of a streetcar terminal between Kajiya-machi and Moto iko ka, ikume ka, ‘Shall I go or shan’t I in Nagasaki dialect’. Shimmachi at Ōsaka, and Shimabara at Kyōto.

21 In 1692 a peak of 1443 prostitutes was reached. The prosperity of Maruyama went up and down in proportion to the trade with China and Holland. At the end of the Edo period (1603–1868) business was slack, and in the Ansei era (1854–60) there were only 28 brothels with 487 girls.

The pensionnaires of the brothels were divided into three classes: tayū, mise, and namé.

22 In 1692 a peak of 1443 prostitutes was reached.

23 In the Tempo era (1830–44) the fee for a tayū amounted to 70 momme of silver which is in present-day money ca. 15,000 yen (some US$44.00). To this the costs of a sumptuous meal and other extras should be added, so that the actual price will easily have been three times as much.

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Because of the special conditions in Nagasaki the girls were — in contrast to the inhabitants of the licensed quarters in other cities — allowed to leave Maruyama. They were divided into three categories: Oranda-yuki ‘those going to the Dutch’, Kara-yuki, ‘those going to the Chinese’, and Nihon-yuki, ‘those going to the Japanese’. In the Meiji era (1868–1912) the term Kara-yukisan was applied to foreigners’ concubines in general.

In 1722 Kara-yuki paid 20,738 visits to the Chinese settlement, while Oranda-yuki paid 270 visits to Dejima. Ten years later these numbers were 24,644 and 399 respectively, in 1737 16,913 and 620.

Engelbert Kaempfer (1651–1716) and Carl Peter Thunberg (1743–1828), a German and a Swede who worked as physicians in the service of the Dutch East India Company on Dejima in 1691–92 and 1775–76 respectively, have left us descriptions of Maruyama. In Kaempfer’s monumental work we read:

That part of the Town (Nagasaki), where they (the brothels) stand, is called Kesiematz (= keisei-machi), that is, the Bowdy Houses Quarters. It lies to the South, he was called kapitān (from Port. capitão). The Oppermoorff in question was Dirk Snoek (1649).
on a rising hill, call’d Mariam (= Maruyama). It consists, according to the Japa-
nese, of two Streets, which an European would be apt to mistake for more,
and which contain the handsomest private buildings of the whole Town, all
inhabited by Bawds. This and another Place in the Province Tsikusen\(^{32}\) tho’
not so famous are the two only Mariams, as they call them, or publick Stews,
in Saikō\(^{7} (= Saikō, i.e. Kyūshū), where the poor People of this Island, which
produces the greatest beauties of all Japan, (the Women of Miaco = Miyako,
i.e. Kyōto) only excepted, who are said to exceed them) can dispose of their
Daughters this way, provided they be handsome and well-shap’d.

The place accordingly is extraordinary well furnish’d, and after that of Miaco
the most famous of the thole [sic] Empire, the Trade being much more profit-
able here than it is any where else, not only because of the great number of
foreigners, Nagasaki being the only place where they have leave to come to, but
also on account of the Inhabitants themselves, who are said to be the greatest
Debauchees and lewdest people in the Empire. The Girls are purchas’d from
their Parents, when very young. The price varies in proportion to their beauty,
and the number of years agreed for, which is generally speaking, ten or twenty,
more or less. Every Bawd keeps as many as he is able, in one house together,
from seven to thirty. They are very commodiously lodg’d in handsome apart-
ments, and great care is taken to teach them to dance, sing, play upon musical
Instruments, to write Letters, and in all other respects to qualify them for the
way of life they are oblig’d to lead. The old ones being more skilful and expert,
instruc the young ones, and these in their turn serve them as their mistresses.
Those who make considerable improvements in what they are taught, and for
their beauty, and agreeable behaviour, are oftner sent for, to the great advan-
tage of their masters, are also by him accommodated in cloaths and lodging,
all at the expence of their lovers, who must pay so much the dearer for their
favours. The price paid to their Landlord, is from one Maas to two liźebi\(^{20}\) for
a night, beyond which they are forbid to ask, under severe penalties. One of the
sortest, and almost born by too much use, must watch the house overnight, in
a small room adjoining to the door, where any passenger may have to do with
her, paying but one Maas. Others are sentenc’d to keep the watch by way of pun-
ishment for the misbehaviour. After having serv’d their time if they are mar-
ried, they pass among the common people for honest women, the guilt of their
past life being by no means laid to their charge, but to that of their parents and
relations, who sold them for so scandalous a way of getting a livelihood in their
Infancy, before they were able to chuse a more honest one. Besides, as they are
generally well bred, this makes it less difficult for them to get husbands. The
Bawds on the contrary, tho’ possess’d of never so plentiful an estate, are for
ever denied admittance in honest companies. They call them by the scandalous
name of Katsuwa\(^{4}\), which signifies the very worst kind of Rabble, and put them
upon the same foot with the Jetta (= eta), or Leather-Tanners, the infamous sort
of people in their opinion, who are oblig’d in this country to do the office of
publick Executioners, and to live out of the town, in a separate village, not far
from the place of Execution. The Bawds are oblig’d also to send their own serv-
ants, to assist the Jetta at all publick executions, or to hire other people to do it.\(^{35}\)

