



Perceptions of Titia Bergsma: A Study on the Representation of Foreign Gender Types as seen in Japanese Art

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Introduction

“Titia is a tribute to all women who throughout history have dedicated themselves to aid the careers of their husbands,” is the opening sentence of René P. Bersma’s work *Titia: The First Western Woman in Japan* (2002). Bersma extracted information from sources such as contemporary documents, private family correspondence and the Dejima logbooks, in order to write his tribute to Titia Bergsma. His initial interest in Bergsma’s story was due to the fact that she is a distant relative and he argues that her story is of interest to the general public, because she was the first Western woman who traveled to Japan in the 19th century.

As a Japan studies’ bachelor graduate, languages and cultures of Japan have interested me for years. Within my bachelor studies I have always concentrated on gender studies in Japan, and my purpose was to find links between the topics of the courses, and specific gender case studies. I decided on doing the Master *Comparative Women’s Studies in Culture and Politics* in order to create a bridge between these two different fields of study. I am interested in both disciplines, so I have aimed at finding links between Japan and gender studies during the courses, the internship and my thesis.

In my thesis, I will explore the question of how certain national subjects in their art represent the Other in terms of gender, nationhood and culture. For this topic I will particularly focus on Japanese male artists and their representation of Dutch, white, females during the 19th century. As a case study I will concentrate on the representation, in Japanese art, of Titia Bergsma, a Dutch woman who traveled with her husband to Japan in 1817. She was denied access to Japan by the Japanese authorities and had to return to the Netherlands, where she died soon afterwards. The story of Titia Bergsma illustrates a woman’s sacrifice by devoting herself to aiding her husband’s career. In this context Bersma calls Titia a tribute to all women who have dedicated themselves to the careers of their husbands.

Within feminist theory, much has been written about the links between gender and nation by, amongst others, Anne McClintock, Gayle Rubin, Cynthia Enloe, Nira Yuval-Davis and Elleke Boehmer. In this thesis, I will look at how unequal power divisions between men and women were formed during the beginning of the 19th century, and I will look at the realization of national identity and national consciousness from a gender perspective. I will determine to what extent the formation of these important social constructions has

contributed to the way in which Japanese men represented non-Japanese women in 19th century Japanese art, and I shall use the case study of Titia Bergsma as an example. Dutch men were allowed to stay on the island Dejima, the Dutch trading post near Nagasaki, while women were not. Bergsma's story is not only an example of personal sacrifice; she was also being deployed as a pawn in the power struggle between the Netherlands and Japan.

Research and Methodology

In my first chapter, I will analyze how Bergsma is recorded in history as a 'token,' a woman who has functioned as a link between the Netherlands and Japan. Because of this position, she became a victim in the power struggle between Dutch and Japanese merchants in regard to their trade relationships. I will start this chapter by giving an outline of the historical narrative leading to Bergsma's eviction from Japan. In order to do so correctly, I will make use of written records such as Bergsma's letters, the official Dejima logbooks kept by Hendrik Doeff and Jan Cock Blomhoff. In addition, I will use the book *Titia, the First Western Woman in Japan*, that has been written by her distant relative, René P. Bersma. For writing his work, Bersma obtained information from private family correspondence and contemporary documents. The title of Bersma's work is not fully correct, as in 1661, some Dutch female refugees from Formosa preceded Bergsma in their short stay at Dejima.¹ However, these women were never captured in any paintings or prints.

Subsequently, I will provide background information on Japan's relationship with the Netherlands during the Edo period,² and explore how Japan exercised power over foreign countries using *sakoku* as a tool. In order to delve into the Edo power structures, I will use the work of Wim Boot (2001), who is one of the authorities in the field of Japanese pre-modern history. I will also make use of Anne McClintock's work *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (1995), in which she analyses how commerce binds the empire together and how increasing commercial interests strengthens the empire as a whole. I want to see if McClintock's theory can be applied to the trade relations

¹ Paul, H., 1984, *Nederlanders in Japan: 1600-1854*, Unieboek b.v., Weesp.

² Edo is the city we now know as Tokyo. The Edo period is a historical period in Japan from 1603-1867.

between the Netherlands and Japan. In the light of this historical context I will look at power relations between men and women in the Netherlands and Japan, and discuss theory on other women who have been used as pawns in the male struggle for power. I will use Gayle Rubin's *The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex* (1975) as a framework on the emergence of power relations between men and women, in order to discuss women's secondary position to men as a result of the origination of the 'economic man' and the 'domestic woman.'³ My goal is to find out how Bergsma's secondary position to her husband was a product of social organizations and how these social organizations contributed to evicting Dutch women such as Bergsma from Japan.

For my second chapter, I will look at the constitution of nationalism as a gendered discourse in male dominated societies. I will look at the construction of national consciousness and national identity through the constitution of modern nation-states. In *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives* (1997), Anne McClintock argues that the subordinated position of minorities in society, women in particular, demonstrates how nationalism is implicated in gender power. She also argues that the foundation of inequality between men and women, and the institutionalization of gender difference in the idea of popular unity, has a deep-rooted history.⁴ I will use her theory in order to analyze how the institutionalization of gender difference has played a part in Bergsma's misfortune. In addition, I will consider how Frantz Fanon's concept of 'familial normality' as a result of social power and social violence can be applied to the construction of Japanese families and Dutch families.⁵ I want to explore how power relations and hierarchical relations between men and women have become embedded in what we nowadays call modern nation-states.

³ Rubin, G., 1975, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex," in Rayna Reiter ed., *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, Monthly Review Press (1975), New York, p. 159.

⁴ McClintock, A., 1997, *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, p. 89-91.

⁵ Fanon, F., 1986, *Black Skin, White Masks*, Pluto Press, London, p. 141-143

After exploring how the subjects of one country co-construct the national and nationalist culture of another culture, I will turn to Jean Baudrillard's theory on 'simulacrum' and explore how this theory can be linked to the fact that Bergsma was depicted in numerous Japanese art pieces and souvenirs. I want to examine how Bergsma was implicated in nationalism as the typical example of a symbolically constructed bearer of the nation as the first Western woman to visit Japan. At the end of the chapter I will link the concept of simulacrum with the notion of representation, that I will put in parallels with the notion of the Japanese image of the 'Dutch woman.'

Exploring both the topics of power relations and national identity will offer us a deeper understanding of the historical and social contexts in which Bergsma's unfortunate story was set. The power relations between men and women, and Japan and the Netherlands, can be connected to the topic of representation in the sense that Bergsma was depicted in numerous Japanese art pieces even though her stay in Japan was insignificantly short. National identity can be connected to the topic of representation in the sense that the image the Japanese had of the Dutch, was an invented image, constructed mainly by Japanese artists in their artwork. Nagasaki painters were amongst the few Japanese people who were permitted access to Dejima, and their work was to record the Dutch in their paintings. Naturally, their work was leading in the way in which the Dutch were perceived by the Japanese. For these reasons, I will explore the issue of representation in my third chapter.

I want to find out why Bergsma's short presence had such an impact on the 19th and 20th century production of art. Even though Bergsma had to leave Japan on Japanese authorities' orders and stayed in Japan for less than four months, she was still the first Western woman to visit Japan since 1661, leaving an immense impression on the production of Japanese art and souvenirs. Nagasaki painters such as Kawahara Keiga and Ishizaki Yūshi immortalized her before she left Japan, and these depictions were to become most influential in representations of Western women in Japanese art. I will examine to what extent these depictions portray a realistic images of what Bergsma must have looked like. In order to do so correctly, I will focus on how the Japanese perceived the Dutch. Since many Japanese were quite ambivalent towards the presence of foreigners in Japan, they portrayed the Dutch in quite a negative, stereotypical manner. In order to increase sales numbers, the

depictions were exaggerated even more. The way in which the Japanese perceived the Dutch at the beginning of the 19th century becomes partially clear through historical readings from this period. For my analysis I will use *The debate over seclusion and restoration*, which consists of personal stories by, amongst others, Aizawa Seishisai (1782-1863) and Sakuma Shōzan (1811-1864). These stories tell us how the Japanese thought about the world they lived in, and how they viewed foreigners during the 18th and 19th century.⁶ I will use these written works to back up my theory that certain features in depictions of foreigners in general, and Bergsma in particular, were either exaggerated or fabricated. It is very hard to estimate to precisely what extent the depictions are truthful, but in order to get an image that is as realistic as possible, it is necessary to explore what parts of portraits are noticeably unfaithful. I will compare paintings and prints that are copies or re-makings of each other in order to analyze what is historically truthful and what is not. I will also look at paintings that are mere creations of the painters imagination, instead of historically truthful representations. I will explore in particular, how certain stereotypes such as red hair and big noses, became leading in the depiction of Dutch people in Japanese art. These features have become iconic representations of the Dutch. Bergsma's "western" looks are still used as typical of European appearance in Japanese art and on national souvenirs, so it can be argued that to many Japanese, she still embodies the Dutch national identity.

⁶ de Bary, T., Gluck, C., Tiedemann, A.E., 2006, *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, second edition, Vol.2: 1600 to 2000, Abridged, Part two: 1868 to 2000, Columbia University Press, New York, preface.

Chapter 1: The Analysis of Power Relations

1.1 A historical introduction on the life of Titia Bergsma

I will start this chapter by giving an outline of the historical account leading to Titia's eviction from Japan. Then I will analyze the underlying power relations between Japan and the Netherlands as well as between men and women.

In April 1600, the first Dutch ship of the East Indian Trading Company (V.O.C.), going by the name 'De Liefde,' arrived at the east coast of Japan's southern island Kyūshū. The Dutch crew reached Japan when Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542-1616) had become the first reigning Shōgun (将軍) of Japan's so-called shōgunate, a government system that can best be described as a Japanese feudal military government.⁷ Tokugawa Ieyasu, as military dictator, also organized Japan's legal systems and encouraged trade with Europe.⁸ He was very fond of William Adams, an Englishman on board of the Dutch ship and the friendship between these two men was the foundation of what would become a century long, strong trade relationship between Japan and the Netherlands. Other countries such as Portugal, Spain, China and England maintained trade relations with Japan during the beginning of the seventeenth century as well. However, the trading competition from these countries diminished quite soon as a consequence of the newly introduced *sakoku-rei* (鎖国令), the "demands for closing the country." Fundamentally, the *sakoku-rei* involved the banning of practicing Catholicism in Japan, the introduction of some extreme restrictions on foreigners who intended to visit Japan and restrictions on any Japanese who would want to visit foreign countries.⁹ Japan's period of *sakoku* was the direct result of the country's negative experience with the intrusion of Portuguese Christian missionaries, who entered Japan in hopes of converting the entire nation to Christianity.¹⁰ The Spanish had been banned from

⁷ Boot, W.J., 2001, "*Keizers en Shōgun*", Salomé - Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam.

⁸ Sadler, A.L., 2010, "*The Maker of Modern Japan*", Routledge: Japan, Oxon.

⁹ Boot, 2001, p. 95.

¹⁰ Gordon, A., 2003, "*A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present*," Oxford University Press, Oxford, p. 17

Japan some years earlier and the English had also returned home due to disappointing trade incomes. Because of all the restrictions imposed by the *sakoku-rei* from 1639 onwards, the Netherlands was the only European country left that was allowed to do business with Japan¹¹.

