In 1639 the Tokugawa Shogunate government issued an edict to exile the partners and children of Dutch and English traders. It followed earlier orders to exclude first the Spanish and then the Portuguese from the country, to ban the promulgation and practice of the Christian faith in Japan, and to forbid the exit of Japanese individuals and vessels from the country. By 1641, the Dutch East India Company (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie, or VOC) would be limited to trade only from Deshima, a constructed island offshore Nagasaki. As with trade, communication between exiles and their Japanese friends and families would be heavily restricted for many years.

In October 1639, the VOC vessel Breda left Hirado carrying a number of individuals of mainly English or Dutch ancestry, Company and free burghers, their wives, children and in some cases, grandchildren. When the ship stopped at Casteel Zeelandia in present-day Taiwan, some of the youngest aboard disembarked to be cared for there, but the majority remained, arriving in the VOC settlement of Batavia (present-day Jakarta, Indonesia) on 1 January 1640. Among those aboard the Breda was fifteen-year-old Haru/Jeronima Marino from Nagasaki, accompanied by her nineteen-year-old
The Japanese community formed a numerically-marginal presence in the European-governed, cosmopolitan entrepôt of Batavia. Just 83 individuals had been identified as Japanese in a population of just over eight thousand in the 1632 census of the city. I’ve been interested to think about how we can understand the emotional experiences of this small community. More particularly, I’ve been exploring how an individual such as Haru/Jeronima expressed herself in cultural terms that made sense within Japanese and Batavian communities.

This essay explores some possible sources that help to construct the emotional lives of these individuals operating between cultures, and to understand how a range of different contexts both mediated and produced emotional performances for this conceptually marginal community in Batavia. In the case of this exile community, a range of textual and material artefacts can be interpreted as emotional performances, including those of women. Interpreting emotional display and behaviour across cultures, however, has been a noted challenge for scholars of emotions, and touches upon wider debates about the universal or culturally-specific nature of emotions. Here I am already employing an English word for an English-language essay as a catch-all term for a whole range of states, feelings, moods, and behaviours that were complex, context-specific, and rarely singular or precise. Their performances in these forms were articulations of identity, producing forms of connection and belonging. They were emotional expressions shaped not only by perceptions of their social identity but were also active components in the enactments of particular presentations of self, designed for specific contexts.

For these exiles from Japan, expression of their emotions was mediated by their status as marginal, gendered individuals of certain social status, age, faith and ethnic identity. It was dependent upon the rhetorical and social mechanisms that particular kinds of texts provided for emotional expression, and the contexts of the particular moments in which these expressions or performances occurred.

In theory, VOC policy conferred legitimacy on children of European employees who had received Christian baptism and thereby had an equivalent status to Europeans. This view was reflected in the January 1640 general missive sent from the Governor-General and Council at Batavia that announced the emigration of Japanese wives and children of the VOC on the Breda and noted that they would ‘endeavour to raise the children in fear of God and heartfelt Christian religion.’ Many exiled Japanese Christian women married men within the VOC network at Batavia. Among the marriages records of the city is that of Haru/Jeronima in November 1646: ‘Simon Simonsen of Hirado, assistant in the Company, with Hieronima Marins, young girl, born in Nagasaki.’ Between

Dear Auntie,

Oh how I long, how I long for Japan! Just like that, I had to leave Japan. Never again can I return to my dear homeland. I cannot live nor set foot on my land anymore. My eyes are swollen from my tears. I cannot tell whether this is real or a bad dream. With my yearning for my homeland, I send you one box of tea. Oh how I long, how I long for Japan!

