

## The Global Company

**Veranstalter:** Adam Clulow, Monash University

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**Bericht von:** Oliver Krause, Graduate School „Global and Area Studies“, University Leipzig

The International Research Award in Global History, which is advertised by the Excellence Cluster „Asia and Europe in a global context“ of Heidelberg University, the Institute for European Global Studies at the Universities of Basel and the Laureate Research Program in International History at Sydney University was awarded to ADAM CLULOW (Melbourne) in 2015 for a proposal on an international conference focused on the global activities and strategies of the English East India Company (EIC) and the Dutch Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC) in the 17th and 18th century, which took place under the title „The Global Company“ at the „International Science Forum Heidelberg“ in December 2015.

International scholars from 22 institutions discussed the history of the EIC and VOC from a global perspective with a particular focus on the interaction and relationship between the two companies and the impact of their activities on social, commercial and political institutions in India, China, Japan, Persia and South East Asia especially in the Moluccas. Presentations and debates also considered the impact of the encounter with Asia on the culture and industries of Europe as well as the influence of the struggle between the companies in Asia on European politics. The impact of the conflicts between England and the United Provinces on the relationship of the companies was also examined. Presentations were far-ranging and included art history, the history of warfare and trade as well as the history of diplomacy between the companies and Asian rulers, the legal status and politics of the companies in the 17th and 18th centuries.

TONIO ANDRADE (Atlanta) opened the conference with a keynote on important trends in the historiography of the VOC. He

emphasized the shift in the understanding of the great divergence (Kenneth Pomeranz) between Asia and Europe, which took place after the 18th century. Further he summarized the view of European intellectuals like Montesquieu, Marx and Weber concerning Asian societies and political systems in the debate and raised the questions about the change in the valuation of the inner Asian trade by the important historians on the VOC such as van Leur, Meiling-Roelofs, Steensgaard and Leonard Blussé. Finally Andrade highlighted the impact of violence and warfare brought to Asia by Europeans, but also the resilience of Asian societies. By way of conclusion, Andrade referred to current gaps in the history of the companies, which are affected by the lack of language skills and the missing consideration of the trade by Europeans and Asians alongside the trade routes of the companies.

TIMON SCREECH (London) considered the global history of English textile production, the cultural interaction between England and Japan by paintings and the exchange of gifts. Screech cited the archbishop of Canterbury George Abbot as an actor on behalf of the global interest of England. In the town of Guilford, where Abbot was born, he convinced the local textile industry to produce blue colored textiles for the export to Japan. Screech showed the global impact of East India Company on the micro level of the English textile production. Screech argued that the telescope which was sent as a gift to the shogun functioned both as military weapon and scientific instrument. With that knowledge the religious interpretation of the Jesuits, who were active in Japan since the Portuguese arrived in Japan, could be criticized on a scientific level. The telescope could be seen as an instrument to change the political climate in favor for the EIC. The main argument of the presentation emphasized the impact of the Japanese demands on the English textile industry and the strategies of the English to gain a foothold in the trade with Japan by disavowing the Portuguese Catholics.

MARGARET MAKEPEACE's (London) presentation shed light on the system of recordation of EIC-documents. In order to ensure the success of the voyages to and the trade with South East Asia, information

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became a vital good for the Companies in the early modern period. The great amount of EIC documents available in the English archive was caused by the regulation to made at least two copies of every document. Through the circulation of the documents between the trading posts in South East Asia and London an information network with the administrative centre in London was established. The consequence of the sophisticated EIC recordation system was the creation of a vast amount of documents. The archive of the EIC showed how the networks of information and knowledge between Europe and Asia worked while also revealing the activities of the EIC.

Adam Clulow commenced the first presentation of the second session by focusing on transnational aspects of warfare and in particular the recruitment of Japanese mercenaries by the VOC in the first half of the 17th century. He demonstrated that warfare in Asia was executed not only by Europeans but also by local mercenaries especially from The Dutch institutionalized the recruitment of these mercenaries by hiring them directly in Japan with the permission of the shogun. The Dutch employed the Japanese mercenaries for two reasons. Ashore the advantage of the Dutch weapons diminished and to wage war on the ground they needed local troops to reinforce their own. Clulow concluded that the recruiting of Japanese mercenaries was one strategy to gain territorial power in South East Asia in line with the plans made Jan Pietersz Coen, an important early Governor-General of the VOC.

