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The Company and the Shogun: The Dutch Encounter with Tokugawa Japan (Columbia Studies in International and Global History)

By Adam Clulow



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The Dutch East India Company was a hybrid organization combining the characteristics of both corporation and state that attempted to thrust itself aggressively into an Asian political order in which it possessed no obvious place and was transformed in the process.

This study focuses on the company's clashes with Tokugawa Japan over diplomacy, violence, and sovereignty. In each encounter the Dutch were forced to retreat, compelled to abandon their claims to sovereign powers, and to refashion themselves again and again?from subjects of a fictive king to loyal vassals of the shogun, from aggressive pirates to meek merchants, and from insistent defenders of colonial sovereignty to legal subjects of the Tokugawa state. Within the confines of these conflicts, the terms of the relationship between the company and the shogun first took shape and were subsequently set into what would become their permanent form.

The first book to treat the Dutch East India Company in Japan as something more than just a commercial organization, *The Company and the Shogun* presents new perspective on one of the most important, long-lasting relationships to develop between an Asian state and a European overseas enterprise.



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Editorial Review

Review

Clulow provides a superb study of the establishment of the relationship between the Dutch East India Company and the Tokugawa shogunate in the 17th and early 18th centuries... Well-researched and well-written... Highly recommended.

(CHOICE)

Not only a thoroughly researched political and economic history, but... a fascinating maritime adventure as well... Highly recommended.

(Northern Mariner)

Well-researched and tightly argued study.... Clulow's 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.

(Michael Facius H-Soz-u-Kult)

This carefully documented analysis of difficult primary sources is unquestionably a contribution to the field and an important resource for better understanding early modern Japan, its foreign relationships, and the formative years of the joint-stock companies in Asia.

(American Historical Review)

Clulow's 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 "early modern."

(Rezensiert für geschichte.transnational)

An engaging, tightly knit, and timely study of the origins of the Dutch East India Company's experience in Tokugawa Japan.

(Journal of Japanese Studies)

Both a gold mine for scholars... and a great model for students who take classes on transnational communication.... An inspiring study.

(H-War)

A provocative achievement in scholarship and one strongly recommended for devoted instructors of world history.

(Education About Asia)

Clulow offers an excellent analysis of how the VOC adapted itself... *The Company and the Shogun* is a welcome contribution to the field of international relations in pre modern East Asia.

(Nam-lin Hur Japan Review)

A fascinating reassessment of previously held assumptions about international relations in 17th-century Japan.

(The Japan Times)

Original, well written, and provocative in the best sense of the word... *The Company and the Shogun* is a seminal work, one that offers a bold new vision of the intersection of Japanese and global history in the seventeenth century.

(Monumenta Nipponica)

Well-written, clearly argued, solidly based on Japanese and Dutch sources....a valuable reminder of the limited influence of European colonial powers in the early modern world.

(Sixteenth Century Journal)

A focused and well-researched book.... It is a welcome addition to literature.

(Business History Review)

This engrossing monograph offers a succinct and original interpretation of the early encounter between the fledgling Dutch East India Company (VOC) and the Tokugawa Shogunate.

(Economic History Review)

Commendable and highly engaging.

(History: Review of New Books)

A superb analysis of the VOC's changing relationship with Japan's political and mercantile elites.

(Low Countries Historical Review)

A most valuable contribution to Japanese political history.

(*The International Journal of Maritime History*)

Review

This is an excellent book. It makes a significant contribution to East Asian history, global history, and, I daresay, European history. It is based on a solid understanding of the relevant sources, Japanese and Western, and it is well written: polished, authoritative, and clear.

(Tonio Andrade, Emory University)

Grounded in alert readings of Dutch and Japanese sources, lucidly written, *The Company and the Shogun* shows how some 'contained conflicts' in the early 1600s constructed and reconstructed practices of sovereignty that limited Dutch power and shaped Japan's diplomatic tradition. It belongs in the library of anyone trying to understand Japan's succession of distinctive relations to the outside world from Nara to Abe.

(John E. Wills Jr., University of Southern California)

In this original and penetrating study, Adam Clulow brilliantly dissects the process through which Dutch merchants and their sponsors became subordinates rather than colonizers in Japan. The book masterfully weaves together storytelling and analysis while impressively mining both Dutch and Japanese sources. The result is not only the best available account of the Dutch East India Company in Japan but also an important contribution to the history of empire, piracy, law, and diplomacy in the early modern world. A remarkable achievement.

(Lauren Benton, New York University)

About the Author

Adam Clulow teaches East Asian history at Monash University.

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