They (i.e. the Commissioners for Victualing) also take care to furnish our people
on demand with whores, and truly our young sailors unacquainted, as they
commonly are, with the virtue of temperance, are not asham’d to spend five
Rix-dollars (Dutch: rijksdaalders) for on night’s pleasure, and with such wenches
too, whom a native of Nagasaki could have for about two or three Maas, they
being none of the best and handsomest. Nor does the Bawd get more than a
Siunome, being about one third of the money, the rest is laid up in cash of this company for their own private use, and as they pretend, to hire proper servants, to conduct the damsels over to our Island.46

Thunberg gives the following account of Maruyama:

In most of the Japanese towns there are commonly, in some particular street, several houses dedicated to the worship of the Cyprian Goddess, for the amusement of travellers and others. The town of Nagasaki is no exception in this respect, it affords opportunities to the Dutch and Chinese of spending their money in no very reputable manner. If any one desires a companion in his retirement, he makes it known to a certain man, who goes to the island every day for this purpose. This fellow before the evening procures a girl, that is attended by a little servant-maid generally known under the denomination of a Kabro,37 who fetches daily from the town all her mistress’s victuals and drink, dresses her victuals, makes tea, &c. keeps everything clean and in order, and runs on errands. One of these female companions cannot be kept less than three days, but she may be kept as long as one pleases, a year, or even several years together. After a shorter or longer time too, one is at liberty to change, but in that case the lady must appear every day at the town gate, and inform the banjoses whether she means to continue on the island or not. For every day eight mas38 is paid to the lady’s husband;46 and to herself, exclusive of her maintenance, presents are sometimes made of silk gowns, girdles, head ornaments etc.

Without doubt, the Christians, who are enlightened by religion and morality, ought not to degrade themselves by a vicious intercourse with the unfortunate young women of this country. But the Japanese themselves, being Heathens, do not look upon lasciviousness as a vice, and least of all in such places as are protected by the laws and the government. Houses of this kind therefore are not considered as an infamous resort, or improper places of rendezvous. They are often frequented by the better sort of people, who wish to treat their friends with sakki (=sake). Nevertheless, the institution carries on its very face that which is derogatory to human nature, and even to the least polished manners. Parents that are poor, and have more girls than they are able to maintain, sell them to one of these fellows at the age of four years and more. During their infancy they serve as maids to the house, and particularly to wait on the elder ladies, each of whom has her own girl to attend her. When one of these damsels arrives at the age of twelve, fifteen or sixteen, she is then, with much festivity, and frequently at the expense of her on whom she waited the preceding years, to be one of those ladies that are exempt from waiting on others, or from any kind of employment. It very seldom happens that one of these ladies proves pregnant by any of the Europeans; but if such a thing happens, it was supposed that the child, especially if it were a boy, would be murdered. Others again assured me, that such children were narrowly watched till the age of fifteen, and then were sent with the ships to Batavia, but I cannot believe the Japanese to be inhuman enough for the former procedure, nor is there any instance of the latter taking place. During my stay in this country, I saw a girl of about six years of age, who very much resembled her father, a European, and remained with him on our small island the whole year through.41

Many senryū, satirical verses, have been composed on the subject of Maruyama’s fair inhabitants.44 I include here six examples:

Maruyama no
keisei fune wo
katamukeru

Maruyama’s
prostitutes know
how to capsize ships.44
Maruyama no koi wa ichiman sanzenri
Maruyama no wakare ichiman sanzenri
Maruyama de kakato no nai mo mare ni umi
Maruyama ni sangoju wo umu onna ari
Maruyama ya onna ni yomenu fumi ga kuru