The Dutch traders staying in Japan have since 1641 resided on an artificially built island named Dejima (出島), located in the harbor of Nagasaki bay.¹² The Dutch “factorij” was erected on this island and this was the only place in Japan where the Dutch were permitted to do business with the Japanese. Dejima was a very small, fan-shaped island, no bigger than 13.969m², with a main street running through the middle of the island from the east side to the west side, leaving enough space on each side for several two-story buildings.¹³ The island of Dejima also had a vegetable garden and a small meadow for livestock. Dejima had two entrances: one on the north side of the island, granting access to the city of Nagasaki, and another entrance on the west side leading straight to the ocean, which was ideal for the anchoring of small ships.¹⁴ The Dutch were not allowed to leave the island without permission, and in case they were granted permission, they were not allowed to leave the island without accompaniment of a Japanese official. At the same time, the Dutch were forbidden to make contact with the mainland Japanese citizens outside Dejima’s walls. On top of that, the shipping of letters from Japan to the Netherlands and back was in those days completely dependent on boat traffic, which made it not uncommon that a letter reached its destination a year and a half later.

The situation that the Netherlands were Japan’s only Western trading partner, would remain until 1854, the year that Japan and the United States concluded a so-called unequal treaty. The previous year, American Commodore Matthew Perry (1794-1858) and his ships arrived at Nagasaki bay and demanded that Edo would open up its harbors to trade with

¹¹ Boot, 2001, p. 95.

¹² Ibid., p. 95.

¹³ Bersma, 2002, p. 53.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 53.

foreign ships. In the following years, trade agreements were not only made with the United States, but also with Britain, France, Italy and Russia.¹⁵

In August 1816, the ship *Sourabaya* departed its Dutch harbor in Texel and set off for Batavia, Indonesia. On board were Jan Cock Blomhoff (1779-1853), his wife Titia Bergsma (1786-1821), their newborn Johannes (1816-1900) and the 22-year old wet-nurse Petronella Munts. After their arrival in Batavia, the family would stay there for a couple of months, until the departure of the ship *Vrouwe Agatha*, that would set off for their final destination: Nagasaki, Japan.¹⁶ From 1809-1813, Blomhoff had worked at Nagasaki as Warehouse Master, an important administrative position which ranked second place in trading hierarchy.¹⁷ Blomhoff returned to the Netherlands after his stay in Japan, married Bergsma and they had a baby named Johannes. After spending several years in the Netherlands, Blomhoff was requested to return to Dejima to become 'Opperhoofd,' chief executive officer, of Dejima for the East Indian Trading Company. During his first stay in Japan, Blomhoff had worked under his superior, Hendrik Doeff. After nine years, Doeff would be released of his duties and be permitted to return to his home country. As stated earlier, ways of communication were scarce and slow. When the Blomhoff's and their wet-nurse set off for their long journey to Japan, they did not know what exactly they would encounter once setting foot on Japanese grounds. There had been no contact between the Netherlands and Dejima in four years, so it was hard to tell whether Doeff had passed away or whether there had been conflicts between the Dutch and the Japanese which would have put a stop to all business relations between the two countries.¹⁸

We cannot be fully sure as to why Blomhoff decided to bring along his wife, child and wet-nurse on his journey to Japan. He was aware of the fact that women were not allowed to stay on the island, but he must have been certain that the Japanese would nevertheless approve of the arrival of his entire delegation. During his previous stay in Japan, Blomhoff

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 102.

¹⁶ Bersma, René P., 2002, "*Titia: The first Western Woman in Japan*", Hotei Publishing, Amsterdam, p. 13.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 29-30.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 46.

had felt that he had worked hard and had performed his tasks very well and the Japanese were in his debt as far as he was concerned.¹⁹ On top of this, in Blomhoff's opinion the rules regarding the governing of Dutch life in Japan were in serious need of revision. The Dutch had endured the imprisonment on the Dejima for two centuries, which consequently negatively affected their position in trade with the Japanese.²⁰ Blomhoff was, probably for this reason, quite sure that the Japanese would allow him and his family to reside on Dejima.

When the ship that had taken the Blomhoff family to Japan, attempted to dock in the harbor of Nagasaki, things did not go as smooth as planned. Before being granted permission to dock in the harbor and depart the ship, the Dutch had to use flag signals in order to inform the Japanese in detail about the number of people on board and the reason for their visit to Japan. Due to the unexpected presence of the women and the baby on board, it took a considerable amount of time to decide whether the passengers would be allowed to depart the ship. In the morning of August 16th, it was finally decided that Blomhoff, Bergsma and Johannes were allowed to set foot on Dejima.²¹ During their stay on Dejima, the Blomhoff family moved into one of the houses together with their wet-nurse Petronella and Maraty, a second maid they had brought along with them from Batavia. Once the present Opperhoofd, Hendrik Doeff, had departed for the Netherlands, Blomhoff would move into the house that was meant for the Opperhoofd.²²

The Blomhoff family was busy settling in their new home and exploring the island. In the meantime, the Japanese governor had decided that in accordance with the current legislation concerning residence permits, it would be impossible to permit Bergsma and her baby to stay on the island.²³ An official petition had to be send to the Shogun's court of Edo, with the request to let Bergsma stay at Dejima. The governor was fond of the Blomhoff family and in order to express his affection, he drew up the petition himself. In this petition,

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 46.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 46.

²¹ Ibid., p. 54-56.

²² Ibid., p. 61.

²³ Ibid., p. 65.

he declared that Blomhoff had fallen very ill in Batavia, right before his departure to Japan. Since there had been no suitable replacer for him to come to Japan right away, his wife had instead come along to take care of him.²⁴ Bergsma, however, had had a child just a year and a half earlier and was therefore forced to bring along her child and wet-nurse. This was the way the unusual circumstances of the Blomhoff family were accounted for in the hope of being granted the Shogun's court's permission to let them stay at Dejima.

On September 28th, Hendrik Doeff and Jan Cock Blomhoff were requested to visit the governor, who had received a response from the Edo Shogun's court. The Dutch inhabitants of Dejima had thrown a large party on the island the night before, because they were fully convinced that the governor would bring them good news regarding the residence permit of the Blomhoff family. As it turned out, the governor appeared not to have any good news for the family: By the order of His Supreme Majesty the Shogun, Bergsma, Johannes, Petronella and Maraty were refused permission to remain in Japan and were requested to return to the Netherlands with the same ship that had brought them to Japan.²⁵

Doeff felt sorry for the Blomhoff family and drew a new petition to plea for Bergsma's stay at Dejima.²⁶ This petition was delivered to the governor, who after his approval would send the petition to the Edo Shogun's court. In this second petition, Doeff did not merely refer to Blomhoff's disease and the unfortunate circumstances he would encounter, if his wife would not be present to take care of him. Moreover, Doeff quoted a historical case in which several foreign women were allowed to stay in Japan in the period of Japan's national closure, due to certain emergency circumstances.²⁷ Shortly after, Doeff was informed that the governor did not dare to send Doeff's petition to the Shogun's court in Edo.²⁸ Even though the governor thought the contents of the petition were very much

²⁴ Ibid., p. 65.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 79.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 84-85.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 85.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 89.

balanced and well thought-through, he was afraid that sending a second petition to the Shogun's court would worsen matters.²⁹

The relationship between Doeff and Blomhoff became quite strained due to these circumstances, and Doeff's patience was put to the test. He had been working 19 years to preserve and improve the bonds between the Netherlands and Japan, and he did not think Bergsma's situation was important enough to risk the undoing of all of his hard work to keep those bonds intact.³⁰ Bergsma often turned to playing the piano when in need of consolation and as Bergsma is often portrayed either playing the piano or taking strolls with her son, we can conclude that those were pleasurable ways for Bergsma to spend her leisure time. It has not been registered in any official written records of the Dejima logbooks, but we can argue that the Japanese painter Kawahara Keiga has captured these moments in his paintings as an illustrative homage. I will in subsequent chapters explore to what extent these paintings reflect the historical truth. I will do so by focusing on certain features in depictions of foreigners that were either exaggerated or fabricated. I will explore what parts of portraits are noticeably unfaithful and compare paintings and prints that are copies or re-makings of each other in order to analyze what is historically truthful and what is not.

Not long before Bergsma's compulsory departure to the Netherlands, a new official, Tsutsui, entered the position of governor of Nagasaki. When visiting Dejima and its inhabitants, he and Bergsma shortly met and Bergsma seized the chance of taking matters in her own hands by writing a letter to the governor begging him to let her stay on the island. She delivered the letter very early in the morning, hoping the governor would take pity on her and thus would delay the execution of the Decree and permit her to remain with her husband and child.³¹ As soon as the Japanese officials informed Doeff and Blomhoff about Bergsma's letter, they became very cross with her, both being convinced that irreversible decisions had been made and that Bergsma's letter would only worsen matters and have a

²⁹ Ibid., p. 90.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 90.

³¹ Ibid., p. 96.

negative effect on the international relations between the Netherlands and Japan.³² When they were being summoned to the governor about the letter, the outcome was that Bergsma's request was rejected, just as Doeff and Blomhoff had expected. The governor was very kind to Bergsma, claiming that he could relate to her feelings and could see why this situation caused her sorrow and despair. Nonetheless, he was unable to grant her permission to remain on Dejima. Afterwards, Doeff and Blomhoff were informed that the Governor had regarded the matter unimportant, since it was 'only a woman' who had committed the offence.³³

There was nothing that could have prevented Bergsma's departure. On December 10th, Bergsma, Johannes, Petronella and Maraty departed for Batavia and they arrived safely on January 16th. The first time Bergsma visited Batavia, she and her husband received a kind welcome by the Dutch General and his wife and they regularly spent time together. However, when she returned to Batavia, Bergsma hardly received any warmth and sincerity. She could sense that without the presence and protection of her husband, she was no longer held in such high esteem.³⁴ There were no more get-togethers and dinner parties and after a very lonely couple of months, Bergsma set off for the Netherlands. The trip was not without misfortune and disease, but for Bergsma the more severe health problems started after being back in the Netherlands. Though living close to her parents and being well-attended to by her family, Bergsma suffered from severe mood swings, became very melancholic and did not recover when given medication.³⁵ In the course of two and a half years, her family watched her as her condition grew worse and prepared themselves to accept Bergsma's ill fate. Titia Bergsma, the first Western woman who had visited Japan by accompanying her husband to Dejima, passed away on April 2nd 1821.³⁶ In the next section I will provide

³² Ibid., p. 97.

³³ Ibid., p. 99.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 106.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 112.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 112.

additional information on the historical relation between Japan and the Netherlands, focusing on the power relations between these two countries.

1.2 Using *sakoku* as a tool for exercising power over the Dutch

In order to make a coherent analysis of power relations between men and women and Japan and the Netherlands with Bergsma's example as a case study, I will first explain the historical background against which these events took place. Delving into the Edo power structures and gaining a better understand of the way the Japanese shōgunate used their period of national closure as a tool to exercise power over the Netherlands, will grant us a better understanding of the importance of how the Netherlands related to Japan in the field of power relations in those days. It is necessary to understand the power relations between both countries to understand for what reasons the Japanese chose to evict Dutch women such as Bergsma from Japan. The quotation "commerce even more than sentiment binds the ocean sundered portions of empire together. Anyone who increases these commercial interests strengthens the whole fabric of the empire,"³⁷ originates from a 19th century entrepreneurial soap advertisement in McClure's Magazine. The advertising agent's aim was to glorify the growth of (British) imperialism and he greatly contributed to the imperial expansion of foreign trade.³⁸ The ambition of imperial expansion by foreign trade was soon copied by many other Western countries such as the Netherlands.