The topic of PETER GOOD's (Essex) presentation was the role of the EIC on the foundation of the Persian fleet under Nader Shah. In the beginning of the 17th century the Persian had no fleet of their own and no ship-building industry. The EIC helped Nader Shah to build up a fleet. The contract between the two actors favored the EIC with the exemption of taxes and fees in Persia for the lifetime of the Shah. Every new elected Shah had to renew the contract. The EIC made contracts with four Shahs in a row. Most of the ships in the fleet of Nader Shah were ships from Europe in poor condition. With the engagement in the foundation of the Persian fleet the EIC

get a foothold in Persian trade by acting as an ally.

TRISTAN MOSTERT (Leiden) highlighted the importance of the port of Makassar as a staple market in South East Asia. The fortification of the city of Makassar made it largely impossible for the VOC to capture the city, which functioned as key hub for the spice in South East Asia. In the time of King *Karaeng Patingalloang* the court in Makassar was a political centre in the region. The king was well educated and had expansive information concerning Europeans. The omnipresent role of Makassar in the spice trade made it impossible for the VOC to get a monopoly on those goods as long as Makassar was an open port. Makassar was an example for the resilience of Asian societies and trade networks against the European impact in South East Asia.

In first contribution of the third session ANDREW RUOSS (Durham) developed an argument concerning the close relationship between the VOC and EIC which turns into adaption of successful strategies on both sides. The companies were connected on the level of the political economy. Both sides observed the activities of one another. This period of observation and recording of the strategies in the documents ended in the late 1680s. A lot of merchants shifted between the two companies. In comparison the EIC was bound more closely to the state than the VOC, which was more an enterprise. Ruoss emphasized the impact of the companies on each other and on the politics of England and the United Provinces in the 17th century. Ruoss suggested the expansion of the comparative analyses of the companies to the mutual agreement with smaller companies.

CHRIS NIERSTRASZ (Coventry) argued that the European impact on the production of tea and textiles in Asia could be better analyzed by looking at the varieties of tea and textiles. Nierstrasz showed the intercontinental impact on the production in Asia especially in the amount of black tea. After the Europeans arrived in Asia the production of black tea increased. The VOC was in the 17th century more successful in bringing textiles to Europe but the EIC caught up in the 18th century. The difference between the VOC and EIC were the laws in England, which protected the indus-

try in England in the way that lesser textiles were brought to England than to the United Provinces. The EIC was more interested in importing Muslins and white calicoes, which could be finished in England.

ALISON GAMES (Washington, D.C.) discussed in the first contribution of the fourth session the invention of the Amboina massacre committed by the Dutch in the literature of the 17th and 18th century, focusing on the different illustrations of the massacre in pamphlets and the translations of the story from English into Dutch. Conflicts between the companies showed the intercontinental rivalry of England and the United Provinces. Games took the massacre as starting point for the story of the relationship between England and the United Provinces in a global context, in which the terms „nation“ and „ethnicity“ should be defined as well as the questions of the state-like power of the companies could be answered.

RUPALI MISHRA (Auburn) emphasized the role of the Privy Council and Charles I. for the English Expansion into Asia. The company was an institution in which different interests came together. In this context Mishra was concerned with the topic of statehood in England and within the EIC. Mishra argued that there was a connection between the EIC trade in Asia and the interests of the English state. The EIC was seen by the English government as an agent to shape the future of intercontinental and global trade and politics. The 17th century was a period for testing different strategies. Mishra defined the early Stuart period as a time of negotiation between different inner state actors, which had an impact on the English expansion to Asia and the shape of body politics.

In his keynote PHILIP STERN (Durham) compared the early modern trade companies with multinational enterprises. Stern argued that the EIC did not plan to establish an empire. The EIC was a combination of business and body politics. The monopolies were strategic means of the joint-stock corporation. The EIC was on the hand a subject of the English state, on the other hand the EIC acted as a sovereign in Asia. Sovereignty depends for the EIC on the place. The EIC was legally flexible and the sovereignty was fragmented

in early modern times. For the EIC territorial power was not really necessary, but it had to find a balance between profit and power. Stern argued that the history of the company should be told as story of a multinational company or corporation. In 19th century the EIC government in Asia was a part of the Empire, what produced a new view on territoriality and sovereignty under the idea of the Empire. Stern considered the EIC as an international organization, which occupies space and implement a new understanding of jurisdiction to protect trade interests. The corporation is in Stern's considerations a fundamental category in analysing early modern politics and trade in a global context.