Hiketaya and Kagetsu

The Kagestu[5] At Maruyama is probably the oldest extant restaurant in Japan. The exact date of its founding is not clear, but it seems most probable that it coincides with the establishment of the licensed brothel quarter in Nagasaki (1642). In that year Yamaguchi Tazaemon[6] built a brothel, called Hiketaya,[7] on a piece of land of 3,000 tsubo (ca. 9,900 m²).[47] In its garden a tea-house, the Kagetsu (Flowers and Moon), was set up, the name of which came, in course of time, to be used instead of Hiketaya. From the Hiketaya many Kara-yuki and Oranda-yuki were sent to the Chinese and Dutch settlements, and in the nineteenth century the foreigners were allowed to visit this and other brothels themselves.

Many famous men spent happy hours at the Hiketaya/Kagetsu: the painter/poet Takemoto Tōtōan (1767–1818), the kyōka poet Shokusan-jin Nampa (1749–1823), the historian/ painter Rai Sanyō (1780–1832), his friend the painter Tanomura Chikuden (1777–1935), the Confucian scholar Koga Kokudō (1777–1836), the poet Kamo Suetaka (1751–1842), the seal-engraver Hosokawa Rinkoku (1779–1843), the Confucian scholar Nakajima Sōin (1780–1856), the poet Yanagawa Seigan (1789–1858), the Confucian scholar Noda Tekiho (1799–1859), the loyalist Taka sugi Shinsaku (1831–59), the naval expert Sakamoto Ryōma (1835–1867), the leader of the Satsuma Rebellion Saigō Takamori (1827–77), Lieutenant Commander Sugano Kakubei (1842–93), the statesman Ōkuma Shigenobu (1838–1922), and General Yamagata Aritomo (1838–1922).

Several interesting mementos remind us today of these distinguished guests. Most cherished among these souvenirs is the ha-uta[48] Harusame, ‘Spring Rain’, created by Shibata Hanamori (1809–90).[49] Spending a spring evening at the Kagetsu he was inspired by the rustling sound of the rain in the plum trees to recite Harusame. A geisha waiting upon him composed a melody to it and so the song was born.

Maruyama no koi wa ichiman sanzenri
Maruyama de kakato no nai mo mare ni umi
Maruyama ni sangoju wo umu onna ari
Maruyama ya onna ni yomenu fumi ga kuru

Love at Maruyama bridges a distance of thirteen thousand miles[44]
A farewell at Maruyama spans a distance of thirteen thousand miles.
At Maruyama those without heels are rarely born.[45]
In Maruyama are women who give birth to coral beads.[46]
Maruyama — where letters come to women which they cannot read.

Harusame ni shippori nururu uguisu no hakaze ni niou ume ga ka ya
hana ni tawamure shiorashi ya

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Harusame ni shippori nururu uguisu no hakaze ni niou ume ga ka ya
hana ni tawamure shiorashi ya

Hiketaya and Kagetsu

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hana ni tawamure shiorashi ya

Hiketaya and Kagetsu

The Kagestu[5] At Maruyama is probably the oldest extant restaurant in Japan. The exact date of its founding is not clear, but it seems most probable that it coincides with the establishment of the licensed brothel quarter in Nagasaki (1642). In that year Yamaguchi Tazaemon[6] built a brothel, called Hiketaya,[7] on a piece of land of 3,000 tsubo (ca. 9,900 m²). In its garden a tea-house, the Kagetsu (Flowers and Moon), was set up, the name of which came, in course of time, to be used instead of Hiketaya. From the Hiketaya many Kara-yuki and Oranda-yuki were sent to the Chinese and Dutch settlements, and in the nineteenth century the foreigners were allowed to visit this and other brothels themselves.

Many famous men spent happy hours at the Hiketaya/Kagetsu: the painter/poet Takemoto Tōtōan (1767–1818), the kyōka poet Shokusan-jin Nampa (1749–1823), the historian/ painter Rai Sanyō (1780–1832), his friend the painter Tanomura Chikuden (1777–1835), the Confucian scholar Koga Kokudō (1777–1836), the poet Kamo Suetaka (1751–1842), the seal-engraver Hosokawa Rinkoku (1779–1843), the Confucian scholar Nakajima Sōin (1780–1856), the poet Yanagawa Seigan (1789–1858), the Confucian scholar Noda Tekiho (1799–1859), the loyalist Taka sugi Shinsaku (1831–59), the naval expert Sakamoto Ryōma (1835–1867), the leader of the Satsuma Rebellion Saigō Takamori (1827–77), Lieutenant Commander Sugano Kakubei (1842–93), the statesman Ōkuma Shigenobu (1838–1922), and General Yamagata Aritomo (1838–1922).