Time-wise, the period in which this line of thought became prevalent, is a couple of decades ahead of the Bergsma story. However, the story is set at the time when early Western capitalism came to a rise and expansion of foreign trade was a goal that was already pursued by many Western nations. It seems illogical to compare the Western range of ideas on imperialism and expansion of foreign trade to the Japanese body of thought, taking into account that Japan at that point in time had been closed off from the rest of the world for about 150 years. It is no surprise that the early 19th century showed a tremendous

³⁷ McClintock, A., 1995, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, Routledge, New York, p. 211.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 211.

difference between the Netherlands and Japan in terms of the economic progress: early Western capitalism against Japan's feudal regime. Nonetheless, the British advertising agent's concept of "expansion of foreign trade" can still be linked to Japan's Tokugawa shōgunate's clever way of managing trade with foreign countries: not by 'glorifying the growth of its own regime and aiming at imperial expansion,' like the motto in the soap advertisement, but by using *sakoku* as a tool to exercise power over foreign countries.

At a first glance, the aforementioned quotation holds a contradiction as regards Japan's way of putting a stop to almost all foreign trade during the beginning of the 17th century. Before Japan's period of national closure, *sakoku*, the country maintained trade relations with several foreign countries. Granting Spain, Portugal, England, China and the Netherlands permission to reside on its grounds, Japan had direct access to products from several regions from the world.³⁹ When the shōgunate made its entrance and the country closed itself off from the world, the number of countries being permitted to engage in trade with Japan was limited to China and the Netherlands. However, increasing the number of countries with which trade relations were maintained and thus expanding the trading network would seem the wise thing to do for the Japanese. Limiting the trade network to merely two countries would bind and strengthen the empire. First, the shōgunate's aim was to strengthen Japan from the inside, not from the outside. By refusing entrance to foreigners, Japanese citizens would not be exposed and enticed by the temptations of foreign traditions such as Catholicism. The Dutch were content to keep their religious ideas to themselves and therefore they posed no threat in the shōgunate's opinion.⁴⁰ Second, even though Chinese and Dutch traders were permitted entrance to Japan, their freedom was very much restricted both in terms of their whereabouts, being forbidden to enter the main land, and also in terms of regulations concerning products for trade. These conditions caused Japan to be able to keep any undesired foreigners at a distance and at the same time still granted Japan a passageway for its products to Europe. As for the Dutch, Dejima was constructed for trading purposes and Dutch trade was officially licensed by the Dutch and Japanese

³⁹ Boot, 2001, p. 94.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 17.

governments.⁴¹ These circumstances offered the Dutch the monopoly on trade and the purchase of Japanese products, putting them in a strong position at the European trading market.⁴²

With respect to the issue of equality of power relations, the Dutch were unfortunately not in a position to bargain, protest or make demands. Straining Japan's tolerance might lead to them being cut off from the Japanese trading network, which would consequently deprive them of the favorable position of being the only European country granted direct access to Japan and the Japanese trade wares.

The shōgunate kept the nation and its people unified under its authority and preserved the total control over governing the country by confining foreign influences to a minimum.⁴³ Not only was this a way for Japan to keep its own citizens safe from foreigners, it also granted them a dominant position and a way of exercising power over a foreign country. The Japanese government used the country's *sakoku* in a clever way as a tool for putting itself in a position to exercise power over foreign countries: first by putting their trading posts on a secluded part of Japan and denying foreign traders access to the mainland. Second, by exercising control over the offer of trade products by instigating a quota system on the export of goods, forcing some ships to return empty when the quotas had been reached.⁴⁴ Third, by introducing an annual court journey to the capital of Edo, a journey that was mandatory for the Dutch. It took about four months to travel to Edo and back, and a considerable number of gifts had to be presented to the Shogun as a tribute to the court journeys.⁴⁵ A smooth procedure of the annual court journey was of importance to the well-being of future trade relationships between the Netherlands and Japan.

⁴¹ Hiroko Johnson - *Western Influences on Japanese Art: The Akita Ranga Art School and Foreign Books*, 2005, Hotei Publishing, Amsterdam, p. 25.

⁴² Boot, 2001, p. 17.

⁴³ Gordon, 2003, p. 17.

⁴⁴ Johnson, H., 2005, *Western Influences on Japanese Art: The Akita Ranga Art School and Foreign Books*, Hotei Publishing, Amsterdam, p. 25.

⁴⁵ Van Gulik, W., 1994, *Japanese Prenten*, Primavera Press, Leiden, p. 161.

The Netherlands, who belonged to the few countries who did not provoke Japanese authorities by imposing its wares and traditions upon the Japanese, fortunately ended up in the privileged position of being allowed to continue trade with Japan. As we know, only men were allowed to stay at Dejima and trade with the Japanese. I will now discuss how men's sole right in this domain has come into existence.

1.3 The origination of the 'economic man' and the 'domestic woman'

In *The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex* (1975), Gayle Rubin describes the part of social life that she calls the 'sex/gender system' and in her work aims at achieving a more fully developed definition of this terminology by examining the work of Freud and Lévi-Strauss.⁴⁶ Rubin explains the 'sex/gender system' as "the set of arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity, and in which these transformed sexual needs are satisfied."⁴⁷ In other words, Rubin gives an account of the basis of female oppression by describing the part of social life which causes the oppression to commence and to explain how it has aggravated through the years.

In order to analyze the Bergsma case with the proper tools, what we must first consider is that Rubin's text describes many cases of women's oppression in the period during which capitalism flourished. In order to analyze the Bergsma story in terms of female oppression by means of Rubin's theory, we have to determine to what extent capitalism was present in the Netherlands during the period in which Bergsma lived. There is reason to believe that Rubin's work, which analyses the works of Marx, Lévi-Strauss and Freud is not applicable to the Bergsma story since these writer's works are written several decades after our story of Bergsma took place. Nevertheless, Rubin states that women have also been oppressed in societies which show absolutely no resemblances with capitalist nations.⁴⁸ In addition, Rubin claims that it is due to the historical period before the rise of capitalism that

⁴⁶ Rubin, 1975, p. 159.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 159.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 163.

unequal relations between men and women have already become an established given.⁴⁹ A long tradition in history has kept up with the notion that wives are necessities for working men, that women more than men like doing housework, and that women are no leaders and do not inherit.⁵⁰ Thus, Rubin strongly believes that traditional, pre-capitalist notions, have gradually established forms of masculinity and femininity and are thus the foundation of unequal division of roles between men and women.⁵¹ For these reasons, I believe that parts of Rubin's theory are applicable to Bergsma's case.

In her work, Rubin explores the relationships which have caused 'women' to become 'oppressed women.' She states that a domesticated woman is 'created' and that a woman only becomes 'domestic,' in her relation to another person, often a man-woman relationship, like being a wife to a husband.⁵² A clear example of this is the case of the middle-class Victorian woman. At a certain point during the eighteenth century, the ideal image of the 'idle woman' came into existence. Wanda Neff writes that at the end of the eighteenth century, "the triumph of the useless woman was complete."⁵³ This so-called 'uselessness' meant that middle-class women were dismissed from all productive labor and they took up the mere position of societal 'adornment.' This lifestyle restricted them to a life as a pretty ornament and symbol of their husbands, who would put all their ambitions in endeavoring a successful career.⁵⁴ We can thus state that a gender-based division of roles between men and women had already come into existence before the commencement of the capitalist period. The realization of labor division was what Nancy Armstrong called "the birth of the 'economic man,' and the 'domestic woman.'"⁵⁵ Men as active doers would carry out their destiny in entering the public space and set up a career, thus becoming 'creators of

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 164.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 164.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 164.

⁵² Ibid., p. 158.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 160.

⁵⁴ McClintock, 1995, p. 160.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 164.

history.⁵⁶ Domestic women were in the meantime restricted to the house, expected to offer a secure and comforting haven upon their husband's return.⁵⁷ The domestication of women, the transition from being a 'woman' to becoming a 'domestic woman' is thus a process, Rubin argues, that comes into being in certain relationships. A woman who married a wealthy middle-class man at the end of the eighteenth century automatically married into the relationship of becoming a 'domestic woman' who was married to an 'economic man,' making women oppression the product of social organizations. What we need to understand about the cult of domesticity, is that it was only applicable to middle-class or high-class families. Many lower-class women had to work in order to provide their own income, and only those wealthy enough could afford staying at home all day. Therefore, the cult of domesticity was an ideology, not a life style for everyone. Rubin's analysis focuses on social reality, but only on the social reality of high-class and middle-class families.

Another important aspect in the discussion on power division between men and women that is approached incorrectly according to Rubin, is that men and women are closer to each other than either is to any other living being. In spite of the considerable amount of differences between the two sexes, nature has not created men and women as two mutually exclusive categories. Rubin argues that we should therefore focus more on sameness and equality between men and women instead of focusing on their differences.⁵⁸

Luce Irigaray (1930) also wants to break with this traditional construction where men and women are opposites, stating that it is impossible to deconstruct if people keep on thinking of men and women as oppositional poles. According to Irigaray it is a task for our time to alter this construction, implicating that women have for a long time been hierarchically inferior to men and that they should be brought together as equals.⁵⁹ Rubin and Irigaray, both respected writers on the topic of power division between men and

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 164.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 164.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 179.

⁵⁹ Irigaray, L., 1996, *"The Other,"* Routledge, London, p. 310, in: *"Oxford Readers: Feminisms,"* edited by Sandra Kemp and Judith Squires, 1997, Oxford University Press, New York.

women, argue that there is, too much of a traditional construction in which men and women function as opposites to each other. Bergsma's story is set in a period in time in which the construction in which men and women function as opposites to each other not only came to a rise, but was also strongly acted upon. Rubin and Irigaray point out the importance of this issue and the necessity of breaking with these traditions, as they are still present in our society and still often put women in a secondary position to men.

In her search for the development of gender systems, Rubin investigates the component that creates and preserves sexual conventions in society. Lévi-Strauss uses the concept of 'division of labor:' economic man versus domestic woman, to ensure the union of men and women and to secure his beliefs on heterosexual marriage and the importance of the nuclear family.⁶⁰ Rubin, however, analyzes the division of labor by sex as a prohibition on the equality of men and women. Through this prohibition, the biological differences between men and women are aggravated and as a result 'gender' is created.⁶¹ When we look at the Bergsma story, it is important to use theories that delve into the realization of power division between men and women, in order to understand the power relations that are at the foundation of Bergsma's story. Especially the way in which Bergsma as a Dutch woman relates to Japanese men and Dutch men is of great value. What we should not forget is that the rules with respect to power relations between men and women have been introduced by men. In the next section I shall offer an in-depth analysis of these issues by making use of the earlier discussed theory.