Koshoro

Fig. 1. The Jagatara (Jakarta) letter, Hirado Dutch Trading Post. IMAGE: REPRODUCED BY KIND PERMISSION OF MR KIDA.
1620 and 1675, some 40 women of Japanese origin were listed in such records; 26 married to European men (23 Dutchmen, three other Europeans), 12 to Japanese men and two to other Asian men. In fact, marriages between partners both of Japanese origins, such as ‘Michael van Langesackij Christen Japonder,’ free burgher, who married ‘Magdalena van Langesackij, Christene, Japonsche jonge dochter’ in January 1642, were relatively rare. In the years directly following the edict of exclusion, especially between 1640 and 1642, the faith of Japanese partners was often specified. This may have reflected a particular concern among those in the Dutch Church and Company to locate these new arrivals within recognisable frameworks that existed in Batavia. The need for local administrators, notaries and Church officials to categorise these emigrants and children of the Company as both Japanese and Christian may well have been part of an emotional performance of their own, tied to anxieties to situate themselves at the top of the Batavian hierarchy as this new cohort arrived. This generation of Japanese Christian exiles remained conceptually marginal — they could be aligned with the European emotional community but never integrated entirely.

Such reflections on states of alterity also animated visual records produced by contemporary European artists keen to emphasise and categorise the melting pot of cultures that thronged the streets of the VOC city. Representatives of the Japanese community were visually catalogued in images created for European consumption. VOC draughtsman Andries Beeckman produced at least two oil paintings from his time in Batavia in which a Japanese Christian, dressed in a distinctive black hat and blue full-length robe appears in the bottom right of the composition (The Castle of Batavia, c. 1661 (fig. 2) and Fort Batavia and Market, c. 1662). This image is similar to another colourful image of a Japanese Christian man in a blue robe and black hat with a sword through his red belt, which Beeckman produced in a manuscript book of drawings made from his voyage to the Indies (fig. 3). In this text, the Japanese Christian was one of 38 ‘others’ which included Eurasian, Chinese, Javanese, Malay, and Africans at the Cape, among others, in a
mix of postures and dress that was perceived to be local, military or European. Here, the Japanese Christian was not a member of a shared Christian community within the VOC but numbered among exotic ‘others’. European artists and viewers drew understandings, and perhaps also emotional responses from fears and wonder, to curiosity and concern, about these people from the associations they made about the styles, colours, fit and suitability of these material accoutrements and the bodily gestures made by those sporting them. Numerically-dominated by such ‘others’ in Batavia, Beeckman’s artwork perhaps provided an aesthetic outlet for anxieties about Europeans’ own numerical marginality and desires to maintain control.

The secret silk letter of Haru/Jeronima would not be her only communication with her Japanese relatives. Over time, authorities in Japan relaxed some restrictions that allowed an older, widowed Haru/Jeronima, in 1681, to send a further letter to Japan along with many gifts to family and friends (fig. 4). In November 1646, she had married Simon Simonsen, the son of a Japanese woman and European father born in Hirado. Simonsen was a VOC Junior Merchant who would rise to become Harbour Master in Batavia in 1663. The couple had at least seven children together. Letters remain from a number of exiled women, which share both stylistic features and matters of content. Perhaps most striking are the explicit expressions of longing within them. Haru/Jeronima’s depiction of her eyes swollen with tears was written soon after her arrival in Batavia, but women writing many years later articulated similar sentiments. One was Cornelia, who in a letter from April 1671, wrote:

From the contents of the letter you have sent me from Japan I have understood your situation and this gives me the feeling that I have seen you. I sadly wipe away the tears with my sleeve.

Cornelia was the daughter of Cornelis van Nijenroode, VOC chief merchant in Japan from 1623 to 1632. With her elder sister Hester, she had been removed from Hirado on the Galjas in November 1637, following a resolution by the VOC Council of Hirado in September the
previous year. Cornelia had married Pieter Cnoll in 1652, and by 1663, the year of her first known letter to Japan, Cnoll had reached the position of VOC opperkoopman (first head merchant) at Batavia. The prosperous family were depicted in a 1665 portrait by Jacob Jansz. Coeman, showing Pieter and Cornelia with their two eldest daughters, Catharina and Hester in European dress, accompanied by two servants (fig. 5).