Several interesting mementos remind us today of these distinguished guests. Most cherished among these souvenirs is the ha-uta[48] Harusame, ‘Spring Rain’, created by Shibata Hanamori (1809–90).[49] Spending a spring evening at the Kagetsu he was inspired by the rustling sound of the rain in the plum trees to recite Harusame. A geisha waiting upon him composed a melody to it and so the song was born.
kotori de sae mo hitosuji ni
negura sadamenu ki wa hitotsu

Watashi ya uguisu nushi wa ume
yagate mimama kimama ni naru naraba
sā uguisu-yado ume ja nai kai na
sāsa nan demo yoi wai na

The nightingale drenched by the spring rain —
the fragrance of the plum blossoms wafted by its wings —
flutters among the flowers — how lovely!
Even little birds have but one mind:
they cannot decide where to roost.

I am a nightingale, you are a plum blossom.
If I had my way some time,
would not the blossoms be my perch
anyway ...?*

Every April, a ‘Spring Rain Festival’ (*Harusame-matsuri*), is celebrated in the garden of the restaurant where we find a stone monument with an inscription form the brush of the popular novelist Hirayama Rokō (1882– ), former resident of Nagasaki, and author of Nagasaki Dejima.51

At the beginning of the Shōwa era (1926) the brothel Hiketaya was abolished but the Kagetsu continued to exist as a restaurant.

In November 1953 a haiku by Mukai Kyorai (1651–1704), who was born in Nagasaki, was carved on a stone and put up in front of the Kagetsu by the inhabitants of Yoriai-machi and Maruyama-machi:

*Inazuma ya*  
*dono keisei to*  
*karimakura*  
A flash of lightning —
with which harlot
shall I sleep tonight?

On 22 March 1960, the restaurant was classified as an historic site (*shiseki*) by the Board of Education of Nagasaki Prefecture.52

*Romances of the Chinese*

*Maruyama no*  
*shirami wakan no*  
*hito wo kui*  
The lice at Maruyama
bite Japanese and Chinese
without discrimination

In connection with the gradual implementation of the seclusion policy the Chinese were, from 1635 on, only allowed to trade at Nagasaki. At first they were allowed to live anywhere in the city and could have relations with ordinary women as well as prostitutes. In 1688, however, the building of a Chinese settlement, *Tōjun-yashiki,* at Jūzenji-mura was begun and with its completion in the year following they were placed under the same restrictions as the Dutch. Because of the many points of resemblance between the life of the Chinese and that of the Dutch at Nagasaki it is worthwhile to insert here a digression on the subject of the relations between the *Kara-yuki* and their clientele.

In the beginning it was the rule that the Kara-yuki were not permitted to spend more than one night at the settlement but it soon became customary for them to leave the gate in the morning, report themselves to the guards and then retrace their steps. Between the girls and their customers, who are

51 Dealing with the love life of Doeff and Von Siebold (see below).
52 The present owner is Mr Honda Chūnosuke.
53 The Dutch ‘factory’ was called Oranda-yashiki. The building costs and appearance of the Tōjin-yashiki are succinctly, but well described in Yanai Kenji, *Nagasaki* (Shibundō, 1959), pp.172–73.
often praised for their generosity with expensive presents, several moving romances developed. Towa,[8] a girl from the Chikugoya in Yorai-machi, for example, pledged vows of eternal love with a certain Ho Min-tê.[9] In 1690, when he was condemned to death for forging, she committed suicide. In 1789 Renzan[10], a pensionnaire of the Azumaya, and the merchant Ch‘én Jên-hsieh[11] from Su-chou made and kept a suicide pact.