1.4 Applying the theory to the case of Titia Bergsma

Men and women have in the course of the past centuries often been defined as 'different.' It is fixed in our expectations, that men are the 'active' half in a relationship between a man and a woman and that the woman is the one in this relationship who should be passively

⁶⁰ Rubin, 1975, p. 178.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 178.

waiting for him.⁶² The active man can also be labeled 'economic man,' and the passive woman as 'domestic woman,' a mere ornament to her husband. Upon arriving in Japan in 1817, Bergsma was the perfect example of how the 'domestic woman' was created in relation to the 'economic man,' through the gender discourse of the time. This cult of domesticity was created through marital relations with a male party. Gayle Rubin gives an account of the basis of female oppression by describing women's secondary position to men, as seen through the feminist lens of power relations between men and women. Bergsma's case teaches us how marriage in that sense is a crucial part of female oppression: Bergsma as a woman, was 'created' into becoming a 'domestic woman' when married to Jan Cock Blomhoff.

The Japanese shōgunate had no interest in permitting a woman to stay at Dejima, as she would neither contribute to improving trade, nor in any way improve the relationships between the two countries. When Blomhoff sent his plea to the Nagasaki governor, for giving his wife permission to stay in Dejima he referred to his own need of having his wife around to take care of him during his period of illness. This is precisely as Marx and Lévi-Strauss designate a wife as a 'necessity' for the working men, a requisite for them to function well. Although they stress the notion that women are indispensable for capitalism, women, I argue, instead are indispensable to the functioning of men, as women's presence will improve their accomplishments. This is an indirect manner of being 'indispensable.' A woman on her own is not so much a necessity to a man. However, the ideal image of a woman supporting her husband has been turned into reality through the creation of the 'domestic woman,' an invention that was supported by the gender discourse of the early 19th century. Bergsma's way of being 'indispensable' to her husband is an example of Rubin's argument about the gender discourse of that time, which created the image of indispensability of 'domestic women' to 'economic men.'

There is another example which points out that there was nothing that the Japanese regarded as 'indispensable' about Bergsma during her short stay in Dejima. When being refused permission to stay, Bergsma took an initiative of her own by sending the Nagasaki

⁶² Bordo, Susan., 1993, *"Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body,"* University of California Press, Berkeley, p. 13.

governor a plea to permit her to stay at Dejima. This degree of political interfering would possibly have been designated as a highly insulting offence by the Nagasaki governor, had the transgression been initiated by a man. However, since it was 'only a woman' who had committed the offence, the Japanese Governor regarded the matter unimportant.⁶³ By becoming mere ornaments and spectators of their husbands' careers, women such as Bergsma lose all independence and a voice of their own. Through compulsive heterosexual relationships and marriage, a distance between men and women is created by excessively stressing how different the two sexes are. Moreover, by regarding each sex incomplete without presence of the other, the many resemblances they share are suppressed, causing a negative balance between men and women because their differences instead of their similarities are stressed. Bergsma was a victim of female oppression as a 'domestic woman' being married to an 'economic man.'⁶⁴ Stressing the differences of each sex to such an extent has made Bergsma's secondary position to her husband the product of social organizations such as marriage, putting imposed gender differences at the foundation of the oppression of women.

Rubin has offered us some answers to the causes of women's secondary position to men, as seen through the feminist lens of power relations between men and women. This secondary position is for example manifested by restrictions in terms of space for movement, tasks, and opportunities. I have explored how Bergsma's secondary position to her husband was a product of European social organizations and how emphasizing the differences between men and women has led to the existence of the notion of 'gender.' Japan and the Netherlands, in those days both male dominated societies, put Bergsma in the position of being subjected to the politically powerful men. Though Bergsma was subjected to the authority of Dutch as well as Japanese men, the Dutch male traders were not in a very favorable position themselves either, as they still faced Japanese prohibitions to enter the main land of Japan. Since their abode was secluded and the early nineteenth century offered no other means for the Japanese to obtain a glimpse of foreigners, the Dutch and their language, clothing, traditions and manners became a curiosity in the eyes of the Japanese.

⁶³ Bersma, 2002, p. 99.

⁶⁴ McClintock, 1995, p. 164.

Their stay at Dejima did not go by unnoticed. I will link the topic of power relations that I have discussed above to the topic of representation in the next chapter by exploring why Bergsma was depicted in so many Japanese art pieces even though her stay in Japan was so insignificantly short. I want to find out why her short presence nevertheless have such an impact on the production of Japanese art.

Chapter 2: The Constitution of Nationalism as a Gendered Discourse

2.1 The construction of national consciousness and national identity through the origination of nation-states

In her work 'Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives' Anne McClintock advocates that "all nationalisms are gendered, all are invented, and all are dangerous [...] in the sense that they represent relations to political power and to the technologies of violence."⁶⁵ McClintock describes the position of minorities in society, women in particular, in explaining how nationalism is implicated in gender power. She claims that in no nation in the world do women have the amount of access to rights and assets as men do. In this chapter I will first explore how national consciousness is constituted as a result of people belonging to a certain nation; I will also explain how this consciousness differs in the experience of men and women.⁶⁶ Secondly, I will use Baudrillard's theory on simulacrum as a link to the Japanese tradition of the reproduction of images of Bergsma ever since she visited Japan.

McClintock describes the nation-state as "an organization which according to nationalists would ideally ensure unity and solidarity amongst the people who belong to the nation in question."⁶⁷ We have already seen in Rubin's analysis of the division of labor that the unequal relations between men and women, have become an established given and that the foundation of this division dates far back in history.⁶⁸ Rubin focusses on all sorts of populations, ranging from the inhabitants of Western, capitalist countries to the African population of Dahomey and Kuma, and Asian populations such as those inhabiting the Trobriands, the Melpa tribe in Papua New Guinea, and the Kachin tribe in Myanmar.⁶⁹ McClintock also claims that the foundation of inequality between men and women, and the

⁶⁵ McClintock, 1997, p. 89.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 90.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 89.

⁶⁸ Rubin, 1975, p. 178.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 181, p.206, p. 208

institutionalization of gender difference in the idea of popular unity, have a deep-rooted history. She points to 'nations' in general here, not to any specific countries, though later on in her work she mainly concentrates on European nation-states. McClintock claims that in no nation in the world do women have the amount of access to rights and assets as men do and therefore it is despite the ideal image of 'unity' amongst the citizens of a nation, that the constitution of nations in fact contributes to gender difference.⁷⁰ Cynthia Enloe adds to this by claiming that due to men's neglect in examining how nationalism and gender power are involved with one another, nationalisms originate mostly from masculinized memory, masculinized discomfiture and masculinized hope.⁷¹ In short, men can determine the requirements of a nation by identifying those requirements to their own frustrations and ambitions. In addition, gender difference and in particular the dominant position of men over women is the reason for male national power to be able to represent itself in any nation-state.⁷²

When we turn to the story of Titia Bergsma, we can see how her position in society exemplifies the notion that women are fabricated merely as symbolic carriers of the nation, but that they do not have any direct share in national agency.⁷³ Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias describe five central ways in which women have been implicated in nationalism, three of which can be applied to Bergsma's story:

1) Women have been implicated in nationalism as reproducers of the boundaries of national groups, through restrictions on sexual or marital relations.⁷⁴ When Bergsma was only nineteen, Jan Cock Blomhoff asked her parents for their daughter's hand, but Bergsma's parents considered her too young at the time.⁷⁵ The decision to marry Blomhoff was not

⁷⁰ McClintock, 1997, p. 89.

⁷¹ Enloe, C., 1989, *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, University of California Press, Berkeley, p. 44.

⁷² McClintock, 1997, p. 89.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

⁷⁴ Yuval-Davis, N., Anthias, F., eds., 1989, *"Women-Nation State,"* Macmillan, London, p. 7.

⁷⁵ Bersma, 2002, p. 28.

Bergsma's to make, but her parent's, the boundary being that Bergsma could not decide for herself whether she would want to marry Blomhoff. Second, after Bergsma was sent back to the Netherlands, her husband in the meantime had an extramarital relationship with a Japanese courtesan.⁷⁶ The population of every nation exists of two main groups: men and women. Women are as a 'group within the nation' imposed restrictions on sexual and marital relations by the other group in that same nation: men. The way in which an important decision is made for Bergsma as for whom she will marry is a clear example of imposing restrictions on marital relations. In addition, Bergsma cannot have an extramarital affair since she is a woman, as opposed to her husband who got sent several concubines to his abode at Dejima, since the Japanese regarded the companionship of a woman as a 'male necessity.' This way of reasoning confirms how society regarded sexual needs in the case of men as a necessity, but in the case of women it would be esteemed infidelity, making Bergsma's case an example of being imposed restrictions on sexual relations.

2) Women have been implicated in nationalism as active transmitters and producers of national culture.⁷⁷ Bergsma drew a great deal of attention when she first arrived in Japan. The Japanese had never seen a Western woman before, so they were very curious of her western looks, posture, clothing, hairstyle and ways of spending her leisure time. It is easy to understand that the appearance of the first Western woman in Japan was immediately eternalized by print designers and that these images were very popular among the Japanese audience.⁷⁸ Bergsma's stay in Japan, however short, greatly contributed to transmitting Dutch culture to Japan. The Japanese had never seen a Dutch woman until Bergsma's arrival. Since Bergsma was the sole example of a Dutch woman they had, her looks, posture, clothing and hairstyle became leading in the image the Japanese had about 'Dutch women.' For the first time, an image of 'the Dutch woman' was spread throughout Japan, implicating Bergsma in nationalism as an active transmitter of Dutch culture.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 111.

⁷⁷ Yuval-Davis, 1989, p. 7.

⁷⁸ Van Gulik, 1994, p. 161.

3) Women have been implicated in nationalism as symbolic signifiers of national difference.⁷⁹ Bergsma was the first Western woman to visit Japan and she is the typical example of a symbolically constructed bearer of the nation. She embodied Dutch national identity in the eyes of the Japanese at the beginning of the 19th century, but was denied any direct part in national agency. In addition, as Elleke Boehmer remarks, men are contiguous with each other and with the national whole, whereas women, by contrast, appear 'in a metaphoric or symbolic role'.⁸⁰ Bergsma appears in a metaphoric or symbolic role, by representing 'the Dutch wife,' the accessory of her husband. Blomhoff was the person with actual power, the man who was directly involved in national agency. The presence of Bergsma glorified the image of a well-functioning Blomhoff, by symbolizing the good wife who would stand on the side of her husband and tend to him.

By pointing out these three ways in which women have been implicated in the construction of national identities over the centuries, I have demonstrated how women such as Bergsma have been implicated in nationalism. Power relations between men and women, in other words notions on gender power, are inseparable from the realization of national consciousness and national identity.

2.2 Post-marriage: The hierarchical construction within families

Another important aspect of power division in nation-states is the notion of hierarchy within the nation and within the family. It seems like a natural fact that has rusted into our belief system that family members are to be divided in separate categories: the man as superior to the woman and the adult as superior to the child. For the incorporation of this family hierarchy into our belief systems, the idea of fixed hierarchical systems within families has been passed from generation to generation as a heritage and tradition that women have been struggling with to break through to the present. In addition, keeping hierarchies within

⁷⁹ Yuval-Davis, 1989, p. 7.

