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„The Role of the Dutch VOC in the Establishment of a Japan-centred World Order in the First Half of the 17th Century“

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Reference for the Reader

For expressions registered in the English dictionary (like shogun, Tokyo, Kyushu, etc.) I omit macrons. Also, Japanese names in the text appear ordered with the family name preceding the given name (e.g., Toyotomi Hideyoshi, Toyotomi Hideyori).

The citations of the *Deshima Dagregister* appear twofold. Once, they are given in the form of a transcription of how the passage appears in the original document. The second citation then is a free translation into English. Note that the translations therefore do not follow a literal approach but are completed in order to explicate the meaning of the text passages. Where needed, additions to the notes appear in squared brackets. I prefer citing both versions so that the reader can get insight into wording and expressions of the original documents as well, next to the analogous translation.

Timeline

For periodization reasons, I distinguish between medieval (1185 – 1600) and early modern Japan (1600 – 1868) in general. The succession of Tokugawa Ieyasu, founder of the Tokugawa dynasty, demarcates the break in 1600. Although one could claim such a categorization as controversial regarding its Eurocentricity, I hold on to its use to also distinguish between periods in a longer timeframe. Note that this categorization, therefore, only serves periodization reasons on a broad definition and that I mainly use the more specific Japanese periods throughout the paper, which are partly overlapping with one another. Starting in the medieval period, the Muromachi Period (1336 – 1573) demarcates the time period of the Ashikaga Shogunate. It is partly overlapping with the Sengoku Period (1467 – 1600) and is followed by the Period of Settlement (1560 – 1600), which is also referred to as the Azuchi-Momoyama Period (1573 – 1600). The Edo Period (1600 – 1868) is completely overlapping with the early modern period, following the periodization of my thesis. The Nuyts incident, which this paper deals with in detail, took place in 1627.

Glossary

- bakufu* - literally translated, it means “tent government”, which refers to the origins of shogunal power from military campaigns.
- bakuhan* - the *bakuhan* system is the result of continuous integration of the Japanese provinces (*koku*, *kuni*, later: *han*) into centralized Tokugawa order in the first half of the 17th century.
- bugyō* - a Tokugawa official in the rank of a samurai; also translated as “governor” or “magistrate”.
- Dagregisters* - records of VOC officials, which were taken during their time in office.
- daimyo* - feudal lords of the Japanese provinces.
- Deshima* - an artificially created island in offshore Nagasaki, where Dutch trading activities were restricted to.
- Formosa* - *Formosa* is the first European expression for Taiwan, used by the Portuguese when they took notice of the island.
- fudai* - the *fudai* daimyo were hereditary lords whose provinces generally were located in the East of the archipelago. They had allied with the Tokugawa already before Ieyasu seized power.
- fusetsugaki* - intelligence about foreign affairs provided by the Dutch on their annual visits to the shoguns court in Edo after the release of the *sakoku* edicts.
- han* - the term *han*, especially in American historiography, emerged to a widely used expression for the Japanese domains of the daimyo, which were seen as provinces of a centralized state.
- keichō* - *keichō* describes an era of the Japanese *nengō* periodization that lasted from 1596 until 1615, reaching from the invasion of Korea under Hideyoshi to the battle of Osaka.
- kogi* - an expression for the public authority of those in power, meaning the daimyo or the shogun.

- roku* - provinces in Tokugawa Japan were often referred to as *roku*, which means “country” literally translated.
- rokujin* - literally translated, *rokujin* means “people of the country” and refers to rebellious samurai, who inhabited the domains provincial areas where they conducted raids as a mutinous act. Their strives came to an end with the unification of the archipelago under Hideyoshi, making them a characteristic phenomenon for the Sengoku Period, where central control was weak.
- nanban* - Japanese expression of the Edo Period for Europeans in general (Spanish, Portuguese, French, English, Dutch). It means “southern barbarians” literally translated, as European vessels usually arrived from the southern part of Japan, calling for the ports of Nagasaki, Hirado or Sakai.
- opperhoofd* - the Dutch expression for Governors of the VOC.
- sankin kōtai* - a system of alternate attendance at the central court. It obliged the *daimyo* to visit the shogun and provide military service in Edo for several months in annual intervals.
- sakoku* - literally translated, it means “closed country”. It is the common term for the edicts released by Tokugawa Iemitsu between 1633 and 1639, which imposed high restrictions on foreign relations. The expression was used in the 19th century to claim the backwardness of Tokugawa policies that banned foreign influence.
- shogun* - the Japanese military ruler and head of the *bakufu*.
- tennō* - term for the Japanese emperor.
- tojin* - originally a term for the Chinese, which also was used for inhabitants of other SouthEast Asian countries.
- tōzama* - the *tōzama* daimyo were lords whose provinces generally were located in the West of the archipelago. Previous to the unification under Ieyasu, they were in opposition to the Tokugawa.
- VOC - The VOC (*Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie*) was the Dutch East India trading company, founded in 1602 and operating in the SouthEast Asian region to establish market share in beneficial spice trade.

wakō - expression for pirates who inhabited the islands of Tsushima and the Inland Sea of Japan in the late Sengoku Period. Literally translated, the term means “dwarf bandit” and was used as a denouncing term to the Japanese throughout SouthEast Asia.

I. Introduction

In the year 1600 the *Liefde* arrived in Japan as the first Dutch ship to lay anchor at the archipelago – the only ship out of five that found her way to a land that was known due to its huge amounts of silver.¹ Also, the crew was drastically reduced throughout the long journey from Rotterdam to only about twenty survivors.² Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543-1616), who seized power the very same year, showed much interest into this unknown foreign group and ordered two members of the crew to his court in Edo (modern day Tokyo).³ The first encounter of Dutch representatives and the Japanese military ruler, who would be inaugurated officially as shogun three years later in 1603, laid the basis for further diplomatic relations between the archipelago and the *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (VOC), established in 1602.

The arrival of the Dutch happened at a crucial time in Japanese history. The early Tokugawa-shogunate re-organised Japanese foreign relations throughout the first half of the 17th century according to a Japan-centred world order (*ka-i* system) that put foreign countries in a subordinated position as secondary states. This adaptation of an originally Ming Chinese (1368 – 1644) idea to create hierarchy in international relations by declaring oneself as the centre surrounded by subjected “Others” contradicted the European conception of the time that viewed sovereign monarchs on an equal level. As a result, first encounters between VOC ambassadors and Tokugawa officials bore much conflict, which peaked in a temporary interruption of trading relations between 1628 and 1632. The re-establishment of official relations could only become possible through a formal excuse and the acceptance of Japanese hegemony by VOC officials, which made them *de facto* subordinates of the shogun themselves. The readmittance of diplomatic relations by the shogun provided the Dutch with a specific rank and place in Tokugawa hierarchy. Trade became restricted to the artificially created island

¹ It already has been stressed often that Japan in the 17th century was producing one third of worldwide amounts of silver, including the vast occurrence in Latin America. Michael Laver, *The Dutch East India Company in Early Modern Japan. Gift Giving and Diplomacy* (London, 2020), p. 4.

² Compare: Laver, *The Dutch East India Company in Early Modern Japan*, p. 2.

³ Comp.: Adam Clulow, *The Company and the Shogun. The Dutch Encounter with Tokugawa Japan* (New York, 2014), p. 40.

As soon as 1605, two of the survivors – Jacob Quackernaeck and Melchior van Sandvoort – already were given a trading license, which points out to the provisional intention of the shogun to establish official relations with foreign authorities. Comp.: Eiichi Kato, *Unification and Adaptation- The Early Shogunate and Dutch Trade Policies*. In: Leonard Blussé, *Femme Gastra* (eds.), *Companies and Trade. Essays on Overseas Trading Companies during the Ancien Régime* (The Hague, 1981), p. 215.

Deshima in Nagasaki and delegates were obliged to visit the court of the shogun in Edo in annual intervals.

Accepting the Dutch meant that they fulfilled a purpose in Japanese self-perception as a centre according to the propagated world order of the shogun. To answer in how far VOC contribution influenced this development of the *ka-i* system therefore is the aim of this paper. Instead of economic reasons, I argue that receiving tribute from the VOC was mainly of political importance, as it corroborated how the shogunate viewed its realm as centre of the world. The timeframe covered in this paper will reach from the arrival of the Dutch and the simultaneous establishment of Tokugawa rule in 1600 to the release of the so-called *sakoku* edicts in 1639, which will only be exceeded where it is necessary to consider earlier developments of the Period of Settlement (ca. 1560 – 1600). The first decades of the 17th century were characterized by the introduction of Tokugawa policies that aimed at strengthening shogunal rule after the successful unification of the archipelago. The *sankin kōtai* system took form. Literally translated it means “alternate attendance” and was used as a tool to foster control over the daimyo by ordering them to the court in Edo for several months in annual intervals. More than 250 daimyo had to maintain permanent households in the capital, where also their families were kept hostage.⁴ Furthermore, travels to and from Edo had to be paid on own accounts, which led to a weakening of the daimyo’s positions on the one hand but had the effect of an economic stimulus for Japan on the other.⁵

To re-organise domestic policy after a system that centralized power at the seat of the shogun, however, did not halt at the Japanese coastline but included foreign countries as well.⁶ Especially Korea, the Ryukyu Islands, and the Dutch became part of the so-called *ka-i* system. Embassies that were received throughout the first decades of Tokugawa rule served to strengthen the claimed centrality of the shogun in front of his people, as they gave proof of shogunal influence that even exceeded the Japanese littoral across the sea.⁷ Foreign embassies paraded in convoys of hundreds of delegates, guards, and warriors from town to town along the

⁴ Comp.: Constantine Nomikos *Vaporis*, *Tour of Duty. Samurai, Military Service in Edo, and the Culture of Early Modern Japan* (Honolulu, 2008), p. 2.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Although central control was the result of experiments rather than strategy, I assume that centralization of shogunal power indeed was a “re-organisation” of domestic policies. The idea of centralizing power using tools such as the *sankin kōtai* system was already applied earlier and re-introduced at the time, if only as a result of experiments.

⁷ Comp.: Ronald P. *Toby*, *State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan. Asia in the Development of the Bakufu* (Princeton, 1984), pp. 64ff.

Tokaido highway – a way that also was used by many daimyo and their entourages.⁸ This, in fact, made both, the *sankin kōtai* system and the way foreign relations were organised, characteristic for the same ideological construction – the creation of a Japan-centred world view.⁹

Historiography often assumed that the release of the *sakoku* policies from 1632 to 1639 led to an isolation of the Japanese archipelago for more than two centuries.¹⁰ Literally translated *sakoku* indeed means “closed country”. Nevertheless, it is important to undermine that this expression was introduced in retrospective to claim the backwardness of banning foreign influence under the shogunate and therefore fails to meet the actual circumstances of the 17th century. The edicts indeed included high restrictions to foreign affairs, such as prohibiting Japanese to leave the archipelago as well as foreigners to travel freely within. Christianity was forbidden and trade was restricted to a few elected ports under high safety measures. Instead of defining these edicts as a break in foreign policies by the shogunate, they rather have to be viewed in context as finalising steps in a development that already had started roughly 80 years earlier with the first successful attempts of Japanese re-unification in 1560. After 150 years of warfare throughout the Sengoku Period (1467 – 1600), the establishment of a Japan centred world view grew out of the need to maintain control over provinces, whose daimyo used to wage war against each other for more than a century. The first attempts of the shogun, Tokugawa Ieyasu, to welcome foreign embassies to Japan were necessary to provide legitimation for the new ruler. With increasing control over its domain, however, the shogunate soon saw the need to expand its regulations on foreign relations as well, which led to stepwise restrictions that (not only) the Dutch had to face throughout the first half of the 17th century.¹¹

The establishment of central control in Japan happened in various ways, including the introduction of a Japan-centred world view in order to foster Japanese militarily achieved

⁸ Comp.: Ronald P. *Toby*, *Engaging the Other. 'Japan' and its Alter Egos, 1550-1850* (Leiden/Boston/Brill, 2019), pp. 143f; 146; 154-158.

⁹ Note that I distinguish between a Japan-centred world order and a Japan-centred world view in my formulations. While both terms are expressions for the *ka-i* system, I use the former to refer to its political aspects and the latter to underline its ideological characteristics. I claim that political effects of the *ka-i* system like stabilizing effects of Edo-centrism on the archipelago, vary from ideological ones, such as the creation of a new kind of Japanese self-perception at the time. Distinguishing between the *ka-i* system as a world view and as a world order in this regard helps to specify the intended meaning of the system more clearly.

¹⁰ Among others, Batten refers to traditions in especially American historiography that assumed the Tokugawa Period to be an era of Japanese isolation internationally. Comp.: *Batten*, *To the Ends of Japan*, pp. 1f.

¹¹ Michael Laver defines three categories of foreign relations (foreigners arriving, Japanese going abroad, and foreign goods and ideas circulating in Japan), over which the Tokugawa “instituted various mechanisms to control all three categories” in the first half of the 17th century. Comp.: *Laver*, *The Dutch East India Company in Early Modern Japan*, p. 6.

unification also ideologically. Throughout the first half of the 17th century, Japanese self-perception shifted from a local perspective of identification with the own village, clan, or estate to an increasing awareness of a whole Japanese unity within the Japanese samurai and ruling classes.¹² This development continued throughout the whole 17th century, for this paper, however, it is sufficient to make evident tendencies of the construction of “Japan” as a unity. To understand what “Japan” actually was in the first half of the 17th century it is important to understand how and why the *ka-i* system could be established and therefore makes up the content of the first main chapter to provide the theoretical frame for this thesis. Bruce L. Batten stresses convincingly in his monograph on premodern frontiers and boundaries of Japan that the Japanese archipelago of the early Edo Period did not meet the requirements of a highly unified territorial state and therefore rejects the projection of Japan as a nation on periods earlier than the mid-19th century.¹³ Batten structures his argumentation around the statement that “boundaries of Japan, like those of other societies, are social and political creations, and (...) do not necessarily coincide with the coastlines of the main islands.”¹⁴ So, in order to define what Japan was in the early Edo Period, Batten uses cultural differentiation in front of diversified “Others” as an aspect of demarcation. This thought is continued by Ronald P. Toby in his recent monography on “Japan” and its respective “Others”.¹⁵ Toby provides a detailed elaboration on the development of cultural differentiation of the Japanese population throughout the Edo Period. A shift in Japanese cosmology caused by the arrival of Europeans on Japanese soil gave rise to a different perception of Japan in the world and thus also of Japanese people in front of foreigners, who were generally referred to as *tojin* – originally a term for Chinese, which also was used for inhabitants of other SouthEast Asian countries.¹⁶ While parades of foreign embassies served as the place where a numerous audience was confronted with such cultural differentiation, also the decentralized organisation of mapping and cartography contributed to a new understanding of Japanese identity in the early Edo Period

¹² Comp.: Ronald P. *Toby*, Rescuing the Nation from History. The State of the State in Early Modern Japan. In: *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol. 56, No. 2 (Summer 2001), p. 202.