In the Shōtoku era (1711–16) several directives were issued with regard to children born of unions between Chinese or Dutchman and Maruyama women, from which it becomes clear that the foreigners were allowed to provide for the education of the children but could not take them along when they returned to their own country.[4]

As a matter of fact many Chinese seem to have worried about the education and future of such children. Huang Chê-ch‘îng,[2] a captain from Nanking, had a liaison with Yakumo,[3] a girl from the Iwataya, and fathered a boy Kimpachi,[4] his only child. In 1723, when he was 71, he returned to Nagasaki to meet his son. He then brought goods with him sufficient to take care of his son for the rest of his life and asked the Chief Administrator’s Office for a special permit to barter them.[5]


The origin of certain famous delicacies may also be traced back to love-affairs. The secret of the preparation of kōsakō, soft sweets consisting of rice flour and sugar, is said to have been taught to the prostitute Ume by a Chinese in the Genroku era (1688–1704). Because of the girl’s name they are shaped like plum blossoms.[8]

Chinese music, songs and dances were also brought to Nagasaki and, of course, executed by the inmates of Maruyama to the accompaniment of such instruments as the moon-shaped lute (yüeh-ch‘în), seven-stringed dulcimer (ch‘i-hsien-ch‘în), and two-stringed violin (hu-kung). The songs were sung in the Tōsō-on (resembling modern Pekinese) as becomes clear from booklets like the Kagetsu yokyō, ‘Kagetsu Entertainment’. [59]

Famous were the Kyürenhwan songs accompanied on the yüeh-ch‘în (Jap. gekkîn), an example of which follows here:

Kankan-i, sāhu-te kyürenhwan
kyûya kyürenhwan
sanshû narai kyaipukyai
naha tôrura kupiterannyu
eyû eyû

Look! Look at the fine puzzle ring you gave me! The puzzle ring with its nine holes. Even if you seize it with both hands, you cannot loosen it. Even if you use a knife, you cannot cut it. Eeyû eyû[60]

To the song belonged a dance called the Kankan-odori after the opening words. It became famous in Kyōto and Edo too but lost its original character.[61] Therefore the Shogunate’s court astronomer Takahashi Sakuzazenom (1785–1829), well known because of his later involvement in the ‘Siebold Incident’, had geisha and local officials in charge of Chinese affairs come up to Edo in order to give unadulterated performances of the dance.[62]
Romances of the Dutch

Towards evening the prostitutes — hired through the good offices of one of the Commissioners for Victualing — went from Maruyama to Dejima, sometimes in palanquins, sometimes on foot. They were accompanied by their kamuro. From the end of the seventeenth century a prolonged sojourn was condoned, as in the case of the Chinese settlement, generally for three days at a time. Towards the end of the eighteenth century a 'five-day system' became customary.

Germain Felix Meylan, who was Opperhoofd from 1827 to 1830, makes the following observations about this custom:

Although, as I have said above, no Japanese is allowed to live on the Isle of Deshima, the Japanese Government permits wenches or so-called wh... to enter the service of the Dutchmen, and these are allowed to stay day and night on the island — on condition, however, that they appear once a day before the Banjoos on duty as a proof that they are still there. Far be it from me to deny that this freedom to take wenches into service is not often, nay actually always conducive to intimate relationships; on the other hand, however, it is no less true that it is difficult or impossible to dispense with such obliging servants, for — though the Japanese Government permits us to engage male servants — there is a regulation that these are not allowed to remain overnight. If it were not for these wenches the Dutch people at Deshima — where there is otherwise not an overabundance of company — would have to remain without any service from sunset until late after dawn and would not even be able to get some tea water boiled, a great discomfort in the long, cold nights of winter.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century — in exceptional cases probably even earlier — visits by the Dutch to the Maruyama brothels were tolerated. Kawahara Keiga (ca. 1786–?) and other artists have pictured the frivolous side of the life of the Dutch, both at Dejima and at the Hiketaya in various paintings and even copperplate engravings.

It is interesting to speculate whether the Dutch introduced certain aphrodisiacs, contraceptives and the like into Japan. In a novel of the 17th century the Oranda itō, ‘dutch string’, a device to counteract the drawbacks of phimosis, is already mentioned. A Dutch physician at Nagasaki is said to have introduced a chômeigakan, a pill for promoting male potency, in the first half of the nineteenth century. The precusor of the modern condom, already pictured in a book dated 1827, was often called rūdesakku. Words of Dutch origin, pompú and sāberu, were used in sexual slang.