Of course, caution is needed in interpreting the precise phrasing of these emotive expressions, not least because they have been translated into English here. Letters by women may have been transcribed by men within their community, and some are extant only in later copies. However, contemporary writers expected women to be aware of, and express, their emotions in specific ways that are consistent with these letters. Women of a wide range of social status were well educated in Tokugawa Japan, not simply those of the samurai class. Their education, the wafū no naraï, focused on the study of kana syllabaries and Japanese classical literature such as the works of female poets of the Heian era that would provide women with ‘a knowledge of ninjō, of the workings of the human heart; it would encourage in them an appreciation of the beauties of nature, refine their feelings, sharpen their intuitions and given them the skill in literary expression in Japanese necessary for social intercourse.” Tears, sorrow and longing were widely expressed throughout women’s verse. Letters too were a codified genre with numerous epistolary handbooks, shōsokyū ōrai, developed in the early seventeenth century for women and men who could not afford private tuition. These women’s particular forms of emotional expression, notably articulations of longing, participated therefore in a construction of their Japanese heritage and identity, one which was culturally resonant to their missives’ recipients.

Their letters also enhanced the exiled women’s ongoing engagement with their relatives and friends in Japan through repeated enquiries about the health of their recipients, discussions of the birth of children and their concern to situate these children among their Japanese relatives in conceptual and material ways. Cornelia’s 1663 letter addressed to her mother and her husband, Handa Goeimon, demonstrated her filial affections and duties to look to the health of her family members and anticipated the concerns of her mother by insisting upon her own wellbeing and that of her family. Cornelia noted that her mother and step-
father were in good health and insisted that they should not be worried about her. In April 1671, she elaborated further:

We are especially in good health, and last year [1670] in the fourth month I gave birth to a baby girl. Now we have four children; they are all in good health, please do not worry. ... Over the last two years nothing has been sent by me; you may be worried about me. But nothing special has occurred. I am in good health so you do not have to worry about me. I have become a mother of ten children; six have been lost, four are in good health. Elder brother is fourteen, his sister twelve, followed by a little sister of six and the little baby who is eight months old. All are in good health. Especially the eldest son and the second daughter send grandfather and grandmother their warmest greetings. That you are still in good health makes me happy time and time again.

Cornelia's repeated injunction to her mother not to worry about her displayed her willingness and capacity to anticipate her mother's feelings. These emotional bonds were also reinforced through the very practice of communicating as much as the words that appeared on the physical form. In doing so, women's letters to friends and family in Japan perpetuated their memory, networks and emotional affiliations.

Additionally, these letters were also accompanied by gifts — tea, wooden screens, and especially textiles. Haru/Jeronima's 1681 letter enclosed such items as white cotton cloth, calico, and figured satin, sent to a large number of friends and family in Japan. In these letters, fabrics from across the reach of the VOC were included, as well as locally-produced batik and ikat. Cornelia sent back many pieces of Salempouri, calico and Palcalle cottons, and batik for her mother, step-father, and wet nurse. She also incorporated her children into the ritual emotional practices of gift-giving: "To grandmother and grandfather I send 2 tan of Dutch linen presented by elder brother and his little sister. It is a small sign of kindness." Women sometimes included requests that obliged their recipients to procure small items for them, or to conduct errands on their behalf, such as having white cloth dyed in Japan or sending barrels of Japanese sake with monies provided. Such requests assumed bonds of duties and obligations between support networks of kin and friends. These gifts and requests represented emotions for, and generated emotions in, recipients, forging affiliations across the communities of Japan and Batavia.

At their death, Japanese Christians not only attested to their faith through testaments but asserted narratives of the past and identities for present and future purposes. Death represented a moment at which profound acts of socialisation occurred, both for the dying and for those who surrounded them in which identities and communities were enacted and performed through often ritualised emotional and affective display. The distribution of these women's goods and people located subjects within Christian, European, Japanese and exile communities. Isabella 'van Nangasacki'/van Sandtvoort had arrived in Batavia on the Breda with Haru/Jeronima. The daughter of a Japanese woman and a freeburgher, Melchior van Sandtvoort, Isabella was the widow of Vincent Romeijn, also an exile from Japan (although from Manila originally) and later a Sherriff of Batavia. When in September 1648 she wrote her will, she designated a number of gifts, money and textiles, to be sent to her relatives in Japan. Additionally, Isabella left both properties and goods to a range of individuals in the exile community, including a stone pedack on the Tijgersgracht to Maria, mother of Haru/Jeronima, 200 reals to Haru/Jeronima, two silver knives, spoons and forks to Haru/Jeronima's husband Simon Simonsen, 100 reals to Cornelia, Haru/Jeronima's niece, the daughter of Man/Magdalena Marino and Michiel Buzzaemon/Boesajimon. Isabella's will also designated a number of gifts intended to be sent to other Japanese exiles living in Macau.