⁸⁰ Boehmer, E., 1991, "Stories of Women and Mothers: Gender and Nationalism in the Early Fiction of Flora Nwapa," in Susheila Nasta, Ed., "*Motherlands: Black Women's Writings from Africa, the Carribean and South Asia*," Women's Press, London, p. 5.

families fixed is also, within European nation-states, regarded as a confirmation that social difference is in fact a category of nature, thus making it more logical to keep the hierarchical bonds intact, since this is a 'natural given.'⁸¹

After the French Revolution (1789-1799),⁸² a system was introduced into European nation-states, which caused a woman's nationality to be determined by the country of origin of her husband. Marrying a man from a foreign country entailed that the woman would have to adopt her husband's nationality once married, thus making a woman's citizenship and belonging to a nation dependent on her marriage.⁸³ When we regard the perception of national consciousness of respectively women and men, we can therefore presume that women's sentiments regarding nation affinity, will probably be considerably weaker than a man's. As an unmarried woman, she can love and feel attached to her native country, but her future husband's nationality is decisive for her eventual belonging to a nation. When it comes to nation as a home, a woman is granted no certainty until marriage. The woman's emotional attachment to a nation is not determined by who she is as a person, but more by the person she is married to. Elleke Boehmer reinforces this notion by stating that: "the 'motherland' of male nationalism may 'not signify 'home'' and 'source' to women."⁸⁴

The narrative of Bergsma's life that was constructed as we have come to know it, centers around the year 1817, the year she visited Japan. This event took place about two decades after the introduction of the reforms that were a result of the French Revolution. I have tried to examine how Bergsma is located in a secondary position in the hierarchical classification of society. This is important in order to understand how her national identity has been realized and how this intertwines with topics in the gender discourse such as power relations and national consciousness. Bergsma is located in a secondary position in the hierarchical classification of society in two ways. First, she is in the secondary position as

⁸¹ McClintock, 1997, p. 91.

⁸² Soboul, A., 1965, "*The French Revolution: 1789-1799*," Presses Universitaires de France, California, Berkeley, preface.

⁸³ McClintock, 1997, p. 91.

⁸⁴ Boehmer, 1991, p. 5.

a child to her parents, which deprives her of the right of having a say in the matter of marrying Jan Cock Blomhoff, a decision which is made solely by her parents. Second, Bergsma is in a secondary position vis-a-vis her husband. Just as Blomhoff performs his national duty by taking up a job in Dejima, so does Bergsma perform her 'marital duty' by agreeing in Blomhoff's decision to take her with him. There were no other options for a woman in Bergsma's position than to support her husband's career by performing her domestic tasks of keeping the household and taking care of her child. Blomhoff's move to Japan implied to Bergsma a mandatory accompaniment in the move to a foreign country, away from her native country, as a consequence of her marriage and the decision that her husband made for her in this respect.

McClintock speaks of her essay as being "directly concerned with the consequences for women of the uneven gendering of the national citizen."⁸⁵ What seems to be prevalent in the modern nation-state is some sort of 'need' to keep the ideal image of 'unity of the nation' intact. As already discussed in the previous chapter on power relations, in the male-female power struggle, women were put on a side-track by governing men, by assigning to them the 'position' of domestic woman, a passive position created in order to support the husband. In the case of nation-building we can see the set up of a similar process: an ideal image of the nation is generally formed by the spread of iconography of families and domestic space.⁸⁶ In these images the woman naturally takes up an important place as women mostly do within families. However, this again creates an image of 'women's indispensability' within society, while in fact it is no more a passive position that has been created in order to support 'economic' men. This division likewise points out the imposed and different gender roles between men and women, creating two separate categories: 'active men' and 'passive women.'⁸⁷

⁸⁵ McClintock, 1997, p. 91.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 90.

⁸⁷ Bordo, 1993, p. 13.

In *Black Skin, White Masks* (1986), Frantz Fanon interprets the notion of 'familial normality' as a result of social power and even social violence.⁸⁸ In addition, Fanon argues that due to the centralization of the state, the domestication of gender power within the family has increased: "the centralization of authority in a country automatically entails a resurgence of the authority of the father."⁸⁹ Many Dutch traders had visited Japan before the arrival of Jan Cock Blomhoff, but there had been no chance for the Japanese to capture the image of a complete Dutch family until Blomhoff brought along his wife, son and two servants. As McClintock states that nations are often figured through the iconography of familial and domestic space, it is easy to understand that it was an ideal chance for Japanese print artists to be able to capture the Dutch family in their work for the first time.

In Japan, the family system was also valued highly and it was not so much different from the European family system. These similarities in norms and values concerning the ideal family system made it interesting for the Japanese to look at how Dutch family were depicted in portraits. In Japan, families were obliged to have a 'nuclear' organization, which permitted only the oldest son to marry and stay within the family. The ideal Japanese system consisted of family households that were kept intact through succession of family heads by the oldest son of each generation.⁹⁰ Younger sons and daughters had to be either adopted or married away from their parents if they wanted to have children of their own. Just like the European system, the ideal way for maintaining relations in Japanese households was through hierarchical power relations within the family and between family members. This system demanded a substantial amount of responsibilities of the Japanese male family head, but the position also accommodated him with relative authority and privileges.⁹¹ The people

⁸⁸ Fanon, 1986, p. 141-143.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 141-143

⁹⁰ Mason, R.H.P. & Caiger, J.G., 1997, "*A History of Japan, Revised Edition*," Tuttle Publishing, London, p. 249-250.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 250.

who were located in such authorial positions were expected to conduct their authority with care; if not they could be disregarded in the succession of head of households.⁹²

That this societal hierarchy and the power position of the family construction were means of social power, became all too clear to Bergsma. When Bergsma wrote a letter on her own initiative to the Governor of Nagasaki to beg him to let her stay on the island, her letter was completely disregarded. First, the Japanese authorities praised Opperhoofd Doeff for his efforts to retrieve the letter before reaching the Governor, and second, there were no consequences in this case regarding the fact that the perpetrator was 'only a woman.'⁹³ Another example of Bergsma's secondary position in society becomes clear when Bergsma resided on Batavia for some weeks before her final return to the Netherlands. Without the presence of her husband, Bergsma did not receive a warm welcome of any kind from her old acquaintances living at Batavia. This illustrates how women such as Bergsma were incorporated into nation-states only indirectly, through men, as dependent members of the family in private and public law during the beginning of the nineteenth century.⁹⁴

2.3 Representation through the use of repetition of images: Simulacrum

Earlier in this chapter, I have explored how nationalism from the very beginning is constituted as a gendered discourse that is mainly constituted by men in male dominated societies. We have come to see how power relations and hierarchical relations between men and women are deeply embedded in the origination of what we nowadays call modern nation-states. Exploring both the topics of power relations and national identity has offered us a deeper understanding of the historical and social contexts in which Bergsma's unfortunate story was set. Her experiences do not show us a mere chain of unfortunate events, but a set of events that resulted from a deep-rooted historical tradition, whereupon

⁹² Ibid., p. 250.

⁹³ Bersma., 2002, p. 99.

⁹⁴ McClintock, 1997, p. 91.

decisions made by men, were esteemed 'obvious' and 'logical' in that specific period in time and also in light of the secondary position of women to men.

I will look at the way in which Bergsma has been represented in Japanese art ever since she first arrived in Japan in 1817. From that time on, the original prints that were made of her, have been constantly copied and re-made. Sometimes the originals were re-made into identical copies of the original, sometimes the artist decided to alter the depiction of Bergsma on account of his own insights. Nevertheless, the image of Bergsma has been represented innumerable times, and is repeatedly re-used on Japanese prints and souvenirs from 1817 until this day. New souvenirs, mainly in the form of ceramics, are produced to this day.⁹⁵ However, the majority of all Japanese and foreigners who come across these souvenirs have no idea that the woman who is depicted here represents Titia Bergsma.

In exploring how the subjects of one country co-construct the national and nationalist culture of another culture, I will now turn to Jean Baudrillard's theory on 'simulacrum' and explore how his theory can be linked to the fact that Bergsma was depicted in numerous Japanese art pieces. Not much has been written about Bergsma in Dutch history and literature as she was, during her lifetime, at best considered a historical accessory to her husband, Jan Cock Blomhoff.⁹⁶ Modern studies tend to show more interest in Bergsma's life story, but written sources are unfortunately limited. Nonetheless, we have a fair idea of what she looked like due to the work of several painters, among which well-known Nagasaki painters Kawahara Keiga and his teacher Ishizaki Yūshi. These artists recorded Bergsma's appearance in over 500 different etchings, drawings, paintings, woodblock prints and effigies.⁹⁷ Even though her stay in Japan was short, Bergsma had an enormous impact on the production of Japanese art. As the first Western woman in 160 years Japanese artists laid eyes on, Bergsma's picture was often used and re-used in numerous art pieces and souvenirs.

In his work, Kooijman discusses Baudrillard's theory of simulacrum and his research on America and American pop culture. He identifies American pop culture as a form of

⁹⁵ Close up: *Verliefd op Titia*, 09:30.

⁹⁶ Bergsma., 2002, p. 18.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

hyperreality and has thoroughly put the image we have of the ‘realness’ of America to the test by analyzing the extent to which America can be called authentic as a nation:

“Baudrillard sees America as the ultimate simulacrum, no longer an artificial copy of an authentic original, but an endless chain of copies referring to each other.”⁹⁸ This phenomenon of endlessly copying images into new images that are re-used over time over and over again, is recognizable in the process of the infinite image copying of Bergsma, as executed by the Japanese. Even nowadays, images of Bergsma can be found on Japanese articles of everyday use such as Japanese *noren* (暖簾)⁹⁹ and especially on earthenware such as tea cups, tea pots, vases, chopstick holders, canisters, plates and rice bowls (Appendix: fig 1, 2, 3, 4). To this day, new articles/objects that have Bergsma’s picture on them are being produced.¹⁰⁰

The images of Bergsma that have been depicted on objects that are manufactured nowadays, are often rough sketches of the detailed paintings that were produced 200 years ago. Although facial features are by no means detailed reproductions of the original paintings, it can easily be established whether the woman on a certain object is Bergsma or not: Bergsma can be recognized by means of one or more of the following three simple accessories: a red necklace, the dress, and the small umbrella.¹⁰¹ In endlessly copying images into new images, one out of these three complements can be found in about every image. Baudrillard discusses that it is not so much of importance that America is the ultimate simulacrum, but that it is more relevant to try to comprehend in what way American culture works, by perceiving America as a hyperreality.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ Kooijman, J., 2008, *Fabricating the Absolute Fake: America in Contemporary Pop Culture*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, p. 17.

⁹⁹ Split curtain used in place of doors as entrances to Japanese shops, and as doorways and decorations inside Japanese homes.

¹⁰⁰ Close up: *Verliefd op Titia*, 09:30.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 10:13.

¹⁰² Kooijman, 2008, p. 70-71.