Although, according to some Japanese writers, the Dutch were ‘as lascivious as dog and spent their entire nights at erotic practices’, others held very high opinions with regard to their sexual morality. In the Tōdō shinden by Andō Shōeki (first half of the eighteenth century) we read:

Their Way of Marriage is truly correct. Once a man is married he does not mix with other women, nor does a wife meet other men. Mutually they observe the love between husband and wife and have no affection for others. When a man without a wife becomes entangled with someone else’s wife his kinsfolk get together and kill him, and when a widow become entangled with someone else’s husband her family gets together and kills her ... [It may happen that during his stay in Nagasaki] a man who has a wife [in Holland] will immediately notice this by the expression on his face, and hurry to inform his kinsfolk who will get together and kill him at once. To know such a thing immediately
is a characteristic [of the people] of that country. In this respect it is superior to all other countries ...  

Morishima Nakayoshi (1754–1808) states in his Kōmō zatsuwa II (1787) that homosexuality is strictly forbidden in Holland, because it is an ‘offense against human principles of what is right (jinri)’. In Ch.V of the same work it is said that in Holland not only daughters of the poor, but also lewd girls of good family who deviate from the correct teachings for women are made prostitutes. After some information about the prices (highest fee: 50 reisutatoru ‘rijksdaalders’) the author adds that all customers are bachelors and that married men never visit brothels. 

The first instance of a (short-lived) ‘dejima romance’ we find in Montanus’s Gedenkwaerdige Gesantschappen while additional information is supplied by Valentijn in his Beschryvinge under the title ‘Letter of a love-sick mestizo’. The entries deal with a certain Martijn Remei, born on Formosa of a Dutch father and a Chinese (?) mother. As a medical assistant (ondermeester) he had come to Nagasaki on the fluyt Nieupoort. Having received permission to take up his quarters at Dejima he amused himself during three days with a harlot from Maruyama who by her departure ‘cut off the gratification of his salacity’. On the morning of 13 October 1659, he had disappeared leaving a suicide note on his bed to the effect that he was unable to live without the girl. After a careful search of the island the Opperhoofd, Zacharias Wagenaar, notified the authorities, and the whole of Nagasaki was in uproar. The Japanese even began to suspect that Temei was a Portuguese Catholic who had hidden himself in the house of some undiscovered Christians. On the evening of the 15th, however, he was put in fetters. It turned out that, once in the water, he had changed his mind about drowning himself and had swum to a Chinese junk anchored in the neighbourhood where he had hidden himself under a sail. At last, his empty stomach had prevailed over his passion and, coming out of his hiding place, he had been arrested. After a period of strict detention Wagenaar sent him back to Formosa to be punished there. 

It has often been alleged that the Japanese practised infanticide in the case of Eurasian children, but there is no evidence in support of this contention. Andō Shōeki has provided us with an interesting theory in regard to the viability of such children: 

It may happen that a Dutch man and a Japanese woman have intercourse and beget a child, but this cannot live long. When it is about ten years old it will surely die. The explanation of this [phenomenon] is that we have here a union of the unyielding physical principle (ki) of the element ‘metal’ of the West and the pliant physical principle of the element ‘wood’ of the East. It does not live long because of this incompatibility. But, in the event of a child [born] after [the father] has lived some ten years in Japan, longevity may be possible. It is a [fundamental] truth of the Way of Nature that a man and a woman produce children in mutual harmony when they have partaken of cereals animated by the same physical principle in this universe, even though they once lived 13,000 miles apart. Hence it is clear that all human beings under Heaven are one in spite of their being male and female. 

Murdoch mentions that Hendrik Indijk (Opperhoofd in 1661 and 1663) had a son and a daughter living with him, but gives no further details. After the directives of the Shōtoku era (mentioned above in the paragraph dealing with the Chinese at Nagasaki) it became customary for a Chinese or Dutch father in spe to notify the Chief Administrator’s Office of the pregnancy of the
woman concerned. As it was sometimes difficult in the case of a Dutchman to decide whether he or a Japanese was the father it became an unwritten rule to determine the race of the child after its birth. For the accouchement the Kara-yuki and Oranda-yuki were, in general, sent back to their parents. Sometimes, however, women were permitted to give birth to a child at the settlement. If they needed female help, e.g. that of a wet nurse, such a person had to be registered as a prostitute or kamuro.79 We have already seen that the children were permitted to be educated by their fathers.