Here, Toby reflects the findings of Hiroshi Mitani from: Hiroshi *Mitani*, Meiji ishin to nashonarizumu. Bakumatsu no gaiko to seiji hendo (Yamakawa Shuppansha, 1997), pp. 15-19.

¹³ Comp.: Bruce L. *Batten*, To the Ends of Japan. Premodern Frontiers, Boundaries, and Interactions (Honolulu, 2003), p. 98.

¹⁴ The main islands of Japan until the 19th century were Kyushu, Shikoku, and Honshu, as most parts of Hokkaido did not belong to the Japanese realm until its annexation in 1869. *Batten*, To the Ends of Japan, p. 11. Batten refers to the similar conception of the creation of boundaries by Richard White: Richard *White*, “It’s your Misfortune and None of My Own”. A New history of the American West (Oklahoma, 1991).

¹⁵ *Toby*, Engaging the Other.

¹⁶ Comp.: *Toby*, Engaging the Other, p. 7.

– which is already stressed earlier by Marcia Yonetomo and Kären Wigen (et al.).¹⁷ The changing way how maps depicted Japan in the first half of the 17th century shows how the archipelago was envisioned according to a *ka-i* understanding, which I discuss with the comparison of the keichō map of 1653 to a map of the medieval Gyōki-style. The definition of Japan as a still very fragile, but also surprisingly cohesive recently established unity in the first half of the 17th century is a prerequisite to contradict common views of perceiving the early Tokugawa shogunate with the same amount of stability like the later Edo Period.¹⁸ In Mark Ravina’s words, the political landscape of Japan at the time reminded of a “patchwork of distinct governments, with broad areas of ambiguous and overlapping authority.”¹⁹ Although Ravina ignores developments of cultural Japanese unity in his monography in order to emphasise the political autonomy of especially western fiefdoms, his arguments clearly underline the difficulties of maintaining central control over the archipelago by force – which made ideological integration an issue. To understand “Japan” as a construct of cultural unity rather than a nation, therefore, is necessary to comprehend the context in which the *ka-i* system managed to prevail. This, furthermore, set the frame for diplomatic encounters between Tokugawa Japan and its Dutch opponents.²⁰

The second main chapter builds up on a definition of Japan in order to comprehend the establishment of the *ka-i* system that developed simultaneously to an ongoing establishment of Japanese unification and increasing central control. Despite Ronald Toby’s argument in his ground-breaking monography about state and diplomacy in early modern Japan, that the establishment of such a system served the re-establishment of Japanese international reputation, my hypothesis contradicts his thoughts in a way that I assume that *bakufu* interests were mainly concerned with strengthening shogunal rule within Japan.²¹ Also, Adam Clulow shows that the early Tokugawa shogunate indeed proactively looked for opportunities to foster legitimation of the shogun by inviting foreign embassies to the shoguns court, which could easily be used to show off shogunal power in front of a numerous audience.²² While I agree with both authors that normalization played an important role after the serious damage, especially, the two Korea

¹⁷ Marcia Yonetomo, Mapping Early Modern Japan. Space, Place, and Culture in the Tokugawa Period (1603 – 1868). Kären Wigen, Fumiko Sugimoto, Cary Karacas (eds.), Cartographic Japan. A History in Maps (Chicago/London, 2016).

¹⁸ Comp.: *Batten*, To the Ends of Japan, pp. 5f.

¹⁹ Mark Ravina, Land and Lordship in Early Modern Japan (Stanford, 1999), p. 16.

²⁰ I will also include theoretical background on the Dutch VOC – especially that of Hugo Grotius – in my formulations. In order to compensate a one-sidedness in bilateral encounters due to my restriction to Dutch sources only, I focus mainly on the Japanese perspective in this particular chapter to complete the picture.

²¹ Comp.: *Toby*, State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan, pp. 64ff.

²² Comp.: *Clulow*, The Company and the Shogun, pp. 50f.

campaigns of Toyotomi Hideyoshi had caused to the shogunate's reputation, the relevance of constructing legitimation within a country that had faced civil war for more than a century by firm administration policies combined with ideological constructs of unity must not be underestimated. The second main chapter is therefore divided into two subchapters. The first considers the roots of the unification process of Japan, which includes the Period of Settlement to examine factors that influenced the establishment of the *ka-i* system. My aim is to show that stepwise introductions of Tokugawa policies to foster central control built up on achievements of his predecessors, which grew out of the need to maintain control over previously independent territories in the process of unification. Yasunori Arano shows that such decentralization did not only affect the Japanese main land provinces, but exceeded the Japanese littoral across the seas, where piratical groups could make use of favourable circumstances, which is why I stress that, after the military unification of Japan, the Tokugawa shoguns saw the need to expand their influence over the seas as well.²³ The result was the establishment of the *ka-i* system to further prevent what Arano calls the “wakō phenomenon” – the phenomenon of piracy in Japan surrounding seaways.²⁴ The second subchapter then is devoted to a detailed explanation of what the *ka-i* system was and how it functioned in the early 17th century. To explain this is a necessary step to understand relations between the VOC and the Tokugawa, as it set the frame for diplomatic encounters between the two.

After the introduction of the *ka-i* system and its characteristics, I continue my thoughts on the establishment of central control over the Japanese domain by examining the *sankin kōtai* system, which is – according to my understanding – highly compatible with the application of principles used in the creation of the *ka-i* world view but applied on a domestic level. Throughout the first half of the 17th century, fostering control over the daimyo and over the *nanban* (“southern barbarians”) happened in a simultaneous development. That borders between taming foreigners and taming domestic lords of the provinces could be fluid, is best made evident with the example of the Dutch, who were seen as barbarians of the lowest rank after Korea and the Ryukyu Islands, but still were taking part in the *sankin kōtai* system – a system that usually was restricted to inland domains only. To structure my formulations, also the third main chapter is divided into two subchapters. The first deals with the *sankin kōtai* system as a system that secured central control within Japan – which builds up on my hypothesis of the second main chapter that domestic stability was of primary importance to the *bakufu*.

²³ Comp.: Yasunori Arano, The Formation of a Japanocentric World Order. In: *International Journal of Asian Studies*, 2, 2 (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 185-216.

²⁴ Comp.: *Ibid.*

The second subchapter then highlights the role of the Dutch in the *sankin kōtai* system. Robert I. Hellyer shows that the daimyo's domains in the early Edo Period still enjoyed a fair level of autonomy.²⁵ Satsuma and Tsushima domain provide two examples that had kept close ties to other polities of SouthEast Asia and continued to do so in the early Edo Period.²⁶ Hellyer views the introduction of Tokugawa policies – including the *sankin kōtai* system, which also Constantine Nomikos Vaporis worked on²⁷ – as means that proactively hampered globalization, which I reject in a sense that the shogunate was rather reacting on the still very fragile domestic constellation of its provinces with the release of restrictions on foreign relations.²⁸

The final chapter of my thesis focusses on a single, but consequential incident in bilateral relations between the VOC and the Tokugawa shogunate. The so-called *noitsu-jiken* (Nuyts-incident)²⁹ from 1627 caused an interruption in trading relations between the two sides due to serious diplomatic misunderstandings between the Governor of *Formosa* (Taiwan), Pieter Nuyts, and Tokugawa officials. Of particular interest are the measures undertaken by the Dutch – especially in regard to Nuyts himself – to re-establish friendly relations through the acceptance of subordination under Tokugawa diplomacy. I stress that integration into the *ka-i* world view, out of the Japanese point of view, again did not happen out of economic needs, but primarily met political interests of the shogunate. The most elaborate monography on the topic of diplomatic encounters between the VOC and the early Tokugawa shogunate comes from Adam Clulow, who demonstrates that – compared to other Dutch encounters in SouthEast Asia – the VOCs bargaining position was in huge disadvantage to shogunal power.³⁰ The result was a continuing weakening of the VOCs position and trading rights in Japan throughout the first decades of diplomatic contact. Only Dutch adaptation enabled the maintenance of trading relations beyond the release of the *sakoku* edicts. Secondary literature on the *noitsu-jiken* in particular is scarce. Yet, Leonard Blussé provides an article with a detailed examination of the

²⁵ Robert I. Hellyer, *Defining Engagement. Japan and Global Contexts, 1640-1868* (Cambridge/London, 2009).

²⁶ Satsuma was located in south Kyushu, the southernmost main island of the Japanese archipelago. Tsushima was an island located between Honshu and Korea, and mostly known as the home of the *wakō* – the Japanese pirates – throughout medieval East Asia. Both islands were positioned on the margins of the Japanese realm with much geographical distance to the centre in Edo, which is why their favourable positions provided the domains with close ties to foreign societies that continued unimpededly after the unification of Japan and the succession of the Tokugawa. That integration into shogunal rule was not as cohesive as elsewhere in Japan makes those domains important examples to explicate the fragility of early Tokugawa authority as rulers were legitimized merely through consensus rather than military suppression. Comp.: Peter D. *Shapinsky*, *Lords of the Sea. Pirates, Violence, and Commerce in Late Medieval Japan* (Ann Arbor, 2014), pp. 229-264.

²⁷ *Vaporis*, *Tour of Duty*.

²⁸ Comp.: Hellyer, *Engaging the Other*, p. 20.

²⁹ Leonard Blussé, *Bull in a China Shop. Pieter Nuyts in China and Japan (1627 – 1636)*. In: Leonard Blussé (ed.), *Around and About Formosa*, pp. 96.

³⁰ Clulow, *The Company and the Shogun*.

incident that led to the interruption of trade and how normalization was reached again.³¹ Blussé attributes the misunderstandings to the VOCs organizational background that committed an ambassador, who was too inexperienced, to a task that was crucial to Dutch Southeast Asian trade, but difficult to fulfil.³²

The arguments of this thesis follow the line from a macro-level, where contexts for the establishment of an international diplomatic system are examined, over the application of comparable measures on a domestic level, to the analysis of a specific event in bilateral relations between the Dutch and Japan. This is necessary to make comprehensible circumstances of diplomatic misunderstandings that characterized the first decades of VOC-Tokugawa relations, before a particular case – the consequential *noitsu-jiken* and its aftermath – can be looked at. Due to my capability of only Dutch, original Japanese sources must be spared in my formulations. Nevertheless, Dutch sources like the *Dagregisters* of Hirado and *Deshima*, in combination with relevant documents regarding the sentencing of Pieter Nuyts by the council of justice of the VOC provide important insights to the VOCs integration into Tokugawa order. The *Dagregisters* were diaries that were kept at every trading post of the company. They regarded everything relevant for the company's trading activity and therefore make up the central source for this thesis. At various occasions, they included juxtapositions of earnings and expenses with detailed lists of gifts for the shogun and numerous other Tokugawa officials, which gives insight to the expenses of the Dutch in order to maintain trading relations. For this paper, however, especially entries regarding the *noitsu-jiken* are analysed, as they give insight to the company's struggle of getting back an ambassador, who they had handed over even to be put under Japanese jurisdiction a few years earlier – a unique and unrepeated act in VOC history.³³ Next to the Nuyts incident, however, the *Dagregisters* are consulted also at different occasions in order to comprehend VOC agency in the region according to its charter and to analyse Dutch involvement in the Shimabara uprising in 1638. For the latter, also notes from Engelbert Kaempfer³⁴ are analysed critically to complete my findings. To further structure my formulations, the first three main chapters follow a chronological line to make comprehensible the developments of the respective topics throughout the first half of the 17th century. Especially the establishment of the *ka-i* system and the *sankin kōtai* system were overlapping, which

³¹ Blussé, *Bull in a China Shop*, pp. 95-110.

³² Blussé, *Bull in a China Shop*, p. 103.

³³ Comp.: Adam Clulow, *European Maritime Violence and Territorial States in Early Modern Asia, 1600-1650*. In: *Itinerario* 33, no. 1 (2007), p. 87.

³⁴ Engelbert Kaempfer (1651 – 1716) was a German scientist who undertook an expedition through Russia, Persia, India, and Japan amongst others from 1683 until 1693. He provided considerable insights into the Japanese society with his notes.

requires this approach. The fourth main chapter focusses on an incident that happened in the latter half of the timeframe provided in this paper. An analysis of representative passages from primary sources therefore fits best after the examination of underlying contexts.

Although the tributary system provides the frame of this thesis, as international relations were conducted through tributary gift exchange, the impact that this sort of trade had on premodern international relations must not be overestimated. David C. Kang is but one out of various defenders of the predominance of a tributary system in Southeast Asia that was characterized by the mutual acceptance of China as a cultural hegemon that did not exploit its subordinated secondary states until the “impact of foreign imperialism”³⁵ in the region caused significant changes.³⁶ Kang argues that such a system generated peace for roughly six centuries in the whole region,³⁷ which Peter C. Perdue openly challenges by questioning the even existence of the system itself.³⁸ While tributary gift exchange certainly played a role in premodern diplomatic relations, Perdue doubts the systematization of tributary relations between China and its “vassals” in comparison to other empires like the Mughal regime, Russia, the Ottomans or even contemporary France, where tribute also was important.³⁹ While I would not go as far as Perdue to question the existence of tributary trade as a systematized practice for the SouthEast Asian region, it is yet important to keep in mind the different forms it took, out of which I argue the *ka-i* system to be one of them. The *ka-i* system cannot be seen as a knowingly inferred model that was artificially created, but as a set of practices that emerged throughout the first half of the 17th century. There was no contemporary expression or definition for a tributary system, which also makes the term “*ka-i*” a creation of later periods to subsume diplomatic practices of the time.

Regarding the historiography of Japanese international relations in the Edo Period, it is remarkable that the majority of contributions come from scholars of western origins, with only a few exceptions like Arano, who actually are from Japanese descent. Much interest, therefore, was laid on the encounters between Japan and westerners – especially the Spanish, Dutch, Portuguese, and English. While the latter originated from the highly competitive European field of interstate confrontations that led to the establishment of a self-perception of absolute territorial sovereignty of one legitimized ruler only, the Japanese experience as an archipelago

³⁵ Peter C. Perdue, The Tenacious Tributary System. In: *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 24, No. 96 (2015), p. 1003.

³⁶ Comp.: David C. Kang, *East Asia Before the West. Five Centuries of Trade and Tribute* (New York, 2010).

³⁷ Comp.: Kang, *East Asia Before the West*, p. 2.

³⁸ Comp.: Perdue, The Tenacious Tributary System, pp. 1002-1014.