MARTINE VAN ITTERSUM (Dundee) introduced in her presentation in the fifth session written treaties in two regions. She began by referencing claims of Native Americans nowadays by referring to treaties between the Dutch and the indigenous people in North America. The presentation also considered agreements with native population in the Moluccas as an option to wage just war, when the contract was violated. Written treaties were sacrosanct in the international law. The strategy to wage just war was the starting point for the territorial power of the VOC in South East Asia. Fortresses were the nucleus of territoriality. Treaties with indigenous people could not be separated from the conflicts of European powers. In the analyses of the treaties, van Ittersum combined book history with the VOC history in North America and South East Asia.

FUYUKO MATSUKATA (Tokyo) examined the diplomatic letters to the shogun. Matsukata mentioned the specific hierarchy in Japan Europeans had to refer to. The Governor-General of the VOC could not directly write a letter to shogun. The Japanese knew that the Governor-General was the highest ranking Dutch official in Asia, but not in the United Provinces. French letters to the shogun were also rejected because the French had no territorial power in Asia in the time they send letters to the Shogun. In Japan a model hierarchy for the diplomacy existed that the Europeans had to obey. Matsukata showed the advanced development of the Japanese diplomatic body.

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GUIDO VAN MEERSBERGEN (Florence) explained VOC diplomacy at the court of the Mughal Emperor Araungzeb in Persia. The Dutch were used to the rituals at the court and all Dutch Ambassadors had excellent language skills. The advantage for the Dutch Ambassadors in behalf of the VOC was the absence of a king in the United Provinces since the end of the 16th century. The ambassadors were able to obey the Mughal Emperor without harming a king at home. The Dutch supported Aurangzeb with weapons and ammunition to gain a foothold in trade with the empire. The governor general was seen as the head of the Dutch regime in Asia. At the Mughal court the VOC was recognised as an independent actor.

In a variety of graphs based on data of VOC and EIC shipments to and from Asia in the 18th century MATTHEW SARGENT (Los Angeles) depicted in the beginning of the sixth session the shipping routes to different ports, the time the ships stayed in the ports and the inner Asian trade routes. His project is embedded in the digital science. The graphs examined local, regional and intercontinental networks of information and trade. The graphs did not show all the trade in Asia, what was determined by the lack of sources.

LEONARD BLUSSÉ (Leiden) described the entangled history of French and Dutch engagement in Asia in the 18th century. The French Admiral Suffren was engaged by the VOC to fight against the EIC in India and Ceylon within the period of the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War (1781-1784). With the help of Suffren the Dutch secured their position in that region, even as they lost military power in Asia. Blussé noted that the amount of goods traded between Europe and Asia was larger in the 18th century but that intra-Asian trade had diminished in that century. The VOC was more reliant on the intra-Asian trade than the EIC. In this context Blussé referred to the ideas of Jan Pietersz Coen of waging war in order to secure the Dutch position in Asia. In Ceylon and Java the VOC was a territorial power, which underlined the argument that the VOC was a state outside the state, which defended privileges by war. Although the Dutch worked closely with the French in Asia, Blussé noted that, the French also tried

to strengthen their position in Asia to the disadvantage of the Dutch.

The trade with ivory in the town of Surat was for MARTHA CHAIKLIN (Dubai) the starting point for the history of the connection between the hinterland trade and the trade interests of the European companies on the west coast of India in the first distribution of the last session. With the arrival of the Europeans the demand for ivory rose. Surat was the most important trade post for ivory in the Far East. Looking at the ivory trade the entangled history of Surat within a global trade network could be told with the focus on the flow of goods.

GIORGIO RIELLO (Coventry) examined the geography of production and trade in Asia with a focus on textile production. Textiles were the most important trading good of the EIC. The companies tried to control not only the trade but also the production of textiles. Textile in India was produced in four steps: cultivation, spinning, weaving and finishing. Most of the production was done in household of little villages in the Indian hinterland to which the Europeans had no access. Intermediaries sold the finished textiles. The asymmetric system of information in the network made it difficult for the Europeans to get a foothold in the production. One available avenue was the centralisation of trade, another one using the existing system. The Europeans had the problem that textiles had to be delivered at a specific time of the year for the return ships. The production could only be changed, when the political system changed. Without the territorial power in India, it was not possible to control the production and standardization of textiles.

GHULAM A. NADRI (Atlanta) linked in his presentation the VOC and EIC employees to Asian bankers and brokers. Nadri also emphasized the limited access of the European companies to the production of textiles in India. The Europeans had to cooperate with the intermediaries who became very rich, and Nadri cited the example of Virgee Vorah showed. The EIC had greater control in the 18th century, when the territorial power of the company arose. The companies tried to expand their rule to protect the production. In the 18th century occurred great changes, with

the consequence of less independence for the Native Indians.