Van Overmeer Fischer, who spent nine years in Japan as warehouse custodian (pakhuismeester), writes on this subject:

Likewise, they (the Japanese) have never tolerated a European taking along his child which he had by a Japanese woman; such children may not even be born on the island80 anymore than a Japanese may die on it and it is considered a special grace if such children are allowed to come to the island during their youth to be taken care of thanks to buying favours through intervention and assent of the Japanese government. These children are placed on a par with all other Japanese and on no account are exceptions made with regard to them.81 Notwithstanding this last statement the fate of these children — outsiders in the close-knit Japanese society — must have been very hard.

The Nagasaki kiji by Miyake Muichi (eighteenth century) mentions several instances of liaisons between Dutchmen and Maruyama prostitutes which had issue: the physician (oppermeester) Hendrik van Haaster (1734–38 in Japan) and Wakamatsu from the Tambaya; the physician Filipp Pieter Musculus (1738–46 in Japan) and Michishio from the Nagatoya; a Kapitan and Tsunezaki from the Saekiya.

The Indonesian servants were also susceptible to the charms of the Maruyama fair but they were forbidden to have intercourse with them.85 In the beginning of the winter of 1752, however, four Indonesians managed to leave Dejima unobserved, dressed à la japonaise and under the guidance of Saddaemon, a merchant from Edo-machi. They went to a brothel in Yoriamachi where they and their Japanese friends had a good time. Emboldened by this success they went again another evening but rumours of the affair had already reached the ears of the Chief Administrator and all concerned, including the owner of the brothel, were punished.86

Harada tells us a humorous story about a handsome young Opperhoofd who arrived in Japan in the Temmei era (1781–89). Upon leaving the Netherlands he had been warned by his mother not to contract some terrible disease from a Japanese Harlot. He faithfully obeyed the injunctions of his mother but soon fell victim to a mysterious illness. The interpreter/physician Yoshio Kōgyū (1724–1800) examined him and brought him a girl from Maruyama. After that he quickly got well. Since we know that Hendrik Casper Romberg (several times serving as Opperhoofd between 1784 and 1790) was involved with a Miss Wakazawa from the Miyaka, it is not improbable that he was the obedient son.

Gijsbert Hemmy (Oppenheid from 1793 until 1798) was deeply interested in Japanese customs, especially in shamisen music, in which had his two Indonesian servants instructed. His special girlfriends were Hanamototó from the Aburaya and Tokiwa from the Miyakoya.

The Oranda-yuki were a ‘smart set’. They mixed Dutch and Malay words in their conversation, kissed and shook hands in a perfectly natural way. They

79 Cf. Fūzoku-hen II, pp.74–76.
80 A curious remark, since Van Overmeer Fischer was at Dejima when the daughter of (his enemy) Von Siebold was born there (1827).
81 Vide J.F. van Overmeer Fischer Bijdrage tot de Kennis van het Japanske Rijk (Amsterdam, 1833), p.266.
82 Their daughter was born in the summer of 1736.
85 Neither were the eta (pariahs). Cf. Fūzoku-hen II, pp.31–34.
88 He was the teacher of Maeno Ryōtaku (1723–1803) and Sugita Gempaku (1732–1817).
90 A kiss was called umakuchi, ‘sweet mouth’, by them.


93 Cf. Fūzoku-hen II, p.72.

94 Cf. ibid. II, pp.3 and 26–27.

95 Vide Vos, p.247 for further details.


97 Cf. Fūzoku-hen II, p.68. Doeff’s attitude towards the Japanese, male or female, is well expressed in a sentence he wrote in 1814 at Shimonomo on a painting (in Japanese style) of the Fuji by Jan Frederik Feilke: ‘Bergen en Daalen ontmoeten elkander nooit, maar Menschen wel’ (Mountains and valleys never meet, but people do). Cf. Koga, p.214.

98 1 kamme=1,000 monme (US$600.00).

99 Cf. Fūzoku-hen II, pp.80-83, Harada, pp.105–106, and Otsuki Nyoden, Ninon yōsoku ken-shi, ed. Satō Ichiji (Kinsei-sha 1965), pp.376 and 382. Although Doeff’s love for his son becomes clear from the actions described here as well as from the fact that he continued to correspond with him after his return to the Netherlands, Jōkichi is not mentioned in his Herinneringen uit Japan, cf. supra, note 16.

100 For recent information about his life and works the reader is referred to the articles by R.-R. Wuthenow, T. Ogata, Y. Iwasaki, A. Nakamisher, and H. Körner in the Mitteilungen (cf. supra, note 31), pp.63–137.


used Western umbrellas, wore bracelets and rings with precious stones, drank coffee and ate chocolate. In a senryū we read:

Marryama de
Maruyama de
toru munagura wa
the bodice of the dress
botan-gake
one seizes at Maruyama
is fastened by buttons.