³⁹ Comp.: Perdue, The Tenacious Tributary System, p. 1010.

without much international competition about its territory at the time resulted in different diplomatic practices that corroborated ideological attitudes of centralization like the *ka-i* system in order to be able to control the vast extent of the political unit, as will be explained in more detail in the first main chapter. Comparisons between 17th century Europe and 17th century East Asia are easily made, but one must not underestimate that mere geographical indicators already contribute to the answer to questions about why a development that occurred in Europe did not do so in East Asia at the time. Since indicators for the centralizing aims of the Tokugawa dynasty originated from a long tradition influenced by ideological, cultural, and even geographical circumstances, diplomatic practices that do not aim at cutting down territorial possessions of other sovereigns but maintaining the status quo appear comprehensible. In order to understand conflict, which derived from such different background settings of the VOC and the Tokugawa, acknowledging differences due to systematized practices that developed simultaneously without any contact prior to what Toby calls the “Iberian irruption” of the mid-16th century is key.⁴⁰

Working in the field of diplomatic history within global contexts provides many opportunities, if one can read Dutch sources next to English. My reasons for focussing on diplomatic encounters between the Dutch and Tokugawa Japan, however, do not only derive from certain opportunities due to language skills. It is a fact that the Netherlands and Japan maintained friendly relations for roughly four centuries until nowadays – making it the longest period of uninterrupted diplomatic relations between Japan and any western country. Of course, I do not want to overestimate Dutch influence on Tokugawa Japan. The assumption of European supremacy in premodern East Asia has already been proven wrong several times.⁴¹ Nevertheless, in consideration of the weak bargaining position the Europeans had in front of the shogunate, it is the more interesting that the VOC somehow managed to maintain diplomatic relations as the only foreign authorities that derived from a highly different diplomatic landscape. The states system⁴² that was about to take form in Europe at the time contradicted

⁴⁰ Comp.: Toby, *Engaging the Other*, pp. 106-141.

⁴¹ Comp.: Clulow, *The Company and the Shogun*. See also: Tonio Andrade, *Beyond Guns, Germs and Steel. European Expansion and Maritime Asia, 1400 – 1750*. In: *Journal of Early Modern History*, 14 (2010), pp. 165-186. Robert Markley, *The Far East and the English Imagination, 1600 – 1730* (Cambridge, 2006).

⁴² In this thesis I refer to conceptions of the European states system in order to explicate differences in international practices between the VOC and the Tokugawa. The early modern age was shaped by the establishment process of the sovereign state as the most important international political actor in Europe. Communication and correspondence between the various centres in Europe increased at the time, while also the practice of sending ambassadors as envoys to foreign courts became common. Such forms of international practices, furthermore, were influenced by conceptions of international law, which were taking shape simultaneously – like the principles of sovereignty, territoriality, and legality – which were not induced forcefully but developed through consensus. Such principles define the hierarchical equality between states as

East Asian tributary relations between hegemon and vassal in a way that it claimed equity between sovereigns.⁴³ Only the surrender of “European” diplomatic perceptions enabled the VOC to maintain friendly relations to the Tokugawa, while other foreigners who did not obey Tokugawa rules were simply expelled. That practices of western states system conceptions still were imposed forcefully in the mid-19th century did not mean that this strong and long-lasting tradition of how international relations were conducted in premodern East Asia lost influence until nowadays. Especially a rise of international influence in East Asian societies recently shows that diplomatic patterns of tributary relations are still valid. To look at first encounters of representatives from diverging diplomatic backgrounds nowadays therefore seems as relevant as ever.

II. Theoretical Framework – “Japan” and the VOC in the First Half of the 17th Century

In 1603, Tokugawa Ieyasu was inaugurated as the first out of fifteen shoguns, who would rule the Japanese archipelago for more than 250 years throughout the Edo Period (1603 – 1868). He was followed by his descendants Tokugawa Hidetada (1579 – 1632/33) and Tokugawa Iemitsu (1604 – 1651). With the inauguration of the latter in 1623, the third ruling generation finally was reached, which effectively made the Tokugawa family a dynasty. Still, in the first decades of the 17th century, Japan was far from what can be referred to as the highly centralised feudal

well as the undivided sovereignty of a state’s government over its territory. Nevertheless, what is nowadays known as the states system or the Westphalian system as a system of hierarchically equal countries and an international balance of power could not be found in Europe by the time of the early 17th century. In this regard, I state that the development of a state system with well-defined borders and clear assignments of competences between states, in the sense of the above-mentioned principles, did not fully arise until the 19th century. Nevertheless, in the leap of the Westphalian Peace Congress, diplomatic practices already took form that influenced representations of sovereigns and theoretical foundations like Hugo Grotius’ thoughts on international law too had a long-lasting impact on European conceptions of international relations. Early tendencies of principles fundamental for the contemporary states system therefore already could be found. Two of the most influential works of Hugo Grotius in this regard are *Mare liberum* (1606) and *De jure belli ac pacis* (1625). Comp.: Sven Externbrink, Staatensystem. In: Friedrich Jäger (ed.), Enzyklopädie der Neuzeit, Bd. 12 (Stuttgart, 2010), pp. 558f. Anuschka Tischer, Westfälischer Friede. In: Friedrich Jäger (ed.), Enzyklopädie der Neuzeit, Bd. 14 (Stuttgart, 2011), p. 1028. Stephen C. Neff (ed.), *Hugo Grotius on the Law of War and Peace*. Student Edition (Cambridge, 2012). Robert Feenstra, Jeroen Vervliet (eds.), *Hugo Grotius Mare Liberum, 1609-2009*. Original Latin Text and English Translation (Leiden/Brill, 2009).

⁴³ European conceptions of the states system were shaped by constant concerns to establish or enable hegemony of one state throughout the early modern period with concepts of balance of power and equilibria dating back to the late 15th and early 16th century that promoted perceptions of equity. Comp.: Externbrink, Staatensystem, pp. 559f.

state, which historiography often assumed for the Edo Period.⁴⁴ In order to understand how the *ka-i* system developed over the first decades of Tokugawa rule, it is therefore necessary to comprehend the development of what “Japan” was in terms of cultural, political, and ideological unity at the time.

Since the creation of the modern nation state in the 19th century, identity is usually linked to nationality instead of smaller, more local units like provinces, towns, villages, or even family ties – a situation that was vice versa in Japan of the Sengoku Period, where Japan as a nation hardly ever existed.⁴⁵ The artificial creation of historically grown, but sometimes also arbitrarily drawn borderlines nowadays sets the frame for international interaction, and the high level of establishment of such a categorization easily tempts to project back contemporary circumstances on previous times and places.⁴⁶ To understand “Japan” in the first years of Tokugawa rule, it is rather accurate to view it as a fragile conglomerate of *koku* (states; lit.: countries), which – after roughly 150 years of independence – only recently were unified to the *dai-nihon-koku* (lit.: great country of the rising sun) throughout the Period of Settlement (1560-1600). Accordingly, a certain level of cohesion already prevailed among the daimyo of the early Edo Period, which derived from widespread acceptance of military hegemony of the Tokugawa. The development of Japanese unity in terms of self-perception and identity, however, was only about to begin in 1603, when Tokugawa Ieyasu was inaugurated as shogun, and furthermore required the creation of the *ka-i* world view with all the policies and administrative measurements that derived from it.

First traditions that prove a creation of collective identity already took form roughly 900 years earlier. The term *nihon* dates back to the 7th century as the response of the imperial dynasty to the denouncing expression *wa* (lit.: dwarf), which the Chinese kept in use to refer to the archipelago that was positioned in the east of their territory.⁴⁷ Also, the Muromachi Period (1336-1572) was the origin of many cultural traditions like the tea ceremony, or the noh-theatre,

⁴⁴ Among others, Hellyer argues against such a historiographical tradition. Comp.: *Hellyer, Defining Engagement*, pp. 10-12.

⁴⁵ Comp.: *Batten, To the Ends of Japan*, p. 98.

⁴⁶ The usage of the term “international” itself already indicates the high level of self-evidence that categorization in terms of nationality has reached in contemporary times. Although I do not understand Japan of the first half of the 17th century as a nation in a modern sense, I will continue to use the expression “international” in my thesis to refer to cross-border interactions due to understandability reasons. Nevertheless, that interactions between states in the early modern period did not take place between nations should be kept in mind.

⁴⁷ Comp.: Joshua A. *Fogel, The Cultural Dimensions of Sino-Japanese Relations. Essays on the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London/New York, 2015), p. 140.

which shape Japanese cultural identity even nowadays.⁴⁸ Although politically fragmented, a sense for cultural unity endured the Sengoku Period. After all, civil war did not emerge out of the wish to assimilate alien countries, but to re-establish unity by re-establishing a shogunate.⁴⁹ That a certain idea of collective identity already existed in times previous to the establishment of the *ka-i* system, also shows the cosmologic trinity of how the world was perceived in medieval Japan. In this period, which endured approximately until the arrival of the first Europeans in Japan, the world was divided into *honcho* (lit.: this country) and *kora*, which meant China, but simultaneously subsumed other known parts of SouthEast Asia as well under that expression.⁵⁰ The third region was referred to as *tenjiku* and geographically included India and everything that went beyond, although, however, this land often was perceived as divine territory and therefore rather had mythological value.⁵¹ More important for Japanese self-perception was the dichotomy between “this country” (*hocho*) and “that country” (*kora*), which used to reside safely away from own territories.⁵² It is a fact that foreign arrival over the seaway hardly ever happened previous to regular arrivals of the Europeans, which nurtured such a cosmology. The more striking was the actual impact of foreign arrivals in Japan in the mid-16th century that caused intense disputes over Japanese identity and position in the world for several decades.⁵³ The early Edo Period therefore was shaped by the attempt of the first three shoguns to strengthen Tokugawa rule over the archipelago by fostering unity not only politically, but also ideologically, through the establishment of the *ka-i* system.

The introduction of a Japan-centred world view based on principles that were copied from an originally Ming Chinese idea. Accordingly, legitimation of the shogun as the protector of the emperor was given by corroborating his rule through overtaking centrality claims to demarcate his seat as the centre of the world.⁵⁴ The farther away a country physically lay from this centre, the more uncivilized it was according to this logic – which is why Korea was seen

⁴⁸ Comp.: H. Paul Varley, Cultural Life in medieval Japan. In: Kozo Yamamura (ed.), The Cambridge History of Japan. Volume 3. Medieval Japan (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 447-499.

⁴⁹ William Wayne Farris explains how the results of the Onin War (1467–1476) led to the Sengoku Period as a time of warring states in order to re-establish central control by establishing “effective control over the economies and manpower”. William Wayne Farris, Japan to 1600. A Social and Economic History (Honolulu, 2009), p. 165.

⁵⁰ Comp.: Toby, Engaging the Other, p.5.

⁵¹ Comp.: *ibid.*

⁵² Comp.: *ibid.*

⁵³ Comp.: *ibid.*

⁵⁴ Comp.: Shōji Kawazoe, Japan and East Asia. In: Kozo Yamamura (ed.), The Cambridge History of Japan. Volume 3. Medieval Japan (Cambridge, 1990), p. 424. Jurgis Elisonas, The Inseparable Trinity. Japan’s Relations with China and Korea. In: John Whitney Hall (ed.), The Cambridge History of Japan. Volume 4. Early Modern Japan (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 299f.

inferior to Japan, the Ryukyu Islands were inferior to Korea and the Dutch resided on the last place.⁵⁵ Geographical distance became the indicator according to which subordinated states were ranked out of a Japanese perspective and the so-called “Gyōki-zu”⁵⁶ (see Fig 1) maps of the medieval period, which were drafted rather imprecisely, were replaced by maps that clearly demarcated where Japan was situated in the world.⁵⁷ Figure 1 shows an example of a Gyōki-styled map, which did not rely on geographical exactness, but underlined “the relative position of the provinces and a general scheme of the main roads leading from the capital province of Yamashiro”, where Kyoto was situated.⁵⁸ References to the *kora* sphere are not made. Instead, provinces are given by their names and connected via routes, which lead to the imperial capital. The fact that this map was drafted in the 8th century, might lay the assumption at hand that viewing the archipelago in context of its respective “Others” simply did not happen at the time but could still have been common in maps of the later medieval period. Yet, there are numerous examples of similar depictions, out of which the “Dainihonkoku zu” was but one of the earliest.⁵⁹ Furthermore, a map out of the 8th century that views Japan of the Nara Period (710-794) not as a unity, but as a conglomerate of neighbouring territories which are somehow connected via roads that lead to the capital, shows that the characteristic fragmentation of Japanese self-perception in the later Period of Settlement and early Edo Period had a long tradition – at least in cartography. Again, it was the arrival of foreigners in the mid-16th century – the begin of the “Iberian irruption”, as Toby puts it⁶⁰ – where Japanese self-perception was confronted with – until then – unknown “Others”, which led to a change in Japanese self-perception that also found its way into mapping. The cosmological dichotomy between *honcho* and *kora* lost value and made way for new interpretations of Japan's position in the world, which were drafted in the sense of the *ka-i* system. Accordingly, mapping in the early Edo Period was characterized by the positioning of the Japanese archipelago in the centre of various world maps that now were drafted with the influence of imported European techniques.⁶¹ The way Japan was mapped at the time in this regard shows that a certain extent of Japanese centrality in global

⁵⁵ Comp.: Yonetomo, Mapping Early Modern Japan, p. 3.

⁵⁶ Gyōki (668-749) was a Buddhist priest in the Nara period (710-794) but also an influential civil engineer who is widely recognised as the founder of mapping in Japan. Comp.: Kazutaka Unno, Cartography in Japan. In: J.B. Harley, David Woodward (eds.), The History of Cartography. Volume 2. Book 2. Cartography in the Traditional East and Southeast Asian Societies (Chicago/London, 1994), p. 367.

⁵⁷ Comp.: Batten, To the Ends of Japan, p. 71.

⁵⁸ Comp.: Unno, Cartography in Japan, p. 369.

⁵⁹ Examples of such Gyōki-styled maps are printed in J. B. Harley's and David Woodward's edition on the history of cartography. Comp.: Unno, Cartography in Japan.

⁶⁰ Comp.: Toby, Engaging the Other, pp. 106ff.