If we compare the reproduced images of Bergsma with the notion of America as a hyperreality, we can in fact state that the depictions of Bergsma as they are nowadays are also a form of hyperreality. The red necklace, the dress and the small umbrella have become three recognizable features that do not represent Bergsma herself, but the image we perceive of Bergsma. Baudrillard stresses that “the original ‘America’ no longer exists, as it is already a copy of a copy, a simulacrum, just another sign in an endless chain of signs that only refer to each other.”¹⁰³ Just the same is the case with the infinite large number of copies of copies of images of Bergsma that have been spread throughout Japan. It has come to the point where any depiction of a Western woman wearing a red necklace, a dress and holding a small umbrella can be labeled ‘Titia Bergsma.’ In this section, I have discussed how the image of Bergsma has been represented over and over, and is repeatedly re-used on Japanese prints and souvenirs from 1817 until this day. For my next chapter, I will more examine more closely how the Japanese prints have developed through time, how Japanese art was influenced by Western influences, and how the numerous depiction of Bergsma have altered under these developments.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

Chapter 3: The Representation of Titia Bergsma in Japanese Art

3.1 Depictions of red-haired barbarians in *Nagasaki-e*

In this chapter, I explore how national and ethnic identity are perceived as representative from one country to another. I focus on the representation of Titia Bergsma and the ways she was depicted in Japanese art, by Japanese male artists. The paintings I will examine for this part of my thesis belong to a separate category of the total of Japanese works that were made at the beginning of 19th century Japan. In the 19th century, the most common way to produce paintings, was by using woodblocks to print text, images or patterns on paper. The official term for these woodblock prints is *ukiyo-e* (浮世絵). Artists from various Japanese cities used this technique of producing prints and it was common for each city to have its own printing style.¹⁰⁴

The prints that I will examine, have some very distinctive features of their own as they were manufactured in the city of Nagasaki, which is why they are called Nagasaki prints or *Nagasaki-e* (長崎絵). *Nagasaki-e* are famous for their depictions of the foreigners, especially the Dutch, that resided in Japan. Other people that were depicted in these prints were Javanese servants and Chinese merchants. Views of Dejima and images of the Dutch ships were also very popular.¹⁰⁵ The introduction of *ukiyo-e* made it possible that prints of all sorts of topics that were popular in those days, could easily spread throughout Japan. Nagasaki was located far away from Japan's main cultural and economic center Edo, and traveling merchants were eager to visit Nagasaki and catch a glimpse of the foreigners that lived there. The policy of the government to shield these foreigners from the citizens as much as possible was successful, which led to great disappointment amongst the curious Japanese.¹⁰⁶ The *Nagasaki-e*, however, rendered a clear image of the lives of the Dutch, and since these prints cost only little money they soon became popular souvenirs. In many

¹⁰⁴ Van Gulik, 1994, p. 167.

¹⁰⁵ Stellingwerf, J., 1983, "*Komo-jin: Roodharige Vreemdelingen op Dejima*," Uitgeverij T. Wever b.v., Franeker, p. 13.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

Nagasaki-e, the depictions of the Dutch carried attributes with them that the Japanese regarded as exotic curiosities in those days: amongst others pipes, wine bottles, glasses, walking-sticks, watches, dogs and musical instruments.¹⁰⁷ *Nagasaki-e* take up a special position in the developmental history of Japanese print art as they demonstrate, in an eye-catching manner, how the Dutch that were allowed to reside on the island as the only Western people, were viewed and depicted on print by the Japanese.¹⁰⁸

In *Nagasaki-e* the Dutch were portrayed as ‘different,’ displaying Japanese and Dutch as *others* to each other on levels of culture, politics, customs and appearances. The Dutch were called *kōmō-jin*, which means ‘red haired barbarians.’ The first part in this term, ‘red hair’ most likely refers to the red hair that some Dutch men had, but used here in a generalizing manner. It is unlikely that all Dutch merchants who came to Japan had red hair, but it is probably the red hair of all hair colors that stood out as most striking to the Japanese, thus making it an interesting component. The result was that the Dutch were depicted with red hair in *Nagasaki-e*. Donald Keene argues in his work *The Japanese Discovery of Europe* that the red hair does not so much refer to actual red hair, but that it implies the appearance of a demonic being.¹⁰⁹

As for the second part of the term ‘red haired barbarians,’ the reason that the Dutch were referred to as barbarians has probably to do with the fact that the Dutch were seen as uncivilized. The principle reason for the Japanese’ contempt towards the Dutch, was the fact that they were unacquainted with the traditional Chinese teachings and the writings of the Chinese sages.¹¹⁰ The Japanese were amazed that the Dutch barbarians were able to produce refined articles in spite of being so ignorant of the Chinese teachings, a sin which in to the Japanese put them on the same level with animals. Another reason for contempt was that the Dutch lacked a ritual order in their hierarchical social order. The Chinese, with whom the Japanese maintained trade relations as well, had a strong hierarchical social order

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹⁰⁸ Van Gulik, 1994, p. 169.

¹⁰⁹ Keene, D., 1952, “*The Japanese Discovery of Europe*,” Stanford University Press, Stanford, p. 16.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

which had a ritual order as a foundation. This ritual order was regarded the most important of the two orders. The Dutch, who did in fact have a social hierarchy, namely with a king as their leader, were still regarded inferior to the Chinese since they lacked a ritual order.¹¹¹

We can see how the Japanese viewed the Dutch at the beginning of the 19th century through historical readings from this period. *The debate over seclusion and restoration*, is a compilation of personal stories from Japanese who lived during the 19th century and all had their own ways of regarding foreigners.¹¹² The imperial court had appointed generals to lead campaigns of suppression, called ‘barbarian subjugating generalissimos,’ but these generals were heavily criticized by Aizawa Seishisai (1782-1863), who was member of the Mito branch of the Tokugawa, appointed to guard the interest of the ruling house.¹¹³ In his *New Theses*, Seishisai describes his concerns on the security of the nation and the increasing ‘barbarian’ threat: “Foreign barbarians standby off our coasts awaiting their chance [...] Mediocre leaders let the barbarians go unchecked under their very eyes, calling them just ‘fishing traders’¹¹⁴ [...] If instead the shōgunate issues orders to the entire nation in unmistakable terms to smash the barbarians whenever they come into sight, and to treat them openly as our nation’s foes [...] this is a great opportunity such as comes once in a thousand years. It must not be lost.”¹¹⁵ The Mito saying ‘Revere the Emperor, Repel the Barbarian,’ was very successful in activating nationalistic feelings amongst citizens. As a consequence, sentiments of dislike towards the barbarians were raised amongst the population.¹¹⁶ Samurai Sakuma Shōzan (1811-1864), was not blinded by xenophobia in spite of being supportive of this saying. Instead, he devoted himself to the learning of Dutch, as this would grant him direct access to Dejima and to the sources of knowledge made available only through the Dutch

¹¹¹ Blussé, L., Rimmelink, W., Smits, I., 2000, *“Bewogen Betrekkingen: 400 jaar Nederland-Japan,”* Stichting Educatieve Omroep Teleac/Not/de auteurs, p. 79.

¹¹² de Bary, Gluck, Tiedemann, 2006, preface.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 519-520.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 521.

¹¹⁵ Takasu, Y., 1941, *Shinron kowa*, Heibonsha, Tokyo, p. 71-72.

¹¹⁶ de Bary, Gluck, Tiedemann, 2006, p. 529.

trading relation. Nevertheless, he remained supporter of the 'Revere the Emperor, Repel the Barbarian' saying.¹¹⁷

What we can conclude from the aforementioned stories is that Japanese's feelings towards the Dutch in Japan, were quite ambivalent. The Mito branch was an influential institution in encouraging nationalistic feelings amongst Japanese citizens, and officials such as Seishisai endeavored to spread stories of the uncivilized foreigners in order to have them banned from Japan. Shōzan, a Japanese official who had direct contact with the Dutch, was in spite of being in favor of introducing Western methods in Japan, still a supporter of the 'Revere the Emperor, Repel the Barbarian' motto.¹¹⁸ Influential Japanese officials such as Seishisai and Shōzan had a strong impact on the overall national sentiment towards the Dutch. It is therefore not surprising that these sentiments were related in depictions of the Dutch in Japanese art.

3.2 The Development of 19th century painting styles

Titia Bergsma has been depicted in Japanese *Nagasaki-e* since her arrival in Japan in 1817. From then on, the original images have been copied and re-made. Sometimes the originals were re-made into identical copies, sometimes the artist took the liberty to alter the contents based on his own insights. Because the making of *Nagasaki-e* has been evolving through the years, it is interesting to closer examine what techniques were prevalent during the time Bergsma was so often portrayed. This will help us gain a better perception on how the original prints are to be analyzed in relation to the prints that were copied and re-made decades after Bergsma left Japan. As for these recent prints, they were often manufactured with rather free artistic interpretation, as the artists in question had never met or seen Bergsma with their own eyes. This meant that their interpretation of Bergsma and the manner in which they portrayed her in their work, was purely based on the Bergsma portraits made by their predecessors.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 530-531.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 531.

Another important reason for examining the development of 19th century painting techniques, is the fact that Western painting techniques started to acquire more influence in Japan during the course of the 19th century. The Japanese portrait tradition differed from Western portraiture and as the Japanese gradually familiarized themselves with Western painting traditions, these innovations added a new layer to the paintings. For this reason, I will first look closer into the development of 19th century painting techniques and painting styles and analyze how these developments have led to a constantly altering reproduction of the image of Bergsma.

Compared to the *ukiyo-e* that were manufactured in big cities such as Edo and Osaka, the style of *Nagasaki-e* is often designated 'naïve,' as it leaves a rather primitive, rural impression.¹¹⁹ However, as opposed to the *ukiyo-e* from Edo and Osaka, manufacturers of *Nagasaki-e* never aimed at producing sophisticated art, as low-priced *Nagasaki-e* were popular and sold very well as cheap souvenirs.¹²⁰ The fact that *Nagasaki-e* were very popular in spite of the basic painting techniques, may have been the main reason why manufacturers of *Nagasaki-e* never aimed at improving and refining painting techniques in the first place. In the beginning, colors were applied by hand and later on by a hectographs, *kappa-zuri* (コンニャク版).¹²¹ The rather labor-intensive manner, in which colors were applied, was a reason for the number of colors to be very limited compared to the coloring in *ukiyo-e*. In addition, *Nagasaki-e* were designated souvenirs instead of art. They were seldom signed by their makers, and only occasionally branded by their publishers, which kept *Nagasaki-e* very low-profile in the art scene compared to other *ukiyo-e*.¹²²

However, *Nagasaki-e* has known some changes and this development can be roughly divided into three stages. The division is based on the techniques that were used, varieties in the way of depicting the subject and the stylistic development of what started as a primitive

¹¹⁹ Van Gulik, 1994, p. 167.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 167.

¹²¹ Stellingwerff, 1983, p. 15.

¹²² Van Gulik, 1994, p. 168.

print, and became a more refined sort of print.¹²³ Nevertheless, the simplicity of the prints was preserved at all times. The first period (1741-1800) is not of real importance here, as Bergsma did not make her entrance until 1817, yet some important innovations were introduced in this period. At the beginning, only black and white was used for prints, but the use of colors was introduced in the course of the first period. Hectographs were also introduced in the first period. This was the direct result of the great competition between print artists.¹²⁴ Hectographs were convenient as they made the coloring go a lot faster than by hand. The method of copying prints by means of hectographs remained very popular during the second period (1800-1843), the period in which prints of Bergsma became popular, and it is argued that about twelve publishing companies owed their existence to the popularity of *Nagasaki-e*.¹²⁵

Opposed to the way of depicting subjects in a sort of stiff, portrait-like manner which was customary in the first period, an important development in the way of depicting subjects was introduced in the second period (1800-1843). Subjects were now more often portrayed during their daily activities, for example while reading, writing, hunting or taking a stroll. In addition, an essential development in the number of popular themes can be noticed as well, with an increase in the depiction of historical events and actualities.¹²⁶ These changes have greatly contributed to our knowledge on how the Dutch were viewed by the Japanese, as prints of daily activities and historical events provide better material for analysis than prints that only depict their subjects seated in their chairs.