In an August 1649 codicil, she placed one of several slaves whom she owned in a five-year term of service to Willem Verstegen who was also known to her from their time together on the Breda. Haru/Jeronima's testament, made in May 1692, showed her like Isabella to be in financially-comfortable circumstances, liberating twelve slaves and leaving five other individuals to her daughter Maria, by then the widow of a Batavian judge.
Beyond their distribution of gifts, these women’s wills bore witness to the balancing of multiple identities in other ways. Isabella’s testament, made in the presence of the Secretary of Batavia, Pieter Hackius, identified some of her male recipients as ‘Japanese Christians’ but none of the women by this designation. Isabella herself was defined in the text by her place of birth, ‘van Nangasacki,’ rather than by the Dutch surname, van Sandvoort, of her father, Melchior. The beneficiaries of Isabella’s testamentary gifts signed their receipt of these items in a document that again identified her as ‘van Nangesacki’. Yet her Japanese recipients chose a range of means to bear witness to this act, in Japanese kana and kanji characters, using a traditional kao (family seal), the Dutch alphabet or with a simple mark. For example, Haru/Jeronima placed her kao upon the document, while her brother-in-law Buzaemon/Boesajmon provided a signature of his name in its Dutch variation, ‘Michiel Bouzayemon’. Haru/Jeronima’s own will was signed in kana. The choices that these individuals made to identify themselves in varied Japanese or European styles in documentary forms shaped by European administrative needs and perceptions of their status, suggests their resistance to the definitions of their identity by others.

Finally, these multiple identities and emotional connections to communities of faith and blood were also made in material forms. The tombstone of only one Japanese exile in Batavia, Michiel Dias Sobe, is known to us. Inscribed in both kanji and Dutch, it reads ‘Michiel T. Sobe, born in Nagasaki in 1605 and died here in 1663.’ It was a visible and material representation of what it meant to be a Japanese Christian in Batavia for others who survived him, and who secured its creation, to draw upon to make meanings in their own lives. But it was not the only physical memorial to the Japanese exiles. In 1682, the relatives of Cornelia van Nijenroode in Hirado erected a miniature stone pagoda at a temple there, honouring the ties that she had maintained to her ancestors and kin in Japan and in appreciation of her demonstration of filial piety in sending letters and gifts to her family. Cornelia’s attempts to maintain connections in the land of her birth had produced an ongoing sense of pride for those who remained there, a testament to Japanese values that she was perceived by them to have practised.

During the seventeenth century, exiles from Japan living in the VOC settlement at Batavia forged for themselves multiple identities and communities through varied emotional performances. Their sense of self, and the emotional display and the forms in which they could be performed, were fundamentally shaped by the feelings of others, where the communicative and communal nature of such expressions engendered not only affiliations and attachments but also difference, even rejection, anxieties and suspicions. These highly-situated emotional displays, in acts of correspondence, gift-giving and sociabilities or in documentary forms of letters, notarial acts, church registers and testaments, both reflected and enacted expressions of multiple identities, forging connections and articulating exclusion far across the globe.

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2. “うば様へ”
日本こそやしほや、ふとしたことで日本を離れたり
二度と帰ることの出来ないふるさとなたしてみ、いて
たっていられませ。


6. I am following from Judith Butler’s notion of performativity here: see *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1999).


17. Letter of Haru, widow of Simonsen, held at the Nagasaki Museum of History and Culture, Reference Number 命書 へ13 62. My thanks to Mr Kazunori Ono at the Nagasaki Museum of History and Culture for his assistance in securing permission to publish this image, and to Mr Kazuo Miyata for his research assistance.


21. This work is discussed in Gelman Taylor, ‘Meditations’, and ‘Painted Ladies of the VOC’ as well as Blussé, ‘Butterfly or Mantis?’ p. 179.


23. See *Japanese Women Poets: An Anthology*, trans. and ed. by Hiroaki Sato (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008); *Court Ladies of Old Japan,*