They also played billiards (tamatsuki) with the Dutch. In the first half of the nineteenth century such girls even made excursions with the Dutch into the country and after the opening up of Japan they were sometimes hidden on board Dutch ships for pleasure-trips to Shanghai and other places.

As Dutchmen had to pay much higher fees than Chinese and Japanese and were liberal with presents (foreign goods!) it was quite attractive for certain girls to have intimate relations with them. In the first half of the eighteenth century the number of nazuke-yūjo or shikiri-yūjo, pro forma prostitutes — girls who were not sold to brothels but who temporarily registered themselves as prostitutes for private, mostly economic reasons — grew steadily. These nazuke-yūjo, whom bona fide brothels refused to register, became so numerous that in 1754 and 1759 measure were taken to prevent them from entering Dejima or the Tōjin yashiki. Nevertheless, these forerunners of the rashamen of the Meiji era and the pampam girls after the Second World War, continued their activities.

Hendrik Doeff (1777–1835), who came to Japan in 1798 and was Oppenhoofd from 1805 until 1817, was an excellent scholar as well as an accomplished lover. Under his supervision a Dutch-Japanese dictionary, the Dōyaku (or Zōfu) haruma, was compiled by a group of Nagasaki interpreters and completed in 1815. In Roman letters he wrote a postface for, and even contributed a haiku to Misago-zushi compiled by Ōya Takuō (1788–1850).

Doeff’s enthusiasm for the Maruyama fair is described in Shokusanjin Nampa’s Keiho zattetsu where we read that, one day, in April 1805, he made an excursion with some 20 keisei to Mogiura and held a glorious party there. Special friends of his were Sono o, Iroha and Katoki from the Hiketaya and Uryūno from the Miyakoya. By Sono o he had a daughter, Omon, who died in 1811. Uryūno (civilian name: Yō, daughter of Doi Tokubei) bore him a son, Jōkichi. Worrying about Jōkichi’s future Doeff presented a petition to Tōyama Doeff’s request was granted privately imported by him from Batavia for the maintenance of Jokichi and his mother. Thanks to the mediation of Toyama Doeff’s request was granted by the Shogunate in October 1815. In 1821 Jōkichi was granted the family name Dofu and was appointed Tōbutsu-mekiki, expert on foreign goods. In 1824 he died, barely seventeen years old.

Although he was not Dutch, the name of Dr Philipp Franz von Siebold (1796–1866) should not be omitted here. At Nagasaki he lived together with Sonogi from the Miyakoya. By Sono o he had a daughter, Omon, who died in 1811. Uryūno (civilian name: Yō, daughter of Doi Tokubei) bore him a son, Jōkichi. Worrying about Jōkichi’s future Doeff presented a petition to Tōyama Doeff’s request was granted by the Shogunate in October 1815. In 1821 Jōkichi was granted the family name Dofu and was appointed Tōbutsu-mekiki, expert on foreign goods. In 1824 he died, barely seventeen years old.
other provisions for the maintenance of Sonogi and her daughter. Further, he asked his pupil Ninomiya Keisaku (1804–62) to look after them. Later Sonogi married Tawaraya Tokujirō (†1851).

German biographers of Von Siebold generally strive to embellish the circumstances of his meeting with Sonogi. In a recent publication we find the contention that Sonogi, out of love for Von Siebold, destroyed her good name on purpose by having herself registered as a courtesan; in other words, she became a kind of nazuke-yūjo. Japanese sources, however, leave no shadow of doubt in this respect. In my opinion the truth would not detract at all from Von Siebold’s greatness as a man and a scholar. He merely followed the dictates of his heart and the customs of the time and place.

It has certainly not been my intention to besmirch the memory of my ancestors and their foreign associates in this article but rather to show their human sides and, often, their humanity.

102 Cf. Koga Jūjirō and Ōniwa Yō, Ranzan-i Shiboruto to Maruyama-yūjo Sonogi, in Kure Shūzō, Shiboruto Sensei: sono shōgai oyobi kōgyō (Tohōdō shoten, 1926), pp.349–52, where we read that Otaki was sold when she was fifteen or sixteen and attracted Von Siebold’s attention for the first time when she was waiting upon a Dutchman at the Hiketaya.