After each session a discussion of the presentations took place. The main lines of the discussions concerned the status of companies in Asia, the impact of war and violence and the systems of production in Asia. The concluding debate firstly centred on the nature of the joint-stock companies as distinctive global hybrids, which combined elements of trade companies and sovereign political entities as well as of religion. The wealth of the companies had to be protected, with the consequence the companies had to strengthen their administration in order to optimize and protect the income of the companies. As Philip Stern pointed out, it is more a question of separating private from public than to differentiate between state and enterprise. A second topic was the definition of terms like state, empire, nation or treaty. There was a reservation about the anachronistic usage of terms in the early modern period. In the research on the EIC and the VOC one has to focus more on Iberian sources, the intra-Asian and not official trade of the Europeans and on the relationship of the companies to the smaller European companies in order to be able to explain the global impact of the companies and the nature of their interactions with Asian societies. In that context the impact of Europe on Asia should be examined as well as the consequences of the Asia encounter for the politics, trade and industrial production in Europe. The companies were key agents that contributed to the intertwining of Europe and Asia.

### Conference Overview

#### Keynote

Tonia Andrade (Emory University): The Dutch East India Company in Global History

#### Session I: Networks of information and knowledge

Chair: Madeleine Herren-Oesch (University of Basel)

Timon Screech (SOAS): The First English Ship from Japan: Return of the Clove, 1614

Margaret Makepeace (British Library): „A System of Recordation so Complete“ – Information Gathering by the English East India

#### Company

#### Session II: The Companies at War

Chair: Moritz von Brescius (University of Konstanz)

Adam Clulow (Monash University): Fighting for the Company: Japanese Mercenaries in the Service of the VOC

Peter Good (University of Essex): The East India Company and the Foundation of Persian Naval Power in the Gulf under Nader Shah

Tristan Mostert (Leiden University): Makassar, the Companies and the Rest: Intelligence, Diplomacy, Technological Exchange and War at a 17th Century Cosmopolitan Trading Post

#### Session III: Rivalry and Cooperation

Chair: Tamson Pietsch (University of Sydney)

Andrew Ruoss (Duke University): Going English? The VOC's Engagement with EIC Political Economy in the First Anglo-Dutch War

Chris Nierstrasz (Warwick University): Rivalry for Trade in Tea and Textiles: The English and Dutch East India Companies (1700-1800)

#### Session IV: The Companies at home and abroad

Chair: Andrew Deakin (39 Essex Street Chamber)

Allison Games (Georgetown University): Inventing the Amboyna Massacre

Rupali Mishra (Auburn University): Contesting the East Indies: Company, Empire, and the Personal Rule of Charles I.

#### Keynote

Philip Stern (Duke University): Of Corporate Spaces: The Heterotopic Legal Geographies of the English East India Company-State

#### Session V: Negotiating in Asia

Chair: Peer Vries (University of Vienna)

Martine van Ittersum (University of Dundee): Empire by Treaty? The role of Written Agreements with Indigenous Rulers and People in European Expansion, 1500-1800

Fuyuko Matsukata (University of Tokyo): Contacting Japan: East India Company Letters to the Shogun in 1627, 1649, 1667 and 1673

Guido van Meersbergen (EUI): The Merchant-Diplomat in Comparative Perspective: The case of Dirq van Adrichem's Embassy to Aurangzeb's Court

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*Session VI: Networks and Empire*

Chair: Roland Wenzlhuemer (University of Heidelberg)

Matthew Sargent (USC): Network Formation and Evolution within Competing Empires of Trade

Leonard Blussé (Leiden University): Deus ex Machina. The Campaigns of Vice-Admiral Suffren during the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War (1781-1784)

*Session VII: Trade and Commercial Competition*

Chair: Susann Liebich (University of Heidelberg)

Martha Chaiklin (Zayed University): Surat and Bombay: The Companies, Ivory and Power in Western India

Giorgio Riello (Warwick University): The English East India Company's Trade and the India Organisation of Textile Production, c. 1650-1800

Chulam A. Nadri (Georgetown University): Interdependence, Competition, and Contestation: The English and the Dutch East India Companies and Indian Merchants in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

*Concluding Discussion*

Tonio Andrade and Philip Stern: Current and Future Trends in Company History

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