The Dejima logbooks that were kept by the Dutch during their stay at Dejima offer an impressively detailed overview of the daily activities of the Dutch and the historical events that took place at Dejima from 1641-1859.¹²⁷ The logbooks therefore offer an extensive historical reference work, as opposed to the prints that are a more subjective source of

¹²³ Stellingwerff, 1983, p. 14.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹²⁷ Veenhoven, W.A., 1950, "*Strijd om Deshima*," Drukkerij J.B. Hemelsoet, Bloemendaal.

information, in which exaggerations of exterior features of the Dutch are not uncommon. Because of the historical facts recorded in the Dejima logbooks, historians have been able to place these prints in their historical context. Since only a limited number of *Nagasaki-e* bears a publisher's mark or any other supplementary information, it would have been difficult without the Dejima logbooks to trace the circumstances that a print was based on and what the contents were meant to imply. Historians who have committed themselves to this task, have already linked a fair amount of the original Bergsma prints, print copies and variations on the original prints, to its year of production and the artist in question, which aids my analysis of Bergsma prints.

During the *sakoku* period, foreign influences were limited to a minimum, which consequently resulted in a limited exchange of knowledge, in culture and art. The Japanese portrait tradition was quite different from Western portraiture, and Japanese painters seemed to lack particular techniques to make their *Nagasaki-e* more lively. Western artists aimed at capturing the individual's uniqueness of character and remarkable personal features in their work, bringing the illusion of a real person to the painting by three-dimensional forms.¹²⁸ Japanese artists never applied illusionistic techniques, thus preserving the simplicity of their paintings of using two-dimensional levels by the use of linear modulation.¹²⁹ It is often argued that East Asian art lacks chiaroscuro, a technique often applied by Western artists in order to create three-dimensional levels.¹³⁰ Whereas Western portraiture aimed at portraying the subject's exterior features in the most detailed manner possible, the Japanese highly valued clouding imperfections in the exterior features by 'perfecting' or omitting irregularities that were in the eyes of the artist.¹³¹

¹²⁸ Browne, L.M., 1985, "Portraits of Foreigners by Kawahara Keiga," in *Ars Orientalis*, Vol. 15, p. 31.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹³⁰ Yoshida, K. & Durrans, B. (eds.), 2008, "アジアとヨーロッパの肖像 Self and Other: Portraits from Asia and Europe," in Thijs Weststeijn, *Portraits of China and Japan: The Case of the Dutch Golden Age*, National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka, p. 276.

¹³¹ Browne, 1985, p. 31.

One of the outstanding artists in the portraiture of the Dutch, is Kawahara Keiga. He was a young painter who introduced a combination of Eastern and Western painting styles. The compositions he made were typically Japanese in origin: detailed depictions of people or objects in front of a large background that was solid of color.¹³² The use of perspective in his work is also traditionally Japanese. Works seem to be two-dimensional as a result of the lack of chiaroscuro.¹³³ Still, Keiga's portraits are notably progressive despite the fact that he grew up in a very isolationist environment that shunned foreigners.¹³⁴ He made use of a shading technique that was Western-inspired and he applied this technique around the eyes, nose, chin and lips of the subjects in his paintings.¹³⁵ Ishizaki Yūshi brought his pupil Keiga along with him on his visits to Dejima, where Keiga could meet the Dutch and observe their customs.¹³⁶ At Dejima, Keiga also had direct access to the art works the Dutch had brought along from the West. This was another primary source of inspiration for his work in terms of techniques and styles. Keiga achieved fame as one of the most competent painters of foreign subjects and, as his contacts with Dutch traders improved and became more frequent through the years, the style and quality of his work improved. Keiga became a celebrated artist, whose work is of vital importance to our knowledge of Japan during the Edo period.¹³⁷

I have examined how the production of *Nagasaki-e* has developed through time. The introduction of inventions such as color prints and hectographs increased the production and sales of *Nagasaki-e*. Painter Kawahara Keiga introduced a combination of Eastern and Western painting styles that was traditional in terms of composition and technique and innovative in terms of shading techniques. Preserving stereotypes in prints was a way of conceding to disappointed Japanese visitors who had come to Nagasaki in hopes of catching

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 32.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹³⁷ Blussé, L., W. Rummelink, I. Smits (eds), 2000, *Bridging the Divide: 400 years The Netherlands – Japan*, Hotei Publishing, Leiden, p. 167.

a glimpse of the Dutch.¹³⁸ By buying *Nagasaki-e*, preferably one that displayed the Dutch as red-haired barbarians, people were still able to return home and tell exciting stories about the Dutch. It is therefore questionable to what extent the majority of *Nagasaki-e* shows a truthful image of the Dutch in Japan, especially prints of Bergsma, who despite her short stay in Japan has been depicted in numerous prints. The manner in which she was depicted has developed from ‘depicting Titia Bergsma’ to ‘depicting the concept/idea/image of Titia Bergsma,’ and soon began the period in which everyone who manufactured her pictures had never seen her in person. In the next section, I will closely observe several images of Bergsma. I will explore to what extent depictions of Bergsma were based on reality, and to what extent they were fictive inventions of creative artists.

3.3 Analyzing Bergsma’s depictions in *Nagasaki-e* and Japanese paintings

In this paragraph I will look at the representation of Titia Bergsma in several Japanese prints and paintings. It is often argued that several of these prints are either partially or complete inventions of the artist’s imagination. I will therefore try to determine to what extent the changes in her depictions were either based on reality or were invented by the artist.

Many *Nagasaki-e* were produced through woodblock printing techniques, in order to guarantee fast re-printing for sale purposes. However, paintings in the category of fine art were nonetheless manufactured occasionally and one such occasion was the arrival of the Blomhoff family. The Blomhoff family included the first non-East Asian women to be seen in Japan for 150 years, so naturally they provoked interest. The most accomplished painters of Nagasaki, Ishizaki Yūshi and Kawahara Keiga were granted direct access to Dejima. They created the most perceptive paintings of the Western women. The painting of the Blomhoff family by Ishizaki Yūshi, is rather stiff, without affection or interaction between the family members (Appendix: fig. 5).¹³⁹ Each individual is seated in a chair or on the floor, staring into empty space. Even though all the women face the direction where Blomhoff is seated, and Blomhoff’s body is positioned in the direction of the women and the infant, there is no eye

¹³⁸ Van Gulik, 1994, p. 167.

¹³⁹ Browne, 1985, p. 33.

contact, body language, or signs in posture that convey any form of contact between the family members. The clear blue eyes of the Dutch individuals create a somewhat hypnotizing effect that was possibly exaggerated, as it came across as 'exotic' to the Japanese.¹⁴⁰ Unlike the *Nagasaki-e*, which are known for their sketchy brushwork and coloring, the subtlety in this painting is extraordinary in regard to detail in clothing and furniture. This is especially visible in the lace in Bergsma's dress and the intricate parts of Blomhoff's attire that are colored gold in the Blomhoff family portraits.¹⁴¹

Earlier on in this chapter, I have explained about two distinctive periods in the development of *Nagasaki-e*. The Blomhoffs resided in Japan at the time of the second period (1800-1843), when the development of painting had already progressed considerably. The Blomhoff family portraits were produced in a period during which it became customary in Japan to portray subjects during their daily activities, for example while reading or writing. Nevertheless, the family is depicted in a stiff, portrait-like manner that is typical of Japanese picture painting during the first period (1741-1800) instead.¹⁴²

The painting of the Blomhoff family that is discussed here is located at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. Ishizaki and Keiga have made several copies of the Blomhoff family portrait with the exact same composition as this one. In addition, they have made several variations on the original composition, either leaving people out of the work, or altering the location of a person within the composition. The works that bear the same composition as the painting of Ishizaki we have discussed earlier, can only be told apart by some minor details. What is more, it is not even likely that this Blomhoff family composition by Ishizaki Yūshi is the first version ever made. An alternative version of the Blomhoff family portrait was made by Keiga, showing some minor differences with Ishizaki's work (Appendix: fig. 6). In this composition one of the servants that is present in Ishizaki's work is absent in Keiga's work. Even more interesting is the fact that Keiga's version of the family portrait shows us a minor form of communication taking place between Blomhoff and his son.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

¹⁴² Stellingwerff, 1983, p. 15.

Blomhoff is making a small effort at interacting with his son by means of a hand gesture of his left hand.¹⁴³ In Keiga's work Bergsma is still seated on the couch. Her head and hair seem to be enlarged, which is suiting her overall body proportions. There are no other noteworthy changes. In one of the variations that Ishizaki made of this composition, only the women and Johannes are depicted. Blomhoff in his chair is completely omitted (Appendix: fig. 7). This exemplifies the level of artistic freedom of Japanese painters when making reproductions of original paintings.

The Blomhoff family painting was most likely immediately remade into a pornographic painting (Appendix: fig. 8). This work is attributed to Keiga, although the dating cannot be proven.¹⁴⁴ *Shunga* (春画), Japanese erotic prints, was a very popular genre in Edo time Japan. The Japanese had a high voyeuristic interest in the sexuality of the Dutch, being at its highest point at the beginning of the 19th century, an interest that was probably reinforced by Blomhoff and Bergsma's visit to Japan.¹⁴⁵ The painting called "Captain Blomhoff and his wife, during her brief stay on Dejima, 1817," is part of a set of twenty pictures in which Europeans are depicted in sexual situations, either with each other or with Japanese.¹⁴⁶ In this particular *shunga* picture, Blomhoff and Bergsma are lying on a lion-legged sofa.¹⁴⁷ The sofa comes up in a second picture where Blomhoff and the Maruyama courtesan Itohagi lie on it (Appendix: fig. 9). It is unlikely that these *shunga* compositions have been drawn from the model of Bergsma and Blomhoff posing in front of the Keiga. In order to fortify this statement, I would argue that the woman in the picture is not Bergsma, but in fact the wet-nurse Petronella Munts, because Munts is easily recognizable by her white bonnet with blue ribbon, and her attire consisting of a dark skirt and white top with

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 40.

¹⁴⁴ Screech, T., 2009, "Sex and the Floating World: Erotic Images in Japan, 1700-1820," Reaktion Books, London, p. 293.

¹⁴⁵ Leupp, G.P., 2003, "Interracial Intimacy in Japan: Western Men and Japanese Women, 1543-1900," Continuum Books, New York, p. 114.

¹⁴⁶ Screech, 2009, p. 293.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 294.

small flower print. These are the clothes Munts wears in the Blomhoff family portraits, and they are the same clothes as the woman in the *shunga* picture is wearing. It can therefore be argued that the woman in this picture is not Titia Bergsma, but Petronella Munts. Even if it really happened that Munts was having an affair with Blomhoff, it is most unlikely that a Japanese painter who was by no means involved in the personal lives of the Dutch, was in the position to capture this event in one of his paintings. It thus seems more logical that the composition was made up by the artist. It may have been for this reason, that Munts instead of Bergsma, was mistakenly portrayed in the *shunga*. The paintings seem to be expressions of Japanese sexual perversity, more than historical truthful representations.