⁶¹ Again, examples of such *Nanban*-Style world maps are printed in J. B. Harley's and David Woodward's edition on the history of cartography. Comp.: Unno, Cartography in Japan, pp. 378f.

contexts already was claimed in the early years of the shogunate and further took form throughout the first half of the 17th century.⁶²

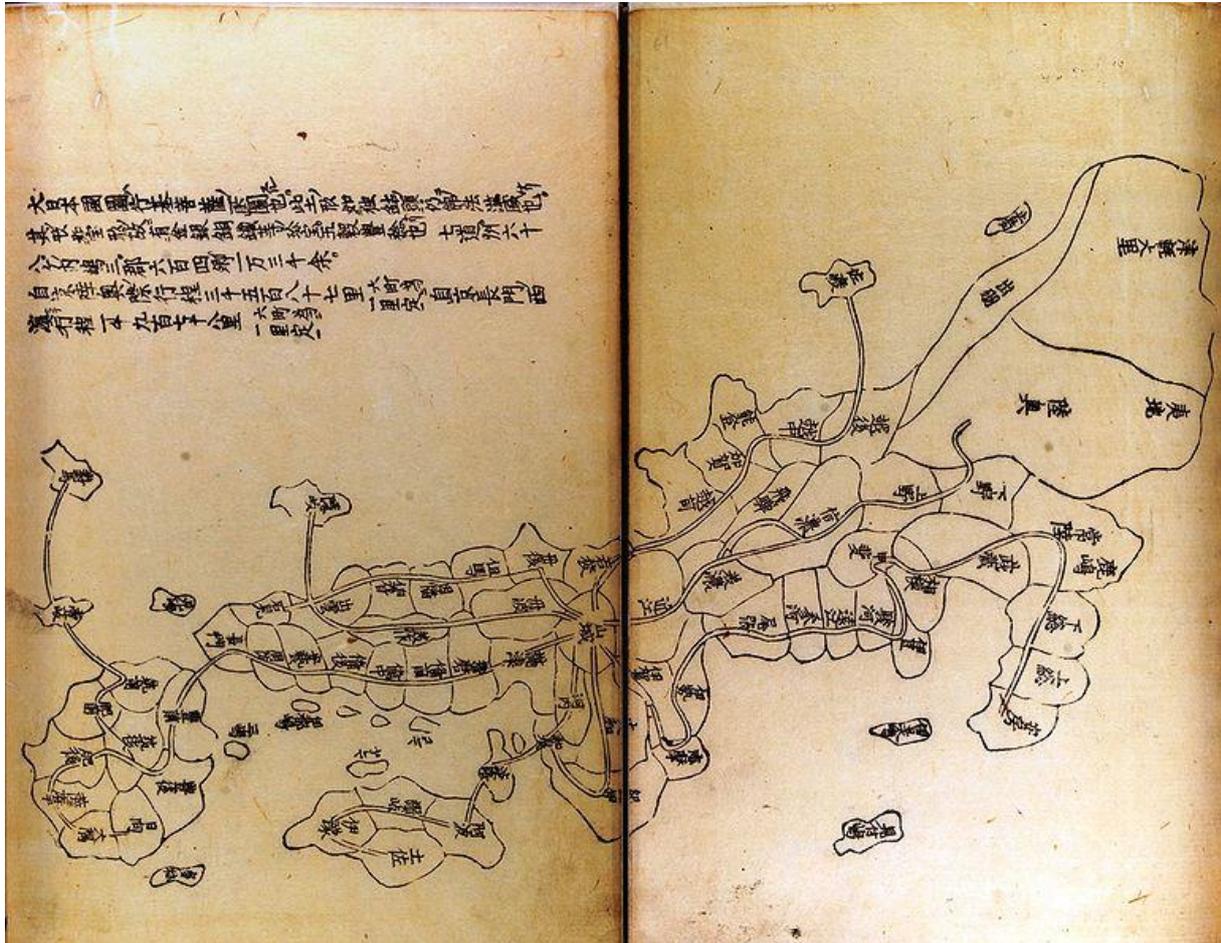


Figure 1: The “Dainihonkoku zu”, 8th century. This map shows one of the earliest depictions of the Japanese archipelago in Gyoki-style. Size of the original: 26,3 x 41,3 cm.

Online source taken from: <https://www.tulips.tsukuba.ac.jp/exhibition/kochizu/gazou/3-1.html> (29.05.2020).

For a printed version of the “Dainihonkoku zu”, see: *Unno*, Cartography in Japan, p. 368.

⁶² Two world maps that position the Japanese archipelago prominently in the middle of the eastern and western hemisphere – like the “Typus Orbis Terrarum” *nanban*-style map – are published in: *Unno*, Cartography of Japan, p. 378.



Figure 2: The keichō map of Japan, ca. 1653. The depiction of Japan offers three sets of information: The estates of the *daimyō* before 1633, the names of the *daimyō* in 1639, and the names of the *daimyō* in 1653. Size of the original: 370 x 434 cm.

Photography taken from: J.B. *Harley*, David *Woodward* (eds.), *The History of Cartography*. Volume 2. Book 2. *Cartography in the Traditional East and Southeast Asian Societies* (Chicago/London, 1994), p. 726. (28.03.2020)

The development of changes in Japanese self-perception in cartography is understood best through the consideration of a later example – the keichō map⁶³ of 1653 (see Fig. 2) – in

⁶³ This depiction of the Japanese archipelago was but one example out of a variety of maps that were drafted throughout the first half of the 17th century. Many maps included depictions of the surrounding East Asian region, or the whole world as well. For the purposes of this thesis, however, it is sufficient to consider the depiction of the *dai-nihon-koku* only. The map was named after the era when the order to realize the project was given, which happened in 1605, the tenth year of the Keichō era (1596-1615). The completion of the map took place in 1639, while the date of the map depicted in figure 2 appears to be the date of a revision. Comp.: *Unno*, *Cartography in Japan*, p. 397.

comparison to medieval traditions like the Gyoki-zu. In contrast to medieval maps, the keichō map clearly shows the progress in measuring techniques that now enabled detailed measurement of the irregularities of the Japanese littoral.⁶⁴ Despite the fact that geographical exactness increased during the first half of the 17th century, the production of depictions of the Japanese archipelago, however, was organized decentral, which led to the effect that various actors constructed different maps of the Japanese archipelago, which meant that demarcations of Japanese margins were varying.⁶⁵ “Although Japanese maps were quite clear about internal boundaries, neither official nor commercial maps made during these centuries, specified exactly where “Japan” ended and someplace else began”, which led to the emergence of maps that included Ezo (Hokkaido) and the Ryukyu Islands (Okinawa) into the Japanese realm, while others – like the keichō map – did not.⁶⁶ Several attempts have been made in historiography to explain these differences in mapping due to the fact that the centre in Edo was not interested in clearly determining the borderlines of its margins, as there simply were no threats to the *bakufu* from foreign powers that would have made it necessary.⁶⁷ This lack of military threat to the shogunate surely contributed to such a development. Nevertheless, the most important argument for an uncertain definition of Japanese borders derives from the common practice in premodern East Asia to simultaneously claim sovereignty over the same territory – like, for example, the Ryukyu Islands, which were invaded by Satsuma in 1609, but at the same time maintained diplomatic relations to Ming China as their subordinated vassals.⁶⁸ Even on the main islands themselves, especially in the early Edo Period, shogunal rule only was maintained through consensus and high concessions that the *bakufu* had to grant the western *tōzama* daimyo, which gave them a fair level of autonomous agency.⁶⁹ While the administration of their fiefdoms was the sole responsibility of the daimyo, without interference of the central government, their domains still were integrated into the overarching policies of the *bakufu*, which makes it some sort of shared sovereignty, remembering of federal structures.⁷⁰ European conceptions of international practices rejected such undefined practices of shared rulership over the same territory and, instead, “posited states with clear and explicit boundaries, and exclusive

⁶⁴ Especially new surveying tools like compasses or the astrolabe, which the Portuguese brought to Japan in the early 17th century, led to the production of maps of the archipelago with more detailed depictions of the irregularities of its coastline. Comp.: *Unno*, Cartography in Japan, p. 347.

⁶⁵ Comp.: *Yonetomo*, Mapping Early Modern Japan, p. 4.

⁶⁶ Ronald P. *Toby*, Mapping the Margins of Japan. In: Kären *Wigen*, Fumiko *Sugimoto*, Cary *Karacas* (eds.), Cartographic Japan. A History in Maps (Chicago/London, 2016), p. 24.

⁶⁷ Comp.: *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Comp.: *Toby*, Engaging the Other, p. 67.

⁶⁹ Comp.: *Ravina*, Land and Lordship, pp. 18-20.

⁷⁰ Comp.: *Ravina*, Land and Lordship, p. 23.

sovereignty over the territories so inscribed.”⁷¹ It took form around the same time in Europe and laid the basis of how Europeans perceived territorial ownership and legitimization of such ownership within and outside of their continent. Differences in such assumptions between the Dutch VOC and Tokugawa Japan often resulted in serious diplomatic misunderstandings, out of which the *noitsu-jiken* is one of the most consequential examples, as will be shown in detail in chapter V.

In encounters between the Dutch and Tokugawa Japan, the recently constituted Dutch East India company – the VOC – made up the counterpart of the Japanese central government that was occupied with the corroboration of unity on the still very fragmented political landscape among the various provinces.⁷² On the one side was the Japanese state that did not clearly demarcate the reach of its influential sphere, but rather engaged in the establishment of an own centrality that could spare exact definition of its borders as long as tribute could be received from such territories in question – for example from the Ryukyu Islands. On the opposite lay the Dutch VOC that was not a state, but an organization that profited from rights that were granted to governors stationed in Southeast Asia to conduct sovereignty acts in the name of the government. It was founded out of political, military, and financial reasons to effectively challenge the claimed Spanish monopoly on spice trade in the East Indies and to get competitors out of the market.⁷³ The underlying law that made possible such a division of sovereignty came from Hugo Grotius, who vehemently argued for the freedom of trade and the principle of *pacta sunt servanda* (“treaties must be honoured”), which were allowed to be defended by force, if they were disobeyed.⁷⁴ The VOC-charter of 1602 explicitly mentions the right of the company agents to establish contracts with local authorities and maintain them by force, if needed.

“Item dat die vande voorst[ae]nde Compagnie sullen vermogen beoosten de Cape van bonne Esperance, mitsgaders in, ende deur de enghte van Magellanen, mette princen, ende potentate verbintnisse, ende contracten te maken, op ten naem vande staeten g[e]n[er]ael der vereenigde Nederlanden, ofte hooge Onericheyt derselver, mitsgaders aldaer eenige forteressen, ende versekertheden te bouwen, Gouverneuren volch van oorlogen, ende

⁷¹ *Toby*, *Engaging the Other*, p. 73.

⁷² See the emphasis of the demarcations between the feudal estates on the *keichō* map, which were clearly separated through borderlines and drafted in different colours to further distinguish them from each other.

⁷³ Comp.: Martine Julia van *Ittersum*, *Profit and Principle. Hugo Grotius, Natural Rights Theories, and the Rise of Dutch Power in the East Indies 1595 – 1615* (Brill/Leiden/Boston, 2006), p. lii.

⁷⁴ Comp.: *Ittersum*, p. lxi. See also: *Clulow*, *European Maritime Violence and Territorial States*, p. 79.

Officiers van Justitie, ende tot andere nootelycke diensten, tot conservatie vande plaetsen, onderhoudinge van goede ordre, politie ende Justitie, eensamentlyck tot voorderinge vande veringe te stellen.”⁷⁵

“Similarly, east of the Cape of Good Hope and in and beyond the Straits of Magellan, representatives of the aforementioned Company shall be authorised to enter into commitments and enter into contracts with princes and rulers in the name of the States General of the United Netherlands or the country’s Government in order to build fortifications and strongholds. They may appoint governors, keep armed forces, install Judicial officers and officers for other essential services so to keep the establishments in good order, as well as jointly ensure enforcement of the law and justice, all combined so as to promote trade.”⁷⁶

While most parts of the VOC charter focus on instructions concerning the conduction of trade, taxation, and punishments in case of violation, this comparatively short paragraph defines some essential rights that the company was equipped with in Southeast Asia. Next to the definition of scope (“east of the Cape of Good Hope and in and beyond the Straits of Magellan”)⁷⁷, it allowed company agents to conduct sovereignty acts in the name of their country in order to achieve their aim to establish market-share. Especially their right to build fortifications and ratify contracts with local rulers, which could be maintained even forcefully, if necessary, reminds of the Grotian principle of *pacta sunt servanda*. This set of rights legitimized the organization to conduct violence for the sake of trade, which also had an impact on VOC relations to Tokugawa Japan. In the first half of the 17th century, the Dutch perception of absolute sovereignty over claimed territory in combination with the right to secure trade by force clashed with the Tokugawa perception that spared exact demarcation of the Japanese margins likely for the European states system and viewed international relations in a hierarchical way, between centre and subordinated vassals, who could, in fact, be paying tribute to multiple hegemons.

Such differences in international practices set the frame for encounters between the VOC and the Tokugawa shogunate and led to various conflicts until Dutch integration into the

⁷⁵ Inventaris van het archief van de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC), 1602-1795 (1811), in: Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Nederlandse Factorij in Japan, nummer toegang 1.04.02, inventarisnummer 1.

⁷⁶ Translation taken from: Peter *Reynders* (transl.), Rupert *Gerritsen* (ed.), *A Translation of the Charter of the Dutch East India Company (Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie)*. Granted by the States General of the United Netherlands, 20 March 1602 (Canberra, 2009.), p. 6.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* NL-HaNA, Nederlandse Factorij Japan, 1.04.02, inv.nr. 1.

Japanese *ka-i* system was reached. In order to comprehend such encounters, it is therefore important to understand what Japan was in the early Edo Period, and that what was perceived as “Japan” underwent serious changes in the first half of the 17th century. There are various debates in historiography that deal with the question in how far Japan could be called a “nation”, a “state” or simply a conglomerate of various more or less independent entities that agreed on transferring a certain amount of sovereignty to a central government, out of which Toby and Ravina are but two representatives of contradicting assumptions. While Toby rather stresses the existence of national unity in terms of cultural homogenization,⁷⁸ Ravina rejects the concept of a state for Japan in the Edo Period, highlighting the huge amount of agency of especially the western *tōzama* daimyo.⁷⁹ As contradicting as both assumptions may seem, I agree to both viewpoints in a way that they circulate around the same phenomenon, only focusing on different aspects. Discussions about the appropriateness to describe Tokugawa Japan as a territorial state in a premodern East Asian setting do not seem fruitful regarding the circumstances that simply spared exact demarcations of the Japanese realm and furthermore relied on principles such as shared sovereignty, both, within and outside of the Japanese main islands. This indicates that the politically fragmented character of Japan and its domains throughout, especially, the early Edo Period concerned the Tokugawa shogunate only to the extent to where it resisted the *bakufu*’s claims of centrality. Through the monopolization of foreign relations – which, one could argue, began already within Japan through the *sankin kōtai* system – the daimyo’s fiefdoms, as well as foreign vassals of the shogun, became bound to the court in Edo, which strengthened the shoguns legitimation in front of a numerous audience. As long as these requirements were fulfilled, autonomy within the provinces could have been high. In order to understand what Japan was at the time, it is therefore necessary to take into account the coexistence of both, local autonomy and national (or proto-national) ties. Toby shows convincingly that exact demarcation of the shogunate’s influential sphere did not take place at the time.⁸⁰ The discussion whether to define the Japanese realm as a state or not, therefore, requires consideration of the same lack of demarcation that characterized the political landscape like practices of shared sovereignty that led to the coexistence of both – local autonomy of especially western daimyo and an overriding ideology of some kind of national unity that took form throughout the 17th century and was spread throughout the archipelago through the system

⁷⁸ Comp.: Toby, *Engaging the Other*, and: TOBY, *Rescuing the Nation from History. The State of the State in Early Modern Japan*.

⁷⁹ Comp.: Ravina, *Land and Lordship*, pp. 16f.

⁸⁰ Comp.: Toby, *Mapping the Margins of Japan*, p. 24.

of alternate attendance that turned Edo into a centre for cultural exchange.⁸¹ Internationally, out of a medieval cosmology that simply put the Japanese archipelago in opposition to all foreign countries that had remained safely across the East China Sea grew a new world view that was much more diversified than before. Changes in Japanese self-perception as a cultural unity in front of its diversified “Others” also happened as a response to this break in traditions of identity after the takeover of the Tokugawa shogunate and the political unification of the country in 1600.⁸² Encounters with its “Others”, out of which the Dutch were one example, were necessary in the beginning of Tokugawa rule, where foreigners were even proactively invited to bring tribute to the shogun, which in the long run led to the establishment of a new world view – the *ka-i* system – in the early Edo Period.⁸³

III. From Warring States to a Japan-centred World Order

The perception of international relations in terms of hierarchical relations between a hegemon and its vassals was not an invention of the Tokugawa shogunate, but instead already was applied by Ming China as early as the mid-14th century.⁸⁴ It was about the same time when Japan had made first experiences with this world order, as the Ashikaga shogun Yoshimitsu had formally accepted a subordinated position to Ming-China as the hegemon who granted diplomatic and trading relations only to legitimized “kings” who declared themselves vassals.⁸⁵ This subordination did not have any political effects on the relations between the countries, but rather served as a formal declaration to empower Ming hegemony according to their world order as the “Middle-kingdom” that claimed the Chinese emperor’s throne as the centre of the world.⁸⁶ The further away a country was positioned from this centre, the less cultivated it seemed through Ming-Chinese perspective,⁸⁷ and tributes sent to the emperor by subordinated secondary states were rewarded with gifts of great value in return – which is how tributary trade functioned.⁸⁸ Although subordination therefore only was a formal act without any political

⁸¹ Comp.: *Vaporis*, *Tour of Duty*, p. 2.

⁸² Comp.: *Toby*, *Engaging the Other*, p. 6.

⁸³ Comp.: *Clulow*, *European Maritime Violence*, p. 83.

⁸⁴ Comp.: *Kawazoe*, *Japan and East Asia*, p. 424.

⁸⁵ Comp.: Charlotte von *Verschuer*, *Across the Perilous Sea. Japanese Trade with China and Korea from the Seventh to the Sixteenth Centuries* (New York, 2007), p. 114.

⁸⁶ Comp.: *Kang*, *East Asia Before the West*, pp. 12; 58. *Kawazoe*, *Japan and East Asia*, p. 432.

⁸⁷ Comp.: *Kang*, *East Asia Before the West*, pp. 25-53.

⁸⁸ Comp.: *Kawazoe*, *Japan and East Asia*, p. 432.

consequences, Ashikaga Yoshimitsu still was criticized by contemporary Japanese aristocrats, which led to a weakening of the position of the shogun.⁸⁹ To prevent criticism from within in the early 17th century, the Tokugawa shoguns needed to structure diplomatic relations in a way that did not undermine the sovereignty of the shogun. A Japan-centred world view was introduced that claimed its own hegemony instead of China's, which led to the need to use international relations to corroborate this attitude.⁹⁰

To view Japan as a centre surrounded by subordinated vassals who paid tribute, had its origins in developments of the late Sengoku Period, where the *koku* were at constant war and unification only was about to begin. The leap of the Period of Settlement turned the Japanese landscape from independent warring domains into pacified territories that still enjoyed a certain level of autonomy, but were unified under one hegemon, the Tokugawa. Further restrictions in the early Edo Period had the aim to maintain and institutionalize that hegemony, which included the expansion of such restrictions to international relations as well. From the beginning of re-unification in 1560, where foreign influences circulated freely on the archipelago, Japan turned into a domain that kept firm control over its provinces and foreign relations until 1639. To comprehend the establishment of the *ka-i* system in the early Edo Period therefore requires the consideration of developments that took place in the Period of Settlement, which laid the basis for Tokugawa Ieyasu to set up a dynasty that would rule the archipelago for 250 years.

a. Roots in the Unification Process

„Pillage, arson and rape took place from one end of the archipelago to the other (...) armies plundered fields during the spring planting, mowed down wheat crops and interfered with farmers during the busy summer, stole the harvest in the fall, and broke into granaries, burned peasant homes, and left their victims to freeze or starve to death in the winter. (...) soldiers repeatedly burned residences, raped women, kidnapped and pressed unsuspecting cultivators into service, and pilfered peasants' personal belongings, tools, and livestock.”⁹¹

⁸⁹ Comp.: *Kawazoe*, Japan and East Asia, p. 435.

⁹⁰ Comp.: *Toby*, State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan, pp. 23ff.

⁹¹ *Farris*, Japan to 1600, Deterioration of Shogunate Control, 1450-1600, p. 169.

William Wayne Farris' explanation of everyday-life during the Sengoku period (ca. 1467 – ca. 1600) gives the impression of Japan as a cruel place, where brutality was on the agenda. War rose in every province, either to deal with their own rebellious samurai-classes (*kokujin*; lit. men of the province), or to compete against neighbouring territories to regain control of an archipelago, whose central government had lost its power. After the shogun Ashikaga Yoshinori (1394 – 1441) died, his descendants were only children, which led to a decline in power. The daimyo one after another declared themselves independent, which led to more than 100 years of battle all against all to regain control over the provinces and strengthen the economy again.⁹² Reasons for fighting reached from the will of several daimyo to unify the country again and bring peace to the archipelago to such fundamental needs like plundering the grain supply of neighbouring territories to prevent famine within their own domain due to harvest losses.⁹³

In this time, international trade was important to the archipelago. There was no central instance to take over the control of foreign relations, which led to several daimyo classes that came into contact with Portuguese, Korean merchants or merchants of the Ryukyu Islands. In the beginning of the 16th century a new daimyo class emerged that was smaller and more tightly organised.⁹⁴ These clans were conducting mercantilist trade. They imported muskets for their armies, improved skills in manufacturing goods like cotton, stone, silver and iron, and exported them for luxury goods like Chinese porcelain and silk.⁹⁵ After the suspension of trading relations with China in 1549, next to Korean and Ryukyuan merchants, also the Portuguese became middlemen to exchange Japanese metal ware with Chinese silk. But also imported weapons played an important role that stimulated competition among the provinces to unify the country again and assure peace. The first, to successfully enwiden his influence on the archipelago in the year 1560 was Oda Nobunaga (1534-1582), daimyo of a small clan in central Honshu, who managed to defeat an army ten times bigger than his own, which was sent against him by Imagawa Yoshimoto. He immediately took over the idea of the latter to conquer Kyoto, therefore joined forces with Matsudaira Motoyasu – the later Tokugawa Ieyasu – and was successful. In 1568 he “declared himself the protector of the emperor” and started to expand

⁹² Comp.: Farris, Japan to 1600, Deterioration of Shogunate Control, 1450-1600, p. 165.

⁹³ Comp.: *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Comp.: H. Paul Varley, Japanese Culture (Honolulu, 2000), p. 141.

⁹⁵ The history of Sakai in this regard gives a good example for the importance of international trade for Japan. At first it was a small port, but during the Sengoku Period it grew due to the importance of international trade for the daimyo. It was made a free city led by merchants with its own law, was guaranteed with protection from the daimyo, and after the arrival of the Portuguese, it even came under control of Christian missionaries. Comp.: Farris, Japan to 1600, Domestic and Overseas Trade, p. 180.

his control over Japan by conquering provinces one after another.⁹⁶ The reasons, enabling him, as the leader of a small clan, to expand his influence in such a matter lay within international relations, because, although his army was small, his soldiers were very skilled at using firearms which were imported from the Portuguese.⁹⁷ These muskets gave him a huge advantage that led to his success in unifying one third of the country until his assassination by one of his vassals in 1582.

Until his death, Oda Nobunaga was the first to effectively establish a hegemonic role on the archipelago after roughly a century of warfare. This, of course, was just the beginning of the process of unification that would result in the establishment of control through the *ka-i* system. Nevertheless, already Nobunaga introduced policies to strengthen the control over his new domain that would help his successors to maintain central control. He made effort to destroy the castles of the rebellious *kokujin*, made allies, and surrounded himself with his nearest and dearest vassals, made surveys to determine the productivity of his land, and unified weights and measures.⁹⁸ Good relations to the Portuguese were of good use, not only because of their weaponry, but also as Christianity might have been useful against rebellious Buddhist sects, which Oda Nobunaga had to deal with throughout his campaign.⁹⁹

After Nobunaga's death, it was Toyotomi Hideyoshi, a general of humble origins, who revenged his assassination and successfully set himself atop of a federation of around 300 vassals.¹⁰⁰ He managed to unify the rest of the country within eight years and benefited from the policies introduced by his predecessor. To strengthen his new gained control over the whole archipelago, several means had to be undertaken, as the newly unified country still was very fragile. He managed to do so by taking into possession the most fruitful land according to Nobunaga's surveys and therefore gained the monopoly on food supply, so pillaging and plundering could be prevented. Furthermore, peasants and samurai had to choose their profession because being a peasant who serves as a part-time-soldier got prohibited.¹⁰¹ The samurai then had to move to the cities, while hunts for weapons were organised in the countryside to prevent possible future rebellions of peasants.¹⁰² A Japan-centred world order, which was developing in the early 17th century, cannot yet be found within this period.

⁹⁶ Comp.: *Farris*, Japan to 1600, The Warring States Settlement, 1560-1600, p. 191.

⁹⁷ Comp.: Marius B. *Jansen*, The Making of Modern Japan (London, 2000), pp. 12f.

⁹⁸ Comp.: *Farris*, Japan to 1600, The Warring States Settlement, 1560-1600, p. 192.

⁹⁹ Comp.: *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Comp.: *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Comp.: *Jansen*, The Making of Modern Japan, p. 22.

¹⁰² For a more detailed explanation of how Hideyoshi managed to take over control of Japan, I refer to: *Farris*, Japan to 1600, pp. 191-194; and *Jansen*, The Making of Modern Japan, pp. 17-24.

Nevertheless, the beginning process of unification went hand in hand with the introduction of administration policies, which laid the basis to successfully put the various warring provinces under firm control by one central authority again.

The decentralization that characterized the Sengoku Period is best visualised by considering the phenomenon of the *wakō* – a phenomenon of piracy that emerged on the Japanese littoral, especially the Inland Sea or the Tsushima Islands located between Kyushu and Korea. Local lords of these domains profited from this lack of central control over the Japanese littoral and conducted raids throughout several countries in Southeast Asia, reaching as far as the southern coast of China. International trade was very lucrative throughout the Sengoku period, which made incoming vessels a good target to get into possession of booty. Raids that were conducted by groups who inhabited those islands therefore often misled to the translation of the term *wakō* as “Japanese pirates”. But to understand the phenomenon of the *wakō* it is important to include the meaning of the original term and how it was used during the late Sengoku and early Edo Period, both internationally and from a Japanese perspective.

Literally translated, the term *wakō* means “dwarf bandit” and was introduced through a Chinese attribution in the 14th century to describe the inhabitants of eastern islands who engaged in piracy.¹⁰³ Throughout the Yamato Period (ca. 250-710), however, the term “wa” generally was used in China to describe Japan as a whole.¹⁰⁴ “Wa” (lit. “dwarf”) therefore was used as a denouncing term to describe Japan through a Chinese perspective as “the land of wa” that was located somewhere in the east consisting of several islands. To describe the phenomenon of piracy in the late Sengoku Period as *wakō* therefore also led to the international perception of Japan as a country of pirates. Records of Korean and Chinese embassies described the *wakō* as uncivilized and brutal and therefore shaped the way not only these sea lords, but the Japanese society as a whole was perceived in Southeast Asia.¹⁰⁵ Such attribution worsened the reputation of Japan throughout the region. Nevertheless, the *wakō* were a phenomenon that did not consist of Japanese people only, but rather of multi-ethnic organizations whose majority was of Chinese descent, which becomes comprehensible when the establishment of – what Arano calls – the “*wakō*-phenomenon” is explained.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Comp.: *Shapinsky*, *Lords of the Sea*, pp. 190f.

¹⁰⁴ Comp.: Okazaki *Takashi*, Janet *Goodwin*, *Japan and the Continent*. In: Delmer M. *Brown* (Ed.), *The Cambridge History of Japan*. Volume 1. *Ancient Japan* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 275.

¹⁰⁵ Comp.: *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Comp.: *Arano*, *The Formulation of a Japanocentric World Order*, pp. 185-216.

In the mid-16th century, China had released edicts to prohibit private foreign trade as a means to centralize foreign relations. From 1550 until 1567, leaving the country for Chinese merchants became prohibited. Those who still left, settled overseas, where they found circumstances that enabled some to achieve influential positions as merchants, interpreters or even ambassadors.¹⁰⁷ The favourable position on the margins of the Japanese littoral, where the weak central control could not reach to, enabled the establishment of sea lord's trading networks and influential spheres across the East China Sea that also resulted in the possibility to conduct raids and acquire booty. To describe the phenomenon of the *wakō* simply as piracy does not do justice to the several trading activities that also flourished under sea lords. At a time where central authority of Japan was weakening and China's lack of control over its littoral made possible raids of seafarers, it is more accurate to view the *wakō* as a phenomenon that emerged out of the possibility to make use of favourable circumstances through filling a vacuum and aiming at influence internationally. The phenomenon of the warring states described above did not halt at the Japanese coastline but expanded all over the sea as an own boarder zone in which war, but also merchandise and trade was conducted by various actors.¹⁰⁸

A broader definition of the *wakō* by Yasunori Arano does not focus on thriving sea lords of Tsushima and the Inland Sea of Japan, but includes the Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, and British as well, who competed for trading ports on Taiwan, Macao, and the Philippines.¹⁰⁹ This enwidening of the definition elucidates the plurality of actors involved in this maritime region and furthermore clears up with supposed assumptions of *wakō*-piracy as a phenomenon of primarily East Asian descent. In fact, in the perception of the *bakufu* of the early Edo period, disputes between the Portuguese and the Dutch on open waters for example often were conceived as piratical acts.¹¹⁰ The formation of a vacuum on the East China Sea due to a weakening in central authority of Japan therefore coincided with the arrival of European ships in the region, which they used to establish themselves as intermediaries between land-based authorities such as China, Korea, and Japan.

The year 1588 demarcated a change in dealings of Japan with the *wakō*. Toyotomi Hideyoshi released restrictions of foreign trade and forbade piracy, which was used to legitimise

¹⁰⁷ Comp.: Arano, *The Formulation of a Japanocentric World Order*, pp. 186f.

¹⁰⁸ I refer to the elaborations of Bruce Batten, who states that the whole Chinese Sea region of the 16th century was a border, according to his definition of a border as a generic term of social division regardless of geography. Comp.: Batten, *To the Ends of Japan*, p. 39.

¹⁰⁹ Comp.: Arano, *The Formulation of a Japanocentric World Order*, p. 189.

¹¹⁰ For a detailed description of Japanese jurisdiction over Dutch encounters in the Japanese sphere I refer to Clulow's chapter on "Power and Petition" in: Comp.: Clulow, *The Company and the Shogun*, pp. 171-202.

him as the only one to be allowed to use force for the solution of conflicts.¹¹¹ This on the one hand should help to become accepted as the sovereign ruler of Japan internationally, but on the other hand also shows the extent of Hideyoshi's power to impose jurisdiction over the archipelago. To effectively control such sanctions, however, cooperation of sea lords was needed, which only happened through dialogue, negotiation, and compromise instead of suppressing them militarily.¹¹² Especially the lords of islands of the Inland Sea, such as Noshima and Kuroshima, profited from their geographic position on the margins of the Japanese main islands through the custom to hire them for protection services, trade barriers or to join sides in war, which was often used in times of war between the Mōri and Hideyoshi's forces.¹¹³ The difference between the *wakō* and piracy is again implicated by the comparability of sea lords to other warlords of land-based domains that were characteristic for the Sengoku Period. A lack of central authority led to the establishment of independent groups on the margins that could only be re-integrated through favourable conditions, which tempted them to do so. After Hideyoshi pacified western Honshu, Kyushu and Shikoku, it became obsolete for the lords of Noshima and Kurushima to continue with offering services for protection or warfare, as no opposing powers were left to benefit from.¹¹⁴ So the result was integration into Hideyoshi's policies.

As a consequence of the successful unification of the country Hideyoshi laid his focus abroad and in the 1590s started to realise his aim to conquer Korea. A possible reason for this might have been the need to keep the daimyo busy and to prevent rebellion. But, as trading relations to China still were abolished, the wish to force the Chinese into direct trade again also was of importance to let him take action.¹¹⁵ In any case his second invasion ended unsuccessfully with his death in 1598, which left a bad reputation of Japan in the SouthEast Asian region for his descendant, Tokugawa Ieyasu. The Portuguese were still trading with Japan, while their missionary activities were successful as well, diplomatic relations with Korea were set on ice and the image of the shogun throughout SouthEast Asia has taken serious damage.¹¹⁶ After a long period of time during the Sengoku Period, where foreign influence and foreign relations were of great use for the archipelago and the first two unifiers were busy with

¹¹¹ Comp.: *Arano*, The Formulation of a Japanocentric World Order, p. 190.

¹¹² Comp.: *Shapinsky*, Lords of the Sea, p. 230.

¹¹³ The Mōri were a clan of the province of Aki and stood in opposition to Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi. After the unification process, in the Edo Period, they were integrated into the *bakuhān* system as *tōzama* daimyo (daimyo of the western fiefdoms). Comp.: *Shapinsky*, Lords of the Sea, p. 236.

¹¹⁴ Comp.: *Shapinsky*, Lords of the Sea, p. 243.

¹¹⁵ Comp.: *Jansen*, The Making of Modern Japan, pp. 20f.

¹¹⁶ Comp.: *Toby*, State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan, p. 55.

taking over control through their domestic policies, Tokugawa Ieyasu finally saw himself in the need to expand this means of control on international relations as well.

Following Arano's thoughts, the unification of Japan had a lot to do with the integration of the littoral into central control. The phenomenon of the *wakō*, however, did not stop with this integration in the beginning of the Edo Period, but instead continued with the involvement of different actors, including Europeans. The creation of a Japan-centred world order on the one hand therefore grew out of the need to halt the littoral. The fact that *wakō*-piracy on the other hand did not disappear after the establishment of the Tokugawa *bakufu* shows that the focus of Japan on its own country as a centre still left the vacuum on the seas disregarded, allowing other actors to compete in these maritime areas.

b. The *ka-i* System – International Relations in Context of a Japan-centred World Order

After Hideyoshi's death in 1598, his son Hideyori should have become the new ruler according to Hideyoshi's wish. Nevertheless, it was Tokugawa Ieyasu, who benefited from his wealthy land possessions in Kanto and firm administrative control over his domain to prevail as the new shogun.¹¹⁷ The stepwise introduction of administrative measures by his two predecessors laid the basis for the establishment of a Japan-centred world order that now could be applied on international relations. Agendas of international relations to some extent could be integrated into the control of the shogun again, although provinces like Satsuma and Tsushima still kept up a certain amount of autonomy in conducting foreign relations, as will be shown in more detail in the chapter about the *sankin kōtai* system. Still, the last of the three famous unifiers of Japan in the same time became the first ruler of the more than 250 years lasting Tokugawa dynasty by benefitting from stepwise introductions of administrative measures, which had been launched by his two predecessors. These measures could now be used to foster unification of the country under a Japan-centred world order.

In contrast to the states system developing in Europe, where diplomacy took place between sovereign monarchs who were corresponding on an equal level, diplomatic relations

¹¹⁷ Comp.: Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, pp. 29-31. Farris, *Japan to 1600, The Warring States Settlement, 1560-1600*, p. 194.

in SouthEast Asia functioned on a hierarchical basis.¹¹⁸ International relations were influenced by a cultural hegemon in premodern East Asia, which set the standards of how official foreign contact was organized at the time. In general, historiography perceived that hegemon to be China, although Japanese claims of their own centrality at the time openly challenged such a Sinocentric conception.¹¹⁹ Ming Chinese policies of centralization of foreign relations in making any international trade dependant on trading licenses (tallies) institutionalized common practices of diplomatic relations to what nowadays is perceived as the so-called tributary system – a framework of rules and practices for diplomatic and economic exchange. In how far such a system actually existed in the region at the time has often been asked in recent historiography with varying results, reaching from rather defensive standpoints of the model to the denial of its existence as a system. According to David C. Kang – one of the defenders of the tributary model – only cultural recognition through the subordinated states could lead to the establishment of a hegemon (in this case China), which is how he, as only one representative of a whole historiographic tradition, propagates the characteristics of such a system as one that assured peace due to mutual acceptance of the hierarchical order inherent in its shaping.¹²⁰ The takeover of Confucian thoughts and institutions was relevant and the hegemon was expected not to exploit its subordinated states, which – according to Kang – disproves the assumption of military power as the reason for subjugating these secondary states.¹²¹ Such assumptions, however, disregard the actually very violent characteristics of early modern international interactions that were constantly shaped and reshaped by the phenomenon of piracy and the political vacuum at sea that actually allowed Europeans to set foot in East Asian waters in the first place. Peter C. Perdue recently shows that what Kang explained as the tributary system often was overemphasised, as tributary practices neither were restricted to premodern SouthEast Asia only, nor that they were as important for conducting international relations or corroborating a world view in the region, as often was assumed.¹²² While I would not go as far as to reject the whole existence of the East Asian tributary system, Perdue's thoughts are convincing in deconstructing the overly politicized use of the existence of a model in order to

¹¹⁸ Comp.: Kang, *East Asia Before the West*. Fuyoko Matsukata, *Contacting Japan*. In: Adam Clulow, Tristan Mostert (eds.), *The Dutch and English East India Companies. Diplomacy, Trade and Violence in Early Modern Asia* (Amsterdam, 2018), pp. 79-98.

¹¹⁹ Comp.: Kang, *East Asia Before the West*.

¹²⁰ Comp.: Kang, *East Asia Before the West*, p. 8.

¹²¹ Comp.: Kang, *East Asia Before the West*, pp. 17-24.

¹²² Comp.: Perdue, *The Tenacious Tributary System*, pp. 1008-1010.

view premodern SouthEast Asia as a harmonious and “enduring structure” previous to the “aggressive impact of foreign imperialism in the nineteenth century”.¹²³

With the succession of the Ming in China, diplomatic practices of the region became institutionalized, which indeed made the way how international relations were conducted characteristic for an established practice that justifies its definition as a system. Under the Ming, measures were undertaken to foster central control over foreign relations by introducing policies that prohibited Chinese merchants to leave their country and restricted overseas trade to a number of seaports in the first half of the 16th century. Those who wanted to maintain trading relations had to rely on the tally as a seal, which merchants had to carry with them in order to be recognized as official delegates of a foreign authority and not to be mistaken for pirates.¹²⁴ Tributary missions to Beijing happened less out of political reasons than out of ideological ones in order to constitute China not only as a hegemon of the region, but as the centre of the world. The practice of tributary gift exchange, in this regard, served as a common language to foster such a world view in a way that it made use of the practice of “presenting gifts for political and economic gain”¹²⁵ with the side-effect of strengthened ideological legitimation for the centre.¹²⁶ Japanese contact with the way Ming China organized its international relations already happened as early as the Ashikaga shogunate (1336 – 1573), when the shogun Yoshimasa (1436 – 1490) decided to take part in the system and therefore officially declared him and his realm as subordinated vassals of China – an act, although only of symbolic value, that caused much critique within Japan.¹²⁷ Political unrests and the results of the Ōnin War (1467 – 1477) led to a weakening of the shogunates position, which initiated the Sengoku Period where international relations were shaped by the competition of two families, the Ōuchi and the Hosokawa. Armed conflicts between the two, which occasionally even were carried out on Chinese territory, led to the ban of direct trade between the Ming and Japan in 1549.¹²⁸

Only after the reunification process of the Sengoku Period, central authority and control over the archipelago was established enough to meet the prerequisites to take part in international relations again, where recognition as a sovereign who is authorized to dispatch

¹²³ *Perdue*, *The Tenacious Tributary System*, p. 1003.

¹²⁴ *Comp.: Kawazoe*, *Japan and East Asia*, pp. 431f.

¹²⁵ *Laver*, *The Dutch East India Company and the Rhythm of Life in Japan*, p. 1.

¹²⁶ *Comp.: Perdue*, *The Tenacious Tributary System*, p. 1008.

¹²⁷ *Comp.: Kawazoe*, *Japan and East Asia*, pp. 432-435.

¹²⁸ The Ningbo incident of 1523 was such a conflict where two embassies – one of the Ōuchi, one of the Hosokawa family – made use of violence on Chinese territory, which caused much critique from the Ming who accused the Japanese of piracy. *Comp.: Shapinsky*, *Lords of the Sea*, p. 215.

embassies and conduct trade was required to be accepted. As soon as Hideyoshi established rulership over the archipelago under one central authority again, the Ming repeatedly attempted to re-integrate Japan into the Chinese tributary order, which Hideyoshi consequently rejected.¹²⁹ Also Tokugawa Ieyasu decided against re-integration due to bad experiences of the Ashikaga shoguns two centuries earlier and followed own foreign policy agendas.¹³⁰ Re-establishing peace on the archipelago, as it was the aim of the unifiers of Japan discussed above, led to the idea of taking over such institutionalized practices of diplomatic relations according to the Sinocentric world order but reshaping them in order to emphasise Japanese centrality. A Japan-centred world order therefore followed the role model of a China-centred world order, which was promoted by Japanese authorities, who stood in for the attitude that Japan had to be an own centre of the world, openly challenging universality claims of Ming China in their correspondence in the early Edo Period.¹³¹ Claiming Japan's own centrality instead of China's, therefore, also can be read as a challenge to Chinese hegemony in the region by forming alliances outside of the tributary system of the Ming.¹³² As both countries required formal subordination to their hegemonic status as a centre, official diplomatic contact could not be re-established between China and Japan, which is why direct diplomatic relations were not restored until the succession of the Qing dynasty (1636 – 1911) to the Ming. Japan had to rely on other foreign countries to establish itself as a centre, out of which Korea, the Ryukyu Islands, and to a certain extent the Dutch VOC as well turned out to be the most prevailing authorities.

In the same year when Ieyasu started his reign, the Dutch arrived at Japan and in the following years established their trading bases at Hirado and Nagasaki. The Portuguese therefore got competition in regard to indirect trade between Japan and Ming China. Furthermore Christianity – at first of use against rebellious Buddhist sects – grew in influence and now was considered as a threat by the shogun, as it would have led to decentralization again. So the propagation of Christianity got prohibited, trade was restricted to the two ports of Hirado and Nagasaki and finally the complete expulsion of all Portuguese followed in 1639.¹³³ The still very lucrative international trade could now be overtaken from the Dutch, who managed to put themselves into good light by explaining to the Japanese how the Netherlands

¹²⁹ Comp.: Birgit *Tremml-Werner*, *Audienzen und Korrespondenz. Japan und das spanische überseeische Imperium in der Frühen Neuzeit*. In: Birgit *Tremml-Werner*, Eberhard *Crailsheim* (eds.), *Audienzen und Allianzen. Interkulturelle Diplomatie in Asien und Europa vom 8. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert* (Wien, 2015), p. 74.

¹³⁰ Comp.: *Toby*, *State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan*, p. 59.

¹³¹ Comp.: *Toby*, *State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan*, pp. 59f.

¹³² Comp.: *Tremml-Werner*, *Audienzen und Korrespondenz*, p. 75.

¹³³ Comp.: Grant K. *Goodman*, *Japan and the Dutch 1600 – 1853* (Richmond, 2000), p. 11.

managed to free themselves “from the yoke of Roman Catholic Spain”.¹³⁴ But next to European actors, who continued influencing the way international relations were conducted throughout the early Tokugawa shogunate, primarily SouthEast Asian actors were important for the establishment of a Japan-centred world order of the archipelago. As already explained above, the name of the shogun suffered from bad reputation, as Tokugawa Ieyasu took over after the two, in sum, unsuccessful invasions of Korea. He now had the task to prove himself as the new ruler – supported from the inside and acknowledged internationally. One way to achieve this was searching for normalisation between Japan and Ming China to restore friendly relations. But in order to be part of the Chinese world order again, he would have had to declare himself and therefore also his country as subordinate to China again – an act that already caused critique from the inside two centuries earlier. So the shogun decided against it, although the Chinese offered direct trade again in a letter, and rejected, because the way the shogun was addressed in this letter seemed improper according to the now newly propagated Japan-centred world view.¹³⁵ This letter is dated back to the year 1619, when indirect trade via the Portuguese still was enact, which also shows that interest in direct trade with the Chinese lost in value, because the competition between the Portuguese and the Dutch was very lucrative for the *bakufu*.¹³⁶ In the year 1621 direct trade got forbidden and therefore another restriction of foreign relations was introduced to strengthen the shoguns control over his country.

Other examples of how the shogun legitimised his rule by international relations are foreign embassies from the Ryukyu Islands and Korea. In 1607, 1617, and 1624 embassies were received from Korea to restore diplomatic relations through the attendance at ceremonies of celebration for the inauguration of a new shogun.¹³⁷ As Ieyasu took over, still not everyone was submissive to his reign. After his son Hidetada was made shogun as his descendant, the received Korean embassy was used to show off his influence reaching even beyond the sea before the daimyo, who still were sceptical.¹³⁸ The same procedure was repeated with an embassy from the Ryukyu Islands as Hidetada’s descendant, Iemitsu, became shogun. But the reason was not

¹³⁴ Goodman, Japan and the Dutch 1600 – 1853, p. 10.

The 80 Years’ War between the united provinces of the Netherlands and Spain endured until 1648 as a war for independence from the Spanish Habsburg monarchy, which was reached with the ratification of the Treaty of Westphalia. In the first half of the 17th century, Dutch and Portuguese enmity therefore also was carried into Asian waters.

¹³⁵ Comp.: Toby, State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan, p. 62.

¹³⁶ Comp.: Toby, State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan, p. 63.

¹³⁷ Comp.: Mark Ravina, Japan in the Chinese Tributary System. In: Tonio Andrade, Xing Hang, Anand A. Yang, Kieko Matteson (eds.), Sea Rovers, Silver, and Samurai. Maritime East Asia in Global History, 1550 – 1700 (Honolulu, 2016), p. 354.

¹³⁸ Comp.: Toby, State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan, p. 70.

only to strengthen the rule of the shogun. It also aimed at restoring good relations with Korea, which, under Hideyoshi, was attacked by the Japanese. These embassies used as propaganda tools therefore had the effect to simultaneously strengthen the legitimation of the Tokugawa shogunate (now even in 3rd generation, which made it a dynasty) internationally and on a domestic level. Creating a Japan-centred world order and situating surrounding East Asian countries within this system therefore served as a stabilizing factor within the archipelago. Considering the fact that Japan consisted of several estates that were bound together by one central government, but still did not lose all of their autonomy, therefore led the shogun to the need to create a hierarchisation that put himself in the centre and surrounding vassals in subjected positions in front of his people.

By taking into consideration the process of unification of the archipelago under one ruler, it becomes clear that the Sengoku Period had a huge impact on why foreign relations were, or even had to be conducted according to a Japan-centred world order. In fact, this world order was created out of the need of the shogun to simultaneously integrate foreign influences and influences from within Japan into his rule with the aim to establish peace. Instead of a misleading interpretation of the *sakoku* policies by the early Tokugawa shoguns, “Japan’s foreign relations were not defined by an overriding ideology of seclusion, as is conventionally argued, but rather by particular Tokugawa domestic agendas as well as political interchanges, shared goals and rivalries in trade, and dispute over defense”.¹³⁹ It is important to underline that the archipelago indeed was unified under one legitimized ruler – the Tokugawa shogun –, but that it *de facto* still consisted of many provinces, which still possessed a certain amount of autonomy. The fact that these provinces were referred to as *koku* (jap. for “country”), while Japan as a whole was referred to as *daikoku* (jap. for “the whole country”) or *dai-nihon-koku* (jap. for “the whole country of the rising sun”) reflects this attitude. In this regard, a sense for Japan as a singular concept of a nation or a state did not exist in the early 17th century.¹⁴⁰ Instead, various daimyo from the provinces possessed different amounts of room for manoeuvring autonomously, although they were firmly controlled by annual visits to the court in Edo as a part of the *sankin kōtai* system. The introduction of a Japan-centred world order that contained these regular visitations of foreign, but also of domestic delegations therefore had the beneficial effect of openly challenging Chinese hegemony internationally while simultaneously bounding together Japanese provinces and preventing rebellions. What Hideyoshi introduced as first claims of Japanese centrality, was continued by Tokugawa Ieyasu and institutionalized through

¹³⁹ Hellyer, *Defining Engagement*, p. 4.

¹⁴⁰ Comp.: *Yonetomo*, *Mapping Early Modern Japan*, p. 1.

the introduction of more restrictions on foreign relations, while in a simultaneous development, domestic authorities became integrated into the process of fostering the centrality of the shoguns court in Edo.

IV. The Sankin Kōtai System

The system of alternate attendance (*sankin kōtai* system) prevailed throughout the whole Edo Period (1600 – 1853) to control the daimyo by ordering them to the court in Edo for several months in annual intervals. After a few decades as a habitual practice of a feudal society that had its roots in the reign of Hideyoshi, two edicts of 1635 and 1642 transformed it into an institutionalized system that regulated formal requirements and financial aspects of the attendance of the daimyo.¹⁴¹ More than 250 daimyo who conducted these tours in annual intervals were obliged to keep their families as hostages in permanent households at the capital, which consolidated power in the hands of the shogun.¹⁴² Furthermore, the processions and convoys to and from Edo, as well as the permanent households at the capital had to be paid by the daimyo's on own accounts, which further weakened their positions and was introduced by the *bakufu* to prevent rebellion in the provinces. But until the *sankin kōtai* system was institutionalized as such, it underwent several changes in the first half of the 17th century – in the same way as the *ka-i* system that emerged as a practice of how foreign relations were conducted. In the Period of Settlement when Toyotomi Hideyoshi seized power, his vassals were obliged to attend at his court in Kyoto in order to receive rights to govern certain territories.¹⁴³ With the succession of Tokugawa Ieyasu and the emergence of the *bakuhau* system, however, the use of attendance as a form of personal relationship between sovereign and feudal lords lost meaning and was gradually replaced by an increasingly institutionalized system that became a formal requirement. Providing military service to the shogun became the duty of the daimyo in exchange for their right to govern their fiefdoms – which built up on practices of vassal services already in use during the Kamakura (1185 – 1333) and the Ashikaga shogunate (1333 – 1567).¹⁴⁴ The extent to which this system was enlarged, however, exceeds

¹⁴¹ The edict of 1635 regulated rules for attendance for the western *tōzama* daimyo, while the 1642-edict concerned the hereditary *fudai* daimyo. Comp.: *Vaporis*, *Tour of Duty*, p. 12.

¹⁴² Comp.: *Vaporis*, *Tour of Duty*, p. 2.

¹⁴³ Comp.: *Vaporis*, *Tour of Duty*, p. 11.

¹⁴⁴ Comp.: *Ibid.*

this definition, as it not only assured military service for sovereignty rights over land, but also served as a tool for central authority to strengthen its power in weakening the daimyo's positions. After 150 years of civil war throughout the Sengoku Period, the *bakufu* introduced stepwise restrictions to narrow down the daimyo's room for manoeuvring throughout the first decades of the 17th century, which had the favourable effect for the shogunate to successfully prevent rebellion in the provinces.

a. Controlling the Daimyo

Throughout the Sengoku Period, where central control was lacking, the daimyo used to rely on force to control their domains but were depending on ideological legitimation as well.¹⁴⁵ The daimyo's domains at the time were not yet organized in a centralized way, which made possible a variety of landowners, reaching from the daimyo himself to various of his vassals. The result was a separation of the peasantry into those in service of the daimyo, and those who worked for his vassals under private control on their fiefdoms.¹⁴⁶ That the latter often wanted to free themselves from private service to become agents of the daimyo led to competition between the daimyo and his vassals about their belonging.¹⁴⁷ Throughout the Sengoku Period, tensions arose out of discord in the distribution of peasant workforce among the ruling classes, which the daimyo could not solve due to their dependency on their vassals goodwill.¹⁴⁸ In the same way as central control was weakening on a national level, the respective domains of the daimyo were lacking a clear structure and orderly ruling conditions, which only changed with Toyotomi Hideyoshi's successful unification of the archipelago under one ruler again, as his firm administrative measurements changed the way in which also Japanese provinces were organized.¹⁴⁹ The population was divided into warriors and peasants. Combined with the compulsory movement of the former to the capitals of the provinces, where they could be controlled more effectively, power was centralized in the hands of the daimyo, who were able to foster their claims of legitimation as "public authority" (jap.: *kogi*) due to favourable political

¹⁴⁵ Comp.: Junnosuke *Sasaki*, Ronald P. *Toby*, The Changing Rationale of Daimyo Control in the Emergence of the Bakufu State. In: John Whitney *Hall*, Keiji *Nagahara*, Kozo *Yamamura* (eds.), Japan before Tokugawa. Political Consolidation and Economic Growth, 1500 – 1650 (Princeton, 2014), p. 271.

¹⁴⁶ Comp.: *Sasaki/Toby*, The Changing Rationale of Daimyo Control, p. 275.

¹⁴⁷ Comp.: *Sasaki/Toby*, The Changing Rationale of Daimyo Control, p. 278.

¹⁴⁸ Comp.: *Sasaki/Toby*, The Changing Rationale of Daimyo Control, pp. 276f.

¹⁴⁹ Comp.: *Farris*, Japan to 1600, p. 193.

circumstances.¹⁵⁰ *Kogi* became used as an expression for the public authority for those in power, meaning the daimyo and the shogun – the latter also was referred to as *dai-kogi* (great *kogi*).¹⁵¹ With the unification of the archipelago, such rulership became institutionalized, while Japan's provinces became increasingly centralized in their development to the integrated *han*-provinces of the *bakuhau* system that emerged in the early Edo Period.

After Hideyoshi had established central authority for the whole Japanese archipelago again, after more than 100 years of war between the provinces, fostering control over the provinces became key. In order to maintain his hegemonic status and legitimize his rule as *dai-kogi*, his administrative reforms of the provinces were a necessary first step. In 1588, he released a ban on any armed conflict between daimyo's domains for territorial seizure, which marked the beginning of a development of pacification that was about to end with the fall of Osaka Castle in 1615, the beginning of more than two centuries of peace under the Tokugawa.¹⁵² The samurai, who now had to reside at the provinces capitals, became prohibited to maintain any more private fiefdoms and their peasants in private service were freed and put under direct taxation under the daimyo as *kogi*, who – in theory – derived their legitimation from the shogun's *dai-kogi* status.¹⁵³ Maintaining a warrior class in times of peace, however, needed additional institutions that would prevent too much autonomy and independency so that chances of rebellion against the newly established central government are reduced to a minimum. While Hideyoshi, as a warlord, tried to solve that problem by ordering invasions of Korea, he also introduced the practice of alternate attendance, which laid the basis for what would later in the early Edo Period become institutionalized as the *sankin kōtai* system as a formal requirement for the daimyo to stay under shogunal control.¹⁵⁴ It was a feudal practice to oblige the daimyo to travel to Hideyoshi's court in Kyoto to thank him for the land, which the daimyo received for their services as his vassals.¹⁵⁵ Only after the succession of the Tokugawa, however, alternate attendance at the central court became institutionalized as a systematic practice. Instead of reasons of bond affiliations between ruler and vassals, the system exceeded the limits of a purely feudal practice to – more than anything – serve as a political tool to ensure stability through shogunal maintenance of control over the provinces.

¹⁵⁰ Comp.: *Sasaki/Toby*, The Changing Rationale of Daimyo Control, p. 271.

¹⁵¹ Comp.: *Sasaki/Toby*, The Changing Rationale of Daimyo Control, pp. 291f.

Ravina also points out that *kogi* was a term, which usually was applied to the daimyo but extended to be used for the shogun as well in the 17th century. Comp.: *Ravina*, Land and Lordship, p. 26.

¹⁵² Comp.: *Toby*, Rescuing the Nation from History. The State of the State in Early Modern Japan, p. 203.

¹⁵³ Comp.: *Sasaki/Toby*, The Changing Rationale of Daimyo Control, pp. 283ff.

¹⁵⁴ Comp.: *Vaporis*, Tour of Duty, p. 12.

¹⁵⁵ Comp.: *Vaporis*, Tour of Duty, p. 2.

While Japan of the early Edo Period often was mistaken for a highly centralized state in historiography,¹⁵⁶ the necessity of the *sankin kōtai* system to keep the samurai class under control underlines the still very fragile construction of Japanese “national” unity, when the Tokugawa succeeded. Especially the *tōzama* daimyo on the littoral managed to maintain a high amount of autonomy. They profited from their marginal positions between the centre in Edo and foreign authorities which made them important intermediaries in the highly profitable international trade. Japan was integrated into an international network mainly through three portals at the time – one in the north, one in the west, and one in the south – which all were shaped by semi-independent actions of local authorities from Tsushima, Satsuma or Matsumae.¹⁵⁷ Most prominent is the example of Satsuma, a province of southern Kyushu, that independently seized the Ryukyu Islands in 1609 and made them vassals of Japan with the objective to get access to indirect trade with Ming China, which was necessary for a province that was highly dependent on foreign trade. But also, Tsushima maintained strong international ties that connected the archipelago in especially to Korea in the early Edo Period.¹⁵⁸ The trading relations between Tsushima and Korea, in the first half of the 17th century, were very beneficial for the domain.¹⁵⁹ But, also out of political reasons, Tsushima played an important role for the archipelago. As one of the islands that were perceived as the origin of the *wakō*, the “Japanese pirates”, it was responsible for the serious amount of damage Japanese reputation had suffered throughout SouthEast Asia in the Sengoku Period.¹⁶⁰ But also out of the *bakufu*’s aim to achieve normalization in diplomatic relations with Korea after the two invasions under Hideyoshi, Tsushima’s geographic position between Korea and the Japanese mainland brought up their role as intermediaries. The following Korean embassies from 1607, 1617, and 1624 were arriving via Tsushima to continue their tour to the capital in Edo on the Tokaido highway, which was used by many domestic lords in the *sankin kōtai* system as well.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁶ Among others, Hellyer argues against such a historiographical tradition. Comp.: *Hellyer, Defining Engagement*, pp. 10-12.

¹⁵⁷ I refer to Shinji Yamauchi, who defined these international connection ties for the Medieval period, while Robert I. Hellyer shows that these ties, even afterwards in the early Edo period were intact. Batten, on the other hand, enwidens the demarcation of the three portals to foreign trade by adding a fourth one, Nagasaki harbour, where – especially after the release of the *sakoku* edicts – Dutch and Chinese merchants used to trade. Comp.: Shinji *Yamauchi*, *The Japanese Archipelago and Maritime Asia from the 9th to the 14th Centuries*. In: Fujita *Kayoko*, Momoki *Shiro*, Anthony *Reid* (eds.), *Offshore Asia. Maritime Interactions in East Asia Before Steamships* (Singapore, 2013), pp. 112-129. *Hellyer, Defining Engagement*, p. 20. *Batten, To the Ends of Japan*, p. 44.

¹⁵⁸ Comp.: *Hellyer, Defining Engagement*, pp. 25-48.

¹⁵⁹ Comp.: *Hellyer, Defining Engagement*, pp. 39f.

¹⁶⁰ Comp.: *Shapinsky, Lords of the Sea*, pp. 5f.

¹⁶¹ Comp.: Toby, *Engaging the Other*, pp. 143f; 146.

At both margins, some sort of shared sovereignty characterized the relationships of Tsushima and Satsuma to the centre in Edo and foreign authorities. While Tsushima was seen as belonging to Japan, it also served as a vassal of Korea and acted with a high amount of autonomy between those powers.¹⁶² Satsuma, on the other hand, claimed sovereignty over the Ryukyu islands, which also was done by Ming China, resulting in a political standoff to fully take over control over the islands.¹⁶³ As direct trade between Ming China and Japan was set on ice since the mid-16th century, maintaining Ryukyuan independence up to a certain amount was important to both countries, for annexation would have annihilated the possibility to use the islands as space of intermediation for indirect trade.¹⁶⁴ When Tokugawa Ieyasu seized power in 1600, long-lasting international ties of domains such as Tsushima and Satsuma were already established and – due to their mere economic profitability – could resist centralizing attempts of the Tokugawa *bakufu* in the first place. Both, “Satsuma and Tsushima enjoyed a fair level of agency derived from their contacts with Ryukyu and Korea independent of Tokugawa authority. Yet the two domains were also active members of a polity dominated by the Tokugawa regime.”¹⁶⁵ Central governmental policies aimed at a share in beneficial international ties of those domains, which resulted in high taxations that exceeded the production capacities of the domains, so that trade was required in order to meet the *bakufu*’s demands.¹⁶⁶ This rejects the assumptions of Japan as an internationally isolated and highly centralized state in the early Edo Period, as the shogunate not only acknowledged the existence of international ties of some of its marginal provinces, but knowingly made use of them economically and politically. Autonomous actions for foreign relations stayed intact but claims for shogunal centrality that fostered control over its domains were expanding.¹⁶⁷ The *sankin kōtai* system that emerged at the time, was one of the tools to promote integration into the Japanese realm by creating cultural homogenization and a sense of national self-esteem among the ruling classes who took part in it.

¹⁶² Comp.: *Ravina*, Japan in the Chinese Tributary System, pp. 354f.

The importance of the Sō family on Tsushima is reflected in the status it had received from the shogun, as the daimyo received the title of a “country holder”, although he by far did not reach the requirement of ruling a territory of 100 000 *koku* in size. Comp.: *Ravina*, Land and Lordship, p. 19.

¹⁶³ Comp.: *Hellyer*, Defining Engagement, p. 38.

¹⁶⁴ Comp.: *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ *Hellyer*, Defining Engagement, p. 42.

¹⁶⁶ Comp.: *Hellyer*, Defining Engagement, p. 40.

¹⁶⁷ In 1609, for example, the shogunate confiscated all ships over 500 *koku* from local lords in Kyushu and therefore reduced naval capacity by far in order to constitute central control over Japan’s international relations. Comp.: *Clulow*, European Maritime Violence and Territorial States, p. 81.

In order to foster Edo-centrism, the *sankin kōtai* system from the early 17th century onwards proved itself as a stimulant for integration of the *han* into an awareness of Japan as a “national” unit. More than 200 daimyo out of every province of Japan had to maintain a permanent household at the capital throughout the whole Edo Period. Half of their time, the daimyo had to reside there themselves to visit the shogun or conduct military service as his castle’s guards.¹⁶⁸ That the household of the largest clans contained up to 5000 people when their daimyo was residing, shows the vast extent of the provinces delegations to the capitals court in Edo.¹⁶⁹ Envoys of hundreds of warriors paraded with their daimyo along the highways from province to province on their way to the capital, where their presence caused Japan-wide cultural exchange as well as economic growth due to the vast expenses of the daimyo for the provisions of their entourages.¹⁷⁰ As a result, cultural life at the capital flourished, which led to early developments of Japanese cultural homogenization through the distribution of cultural products. Also, networks between daimyo emerged at the time in order to coordinate the requirements for alternate attendance as well as the consequences.¹⁷¹

The role of the parade must not be underestimated in this development. Parades of provincial delegations to the central court in Edo, in the same way as the more spectacular parades of foreign embassies, served as a stage for the display of monarchical power that effectively gave proof of the far-reaching influence of the shogun in front of a numerous audience of subjected spectators, who watched such delegations parading on the highway through their towns.¹⁷² Especially in the case of foreign embassies, preparations were elaborate, reaching from instructions for the population how to behave to costly reparations of roads and bridges to present “the realm abroad as a well-ordered manifestation of shogunal virtue.”¹⁷³ While such ornate preparation cannot be expected for inland delegations of the daimyo taking part in the *sankin kōtai* system, parades of envoys nevertheless served as an exceptional interruption of villagers everyday life to take part as spectators in a procession that displayed shogunal power and influence in front of the Japanese population. The fact that this procession was not restricted to inland authorities, but – even more elaborately – included foreign embassies as well throughout their tournaments to the central court in Edo, shows that borders between practices of the *sankin kōtai* system and those of the *ka-i* system could be fluid. Both

¹⁶⁸ Comp.: *Vaporis*, Tour of Duty, p. 13.

¹⁶⁹ Comp.: *Vaporis*, Tour of Duty, p. 7.

¹⁷⁰ Comp.: *Vaporis*, Tour of Duty, p. 2.

¹⁷¹ Comp.: *Vaporis*, Tour of Duty, p. 4.

¹⁷² Comp.: *Toby*, Engaging the Other, p. 146.

¹⁷³ *Toby*, Engaging the Other, pp. 176-187.

systems used to claim centrality of the shogun by displaying delegations in front of the population that came from far away to pay him tribute. This is best made evident with the example of the Dutch VOC, who became the foreign authority to visit the court in Edo most frequently throughout the Edo Period and therefore was integrated further into the system of alternate attendance than any other foreigners.

b. The VOC in the *Sankin Kōtai* System

The practice of alternate attendance was already established under Hideyoshi as a feudalist convention. Nevertheless, it was not before Ieyasu's reign that it took the form of a political tool to restrict the autonomy of the powerful western daimyo, who used to oppose the Tokugawa alliance but – in the end – decided to integrate themselves into their rule. It becomes evident that the centralization of international relations of Japan was not fully achieved, but left room of manoeuvring for a variety of actors. That the Tokugawa wanted to counteract against that development by introducing a system similar to the processions under the *ka-i* world view shows that both systems cannot be seen as independent institutions but, in fact, rather were phenomena of one and the same principal – the centralization and constitution of power in Edo.

The case of the *bakufu*'s dealing with the Dutch VOC shows that borders between both practices – national and international relations in the creation of a Japan-centred world view – could be fluent. Instead of embassies for special occasions only, like Korea and the Ryukyu Islands, who dispatched missions only thirty times throughout the whole Edo Period, Dutch delegations were received once every year since 1634. This has certainly to do with the different circumstances of an East India Company that could not refer to traditional land-based authority claims in East Asia, which worsened their position in front of a much more powerful state like the Japanese Tokugawa shogunate at the time. Dependency on Japanese silver trade of the VOC in the early Edo Period made good relations with the shogun key to their business success in the whole region, which is why annual travels in order to please *bakufu* interests in Edo also were of interest to the Dutch company, as long as tributary trade remained fruitful. On the other hand, contact with the VOC in the first half of the 17th century also bore much conflict, leading to such accusations as piracy-claims on the Dutch for disputes they caused in their confrontations with the Portuguese. What meant cohesion for the Dutch side, therefore, was exertion of power to foster control over the company for the Japanese – the high frequency with

which the Dutch were ordered to the court in Edo was the result of both backgrounds. However, that the processions, which the Dutch had to undertake, showed more similarities to those of the daimyo of the *sankin kōtai* system than to other foreign authorities, remains a fact, which even the Dutch were aware of at the time.¹⁷⁴ In the still considerable amount of agency of the western daimyo it is adequate to view the *ka-i* and the *sankin kōtai* system not as independent institutions, but as policies serving the same principal to consolidate centralized power in the hands of the shogun. That foreign authorities – as in the case of the Dutch – could also go without such categorization as foreign or domestic, gives proof of these undefined demarcations between those spheres, and even more turns out to be a further result of scarce definition of the Japanese borderlines, as is evident in the principle of shared sovereignty claimed over the Ryukyu Islands. That such sovereignty claims also could be applied to the VOC as a Dutch company in at least formal subordination to the shogunate cannot be denied.¹⁷⁵

Integration of the Japanese into the *sankin kōtai* system happened at the very beginning of their relations to the Tokugawa. When the *Liefde* arrived in Japan in 1600, representatives of the Dutch were already ordered to the court of the shogun at their very first contact with Japanese territory. While this occasion cannot be seen as an official audition regarding the condition of the delegation whose ship recently had been shipwrecked, it still demarcates the starting point of official diplomatic relations between the Dutch and the Japanese. In 1604, Quackernaek¹⁷⁶ and his fellowship was allowed to leave Japan for Patani – nowadays a port in Thailand – to alert his colleagues for trade possibilities, which they utilized successfully with the establishment of the first trading post at Hirado in 1609.¹⁷⁷ In comparison to other areas in Asia, like the Mughal regime in India, where the VOC had relied on force to establish trading relations, Japan was open to international trade, as the early shogunate needed to achieve normalization in diplomatic relations to reduce its lack of legitimation through international acceptance, as Hideyoshi's son and heir Hideyori still was alive and presented an obstacle for

¹⁷⁴ Comp.: Clulow, *The Company and the Shogun*, p. 108.

¹⁷⁵ The question if the VOC were seen as vassals of the shogun was often raised in historiography. While Fuyoko Matsukata rejects such an assumption, as the Dutch never possessed the rank of samurai in comparison to the daimyo, Michael Laver mentions their vassal-status in his latest publication. In my opinion, Adam Clulow's approach seems to be the most fruitful, as he examines the Dutch relationship to the *bakufu* as one that was characterized by first attempts of insisting on the company's sovereignty claims, which later on was given up in order to meet Tokugawa interests for the sake of trading relations. Vassal status, therefore, was *de facto* achieved with a change of Dutch communication towards the shogunate in the 1630s, which emphasized Dutch subordination and was accepted by Tokugawa officials as such. Comp.: Matsukata, *Contacting Japan*, p. 87. Laver, *The Dutch East India Company in Early Modern Japan*, p. 21. Clulow, *The Company and the Shogun*.

¹⁷⁶ Jacob Quackernaek (1543 – 1606) was a Dutch navigator and later on captain of the *Liefde* – the first Dutch ship that arrived at Japan.

¹⁷⁷ Comp.: Laver, *The Dutch East India Company in Early Modern Japan*, p. 3.

Ieyasu's reign.¹⁷⁸ The Dutch therefore were not the only ones to receive such an invitation, as the shogun had dispatched letters to several foreign authorities at the time, of European and SouthEast Asian descent alike.¹⁷⁹ In 1609, the first official Dutch embassy was dispatched to the shoguns court, where the delegates presented a letter from Prince Maurice of Nassau and got a red-seal letter (*shuinjo*) in return that allowed for official trade.¹⁸⁰ In comparison to other European agents in Southeast Asia, the VOC previously had the problem that no monarch was available to derive their status from as a fully legitimized embassy with an ambassador who is capable of representing his sovereign. To make up for this deficit, Prince Maurice of Nassau, a representative of the Spanish Habsburgs monarch as *Stadhouder* without the absolute power of a sovereign, was taken in order to pretend monarchical legitimation. The embassy that was dispatched to the court in Edo in 1609 was hastily prepared in comparison to similar processions at the time, which usually consisted of well-equipped delegations carrying a state letter and a lavish array of gifts with them.¹⁸¹ With only two cases of raw silk, 130 bars of lead, 2 gold goblets, and some ivory as a gift, the embassy clearly did not match up with other delegations of the time like those of the Ryukyu Islands or Korea, out of whom the latter even had dispatched the sovereigns son as ambassador.¹⁸² Nevertheless, Tokugawa Ieyasu was keen on attracting delegations of foreign sovereigns to establish diplomatic relations to consolidate the new reign of his family, which still led to a success of the first VOC delegation. In the same year, the Dutch were allowed to open up their first trading outpost on Japanese soil, which they did in Hirado on Kyushu.¹⁸³

In spite of the friendly tone with which the Dutch were welcomed in the beginning, relations did not continue without conflict. The VOCs hostility towards the Portuguese at the time did not make halt at Japanese borders, but occasionally were carried out on Japanese ground as well. As early as 1610, for example, the VOC destroyed a Portuguese cargo valued at 8 million ducats in Nagasaki harbour, which, in comparison, even exceeded the VOC's initial capital of 6,4 million ducats.¹⁸⁴ After the archipelago finally was unified under one ruling authority again, the shogunate was keen on maintaining stability in Japan and hardly rejected

¹⁷⁸ Comp.: *Clulow*, *European Maritime Violence and Territorial States*, p. 83.

¹⁷⁹ Comp.: *ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ Comp.: *Laver*, *The Dutch East India Company in Early Modern Japan*, p. 3.

The *shuinjo* was named after the vermilion-coloured seal of the Tokugawa family. Comp.: *Tremml-Werner*, *Audienzen und Korrespondenz*, p. 75.

¹⁸¹ Comp.: *Clulow*, *The Company and the Shogun*, p. 27.

¹⁸² Comp.: *Clulow*, *The Company and the Shogun*, p. 46.

¹⁸³ Comp.: *Laver*, *The Dutch East India Company in Early Modern Japan*, p. 3.

¹⁸⁴ Comp.: *Clulow*, *European Maritime Violence and Territorial States*, pp. 84f.

any kind of violence imported from the outside. In order to strengthen central authority and control, after domestic peace had been established, taming the margins – western daimyo once in opposition to the shogun and foreigners like the Dutch who took part in privateering – became the central issue. After Tokugawa Ieyasu had taken over, “he arranged for his erstwhile enemies to be either stripped of their domains, moved to other, smaller domains, or simply have their domains drastically reduced in size, and (...) he arranged to have all foreign affairs put under his government’s direct supervision”.¹⁸⁵ With the seizure of Osaka castle and the death of Toyotomi Hideyori in 1615, the shogunate’s forces finally defeated the *bakufu*’s last political opponents in Japan. With the last resistant forces within Japan eliminated, furthermore, also the shogunates rhetoric to the VOC (and foreign influence in general) changed rapidly from a welcoming tone to an increasingly hostile attitude. After the last step of political unification on the archipelago was taken, granting permissions to Dutch trading activities in order to gain support became unnecessary with the result that free trade of the VOC got restricted to the two ports of Hirado and Nagasaki as early as 1616.¹⁸⁶ Also, the death of Tokugawa Ieyasu the very same year and the henceforth independent reign of Tokugawa Hidetada coincides with this break in the *bakufu*’s rhetoric towards prospective foreign influences of the company, which derived from a general change of Tokugawa foreign policy and ideology.¹⁸⁷ In the same way as in the Period of Settlement, after foreign influence was used to achieve unification, it immediately was restricted as soon as it was considered as a threat for the same unification, it had proven itself useful for only a few years earlier.

For the VOC, immediately after the establishment of their trading outpost at Hirado, Japan turned into one of the most important trading partners due to its vast amounts of silver which financed their spice trade. In the beginning, however, they faced serious challenges to get into possession of the most demanded product in Japan at the time – Chinese silk. In order to get access to the Chinese market again, Japan had to rely on intermediaries since the interruption of trading relations in the mid-16th century. While the Ryukyu Kingdom next to China also became a vassal of the shogun in 1609,¹⁸⁸ the Portuguese were able to maintain their trading relations with the shogunate after Ieyasu’s succession, benefiting from the favourable position of Macao as a trading post on the Chinese coastline. Without access to the Chinese market themselves, the VOC had to rely on capturing Chinese and Portuguese ships, which

¹⁸⁵ Laver, *The Dutch East India Company in Early Modern Japan*, p. 6.

