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Adam Clulow. *The Company and the Shogun: The Dutch Encounter with Tokugawa Japan.* Columbia Studies in International and Global History Series. New York: Columbia University Press, 2014. 352 pp. $55.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-231-16428-3.

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A. Clulow: The Company and the Shogun

Much has changed since Arano Yasunori and Ronald Toby argued that, tight travel proscriptions notwithstanding, Tokugawa Japan (1600-1868) was not a âclosed country,â but involved in trade and diplomacy as the center of its own regional order. Arano Yasunori, Kinsei nihon to higashi ajia [Early Modern Japan and East Asia], Tokyo 1988; Ronald Toby, State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan, Princeton 1984. Since then, the Tokugawa experience has come to be understood as one of many ways in which polities in the early modern period dealt with âearly globalization.â Even general-reader introductions now speak of the edicts in the 1630s that regulated trade and travel as the Tokugawa governmentâs âglobalization politics,â and survey works of the period from a world history perspective conceptualize the region as âinteractive Early Modern Asia.â Åishi Manabu, Edo no gaikÅ senryaku [Edoâs Diplomatic Strategy], Tokyo 2009; John Wills, Interactive Early Modern Asia: Scholarship from a New Generation, in: International Journal of Asian Studies 5,2 (1993), pp. 235-245.

From this line of thinking, there naturally follows a drive to reevaluate the place of Europeans in the Early Modern Asian setting, and in particular of the Vereinigte Ostindische Compagnie (VOC) as one of the principal European actors. Following recent enlightening publications on the VOCâs transactions with Vietnam or Siam Some of them reviewed in Wills, Interactive East Asia, 2008. , Adam Clulow is now offering us a new take on its relationship with the Japanese Tokugawa government. Clulow exposes as a myth the familiar storyline that contrasts the money-driven and pragmatic Dutch with the religious and aggressive Portuguese. Far from having been âmeek merchantsâ right from the outset of their interactions with the Japanese, the VOC tried to exert the full range of powers granted to them by their charter and the Dutch king. The most fundamental of these Clulow identifies as (a) powers to construct favorable trade conditions through diplomacy, (b) powers to exert violence if necessary, and (c) powers to install a system of sovereignty. Clulow shows that in a painful learning experience, these theoretically available powers were stripped from the VOC in the course of their tug-of war with the Tokugawa. The study focuses on major conflicts and diplomatic episodes that showcase this nibbling-away of influence and confidence, grouped into three sections that accord to the respective charter powers.

Chapter 1 is a general introduction on the beginnings of Dutch contact with the Tokugawa, the first embassy in 1609 and the role of diplomatic correspondence between the VOC stadthouder and the Tokugawa Shogun. After an initial phase of intensive correspondence, the Tokugawa unilaterally reduced official contact to a minimum from 1615, forcing the Dutch to seek ways to communicate through other channels.

Chapter 2 details the failure of a 1627 mission the VOC sent to the Tokugawa government in Edo to reestablish formal contact and settle frictions that had arisen in the course of the VOCâs presence on Taiwan. In contrast

to contemporary accounts that stress the incompetency of the missionâs leader, Pieter Nuyts, Clulow highlights the missionâs structural conditions, concluding that it never had a real chance to succeed in the first place. The title âKing of Bataviaâ devised by the VOC in order to reflect their growing autonomy from the Kingâs orders back in Holland failed to impress Tokugawa diplomats. In their eyes the envoy was not even qualified to speak to the Shogun without proof of direct royal legitimation.

Chapter 3 shows that because of the embassyâs failure, the VOC crafted a new scenario to secure some influence, one that relied neither on the authority of the King of Holland nor the fictitious âKing of Batavia.â Instead they rooted for a position as vassals of the Shogun, gradually remaking their relationship in this fashion. When it comes to the reevaluation of Tokugawa foreign policy, this is the strongest chapter of the book, because Clulow convincingly shows how the Dutch themselves offered to relinquish a genuinely diplomatic relationship and thus participated in their own demotion. As a consequence, they had to enact the âhofreisâ or annual visit to the Shogunâs court in Edo; later, they were also requested to prepare regular intelligence reports as part of their service.

In chapter 4 and 5, Clulow pits the European technological advantage against the force âAsian lawâ (p. 138), showing that in the case of the VOC-Tokugawa encounter, the latter proved more powerful than advanced ships and cannons.