What is noteworthy about the Blomhoff family paintings, is the fact that Bergsma is wearing the red necklace that has become one of the three distinguishable features in her more recent depictions on prints and souvenirs. Bergsma is also depicted in the Blomhoff family painting with intense white skin, exceptional blue eyes, and a nose that seems excessively large. In paintings of Western women, the blue eyes, white skin and large nose are iconographic features that were often exaggerated by Japanese artists and were thus a way of generalizing the image of Western women.¹⁴⁸ In addition, Bergsma is depicted with red, curly hair, the characteristics of *kōmō-jin*. Even though the wet-nurse Munts is wearing a bonnet in every portrait we can find of her, a little bit of her red hair is nearly always visible from underneath the bonnet. However, the image of Bergsma that has been prevalent for years, is changing. In a 20th century Japanese cartoon on Bergsma's life, her hair is suddenly blond instead of red.¹⁴⁹ There is no historical evidence on the actual hair color of Bergsma, but as she has repeatedly been depicted with red hair, there is no clear reason for the sudden change of hair color from red to blond. We can only assume that the appearance of Bergsma that has been prevalent for years, is gradually adapting itself to a present-day image of the Dutch: as a nation with mainly blonde hair instead of red.

A genre that became very popular in the production of *Nagasaki-e*, was that of the Dutch official and the servant, in Bergsma's case the Dutch woman and the servant

¹⁴⁸ Browne, 1985, p. 33.

¹⁴⁹ Close up: Verliefd op Titia, 08:17.

(Appendix: fig. 10). This genre originated from the fact that the Dutch regularly brought servants from Batavia with them.¹⁵⁰ I believe that this genre was not only popular because it was a common sight for those visiting Dejima to see Bergsma being accompanied by a dark maid. I argue that the fascination of the Japanese with Bergsma's pale skin and blue eyes was reinforced by contrasting her with the maid with dark skin and dark eyes. The contrast in skin color made Bergsma look even more pale and the black maid more exotic. There are two pictures I would like to discuss here. The first work is a *Nagasaki-e* of Bergsma, Munts and Johannes, the second is a painting of Bergsma, Munts, Johannes and Maraty (Appendix: fig. 11 & fig. 12). The composition in both works is very similar, apart from the absence of Maraty in the *Nagasaki-e*. We cannot be sure about which of these works preceded the other, as this is another example of re-making original art work through the personal interpretation of the artist. We cannot know if Maraty was present or absent in the original composition. Therefore we do not know whether the artist of the painting has either omitted Maraty, or added her. We can only guess as to why the artist changed the composition. In any event, these works fortify the assumption that *Nagasaki-e* are rarely full historical reproductions. This knowledge is interesting in relation to the representation of Bergsma in Japanese prints and paintings, because it again adds to the presumption that not all depictions are truthfull.

Nagasaki author Satō Chūryō¹⁵¹ wrote at the beginning of the 19th century: "Western women have very long noses and white complexions. Though extremely beautiful, they neither talk nor smile. They move people by inner emotions, which they are careful never to reveal outwardly. For this reason, artists can draw only their countenances and are unable to reach their inner feelings."¹⁵² This statement by Satō Chūryō explains why certain features of Bergsma were exaggerated or even fabricated, as there was apparently a lack of inspiration for depicting Bergsma's inner feelings. The evidence that the Japanese liked to adapt the looks of women in their paintings can also be found elsewhere. The foreign sailors

¹⁵⁰ Browne, 1985, p. 33.

¹⁵¹ Satō Chūryō, in a section entitled "Ranga" (Dutch Painting), in his *Chūryō manroku*, reprinted in *Nihon zuihitsu taisei*, ed. Junsaburō Hayakawa, vol. 30, p. 69.

¹⁵² Leupp, 2003, p. 33.

who visited the women in Nagasaki's red light district, often requested portraits of these concubines. The local Japanese remarked that the Europeans insisted on images that portrayed the true likenesses of the women, instead of taking satisfaction in the pictures in which the women looks were perfected by the artist.¹⁵³ This Japanese style of turning women into real beauties, *bijin* (美人) in their work was absolutely misunderstood by the Europeans.¹⁵⁴ The depictions in these portraits make clear to us that likeness in Japanese prints was only relative. The ideals of Western portraiture differed considerably from those of Japan. Western artists aimed at capturing the true likeness in their portraits, as opposed to the Japanese, who thought this scientific exactness was irrelevant and believed that anyone important enough to have his or her portrait painted, was to be respected by giving him or her perfected forms and features.¹⁵⁵

In regard to Bergsma, we can conclude that she was placed in the category of the "Dutch," instead of the category '*bijin*,' as she is always depicted with stereotypical Dutch features. We cannot know if the paintings were made to her likeness, but it seems that artists such as Keiga and Ishizaki did not attempt to perfect her forms and features, because some facial linings and wrinkles are clearly visible in their renderings of the Blomhoff family.

In this chapter of my thesis, I have tried to determine to what extent the depictions of Bergsma in Japanese art were based on reality or on the artists imagination. I have found that depictions of Bergsma more often than not contain components of falsehood. Whereas Western artists aimed at capturing true likeness in their portraits, the Japanese thought scientific exactness was irrelevant. The Japanese courtesans that were often depicted in prints that were taken home by the Dutch as souvenirs, were in prints often turned into *bijin*, a tradition stemming from the Japanese notion that anyone important enough to have his or her portrait painted, should be given perfected forms and features. In spite of being a woman, Bergsma was never depicted as a *bijin*, but always as a *kōmō-jin*. The notions on the features of Dutch red-haired barbarians, that were usually men, had influenced the

¹⁵³ Screech, T., 2012, "Obtaining Images: Art, Production and Display in Edo Japan," Reaktion Books Ltd, London, p. 191 & 193.

¹⁵⁴ Churyo, S. & Manroku, C., 1976, "Yoshikawa Kobunkan," in *Nihon zuihitsu taisei* 3, Vol. 3, p 22-355; p. 69.

¹⁵⁵ Browne, 2003, p. 31.

depiction of Dutch women. Both Bergsma and Munts were depicted with red, curly hair, white complexions, blue eyes and large noses. I argue that in order to emphasize her Western features, Bergsma was often depicted next to her black servant. In my comparative research on re-makings of paintings and prints, I have encountered how easily servants were either added, or left out of newly produced works (Appendix: fig. 5-6 & fig. 11-12). The erotic *shunga* in which Munts was depicted with Blomhoff instead of Bergsma, is not a solid historical reproduction either. Depictions such as this one, show that the Japanese fancied the *shunga* genre and that they took a voyeuristic interest in the sexuality of the Dutch.¹⁵⁶ Nagasaki artists exaggerated or fabricated certain characteristics of Bergsma when they depicted her.

¹⁵⁶ Leupp, 2003, p. 114.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have researched how Japan's view of Titia Bergsma in 1817, was prescriptive for the representation of foreign gender types as seen in Japanese art. I have explained the relevance of the historical context in which Bergsma's story was set, by examining Japan's relationship with the Netherlands during the Edo period and exploring the origination of power relations between men and women as a result of social organizations. Bergsma functioned as a link between the Netherlands and Japan as she was used as a pawn in the power struggle between Dutch and Japanese merchants. This, together with the secondary position she held to her husband as a result of social organizations, was decisive in Bergsma's inevitable eviction from Japan.

Subsequently, I have explored the constitution of nationalism as a gendered discourse in male dominated societies and explained how unequal relations between men and women and hierarchical relations between family members have become an established given, both in the Netherlands and in Japan. Bergsma's position in society was therefore merely a symbolic position, without any direct share in national agency.¹⁵⁷ Bergsma was only implicated in nationalism as reproducer of the boundaries of a national group, as active transmitter and producer of national culture, and as symbolic signifier of national difference.¹⁵⁸ Both topics on power relations and national identity have offered us a deeper understanding of historical and social contexts in which Bergsma's story was set. I have connected both topics to my final chapter on representation of Bergsma in Japanese art.

Though Bergsma's stay at Dejima was insignificantly short, she was depicted in numerous art pieces and souvenirs. As a woman, she had no direct power or agency in the decision of her return to the Netherlands, but the short presence of the first Western woman the Japanese had ever laid eyes on, nevertheless proved to be very powerful as an important source of inspiration for the production of Japanese art and souvenirs. I have linked the topic of national identity to the topic of representation in the sense that the image that was constructed of Bergsma in Japanese art, was either exaggerated, or invented.

¹⁵⁷ McClintock, 1997, p. 89.

¹⁵⁸ Yuval-Davis, N., Anthias, F., eds., 1989, *Women-Nation State*, Macmillan, London, p. 7.

I have examined to what extent depictions of Bergsma portray a realistic images of what Bergsma must have looked like. Many Japanese were quite ambivalent towards the presence of foreigners in Japan, so they portrayed the Dutch as barbarians, in quite a negative, stereotypical manner. The notions on the features of Dutch red-haired barbarians, that were usually men, had influenced the depiction of Dutch women such as well. In Japanese art, the Dutch were portrayed as 'different,' positioning the Dutch and the Japanese as others to each other on levels of culture, customs and appearances. Emphasizing Dutch peculiarities has made these features iconic representations of the Dutch.

I have lived in Nagasaki for over a year, and during this year I have come across several stores where souvenirs with Bergsma's depiction were sold. I have always found it very interesting how Bergsma's 'Western' looks are still used as typical of Dutch appearance in Japanese art and souvenirs. During my stay in Nagasaki in 2010, I learned that the overall image that the Japanese have of Dutch appearances nowadays, is limited to blond hair and blue eyes. This may differ from the image that was prevalent during the 19th century, red curly hair and long noses, but it is nevertheless a stereotypical and generalizing image of the Dutch population. With this in mind, it is no surprise to learn that the image of Bergsma that has been prevalent for years, is gradually changing and adapting itself to a present-day image of the Dutch. This has already happened in Bergsma's depiction in a Japanese cartoon, where her red hair is suddenly replaced by a blond coupe. Depictions of Bergsma in Japanese arts and souvenirs have not yet vanished from Japanese grounds, but are instead preserved and reproduced. Nonetheless, we can expect the image of Bergsma and the depictions to adapt themselves to a modern image of Bergsma. To the Japanese, she still embodies the Dutch national identity.

Appendix



Fig. 1. Vessel



Fig. 2. Figurine



Fig. 3. Vase



Fig. 4. Tea cups, porcelain wares



Fig. 5. *Ishizaki Yūshi, The Blomhoff family, c.1817*

standing screen, ink and color on paper at the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam



Fig. 6. *Kawahara Keiga, The Blomhoff family, c.1817*

Kobe City Museum of Nanban Art



Fig. 7. *Ishizaki Yūshi, c.1817*



Fig. 8.



Fig. 9.



Fig. 10.



Fig. 11.



Fig. 12.

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Close up: Verliefd op Titia, 09-03-2008, (visited on October 22, 2013)

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