The Tokugawa opted for indirect maritime influence through their system of vermillion seal trade concessions. They were invested in the safety of any ship carrying one of their passes and retaliated with force against attacks. When the Dutch saw Tokugawa troops destroy a fully-loaded Portuguese ship in the port of Hirado, they learned the lesson not to attack Japanese ships under any circumstances. In an edict of 1621, the Tokugawa banned any privateering in â never clearly defined â âJapanese watersâ as acts of violence. As a consequence, the Dutch had no choice but to stop attacks even on Portuguese ships even though they were leading a âglobal warâ against them.

Chapter 5 discusses petitions and the rising role of Nagasaki as an arbiter of trade disputes not just in Japanese waters but also far beyond. It presents a range of incidents and concludes that Tokugawa âlegal markersâ pacified the seas and severely curtailed the VOCâs potential to use its technological advantage for violent action.

The third part traces struggles over Dutch sovereignty and Japanese trading rights in Taiwan. Trying to bar from trading Japanese ships that had come to the port of Tayouan for some time before the arrival of the Dutch, the VOC deployed the language of international law devised by Dutch jurists to justify their possession. One of the Japanese traders, in turn, brought villagers from Tayouan to the court in Edo and presented them as ambassadors of a people suppressed by the VOC. The Dutch, fearing that the Shogun schemed to take their possession from them and bring it under his control, got in a conflict with a Japanese representative, sacked the goods on his ship and took hostages.

In return, the Tokugawa government put relations with the Dutch on hold for several years, until the VOC decided to hand over the person responsible, again Pieter Nuyts, for punishment at the hand of the Shogun. Because of this unprecedented breach of protocol, the breakdown of the iron principle of exterritorial handling and the de-facto submission to the Shogunâs legal authority, as Clulow convincingly argues, the VOC quickly began to send petitions to get Nuyts back. After four long years of house arrest in Hirado, the VOC was finally able to retrieve him in 1636 in exchange for a special gift â an oversized chandelier that the Tokugawa were all too happy to accept and make use of in public displays of their authority and legitimacy.

In the conclusion, Clulow ponders the significance of the Japanese setting for the history of the VOC in Asia in general, briefly making comparisons to how the VOC fared in Sri Lanka, Vietnam and China. This serves to drive home his most global argument: That the world history of the Early Modern period, in the wake of the debates on the so-called âGreat Divergenceâ between Europe and other parts of the world by scholars such as Kenneth Pomerantz, Andre Guder Frank, and Bin Wong, has to consider not just the one extreme of domination, colonialization and genocide familiar from accounts of the European impact on the Americas, but just as well with the other extreme of complete neutralization of European power suggested by the Tokugawa case.

âThe company and the shogunâ is a well-researched and tightly argued study. Yet, because Clulow (rightly) emphasizes the relative weakness of VOC, he tends to downplay the dynamics on the Japanese side. The Tokugawa are cast chiefly as the insurmountable roadblock to European ambitions. In the discussion of the sudden ebb of diplomatic letters from the Shogun after 1615 (p. 51), for example, Clulow does not even mention the most likely reason for this: the military victory of the Toku-

gawa over their last remaining rival, Toyotomi Hideyori. It is only in chapter 7, when he brings in the chandelier gift, that we get a close look at the significance the relationship with the VOC had for the Tokugawa side.

This is unfortunate given the fact that throughout the period under discussion, the Tokugawa were busy stabilizing and regrouping their system of government, a potent symbol of which is the widespread redistribution of territories and their lords carried out more than 150 times by 1650. See e.g. Somada Yoshio, ShÅgun kenryoku no kakuritsu [The Establishment of the Shogunâs Power], Tokyo 2012. I would have wished to read more here, and I hope the book will stimulate research on a sister volume âThe Shogun and the companyâ that devotes more room to an analysis of how the interactions with the Dutch influenced Tokugawa state building and diplomatic practice. For a recent study on European-Japanese interactions in the Early Modern period that privileges the Japanese perspective, see Anno Masaki, KyÅkairyÅ Nagasaki. Iezusu kai to nihon [Nagasaki as a Church Domain. The Jesuits and Japan], Tokyo 2014. In any case, Clulowâs book makes a most valuable and welcome contribution to a fresh understanding of the history of the VOC and the European presence in Early Modern Asia, as well as to the ongoing debate about the characteristics of the global âearly modern.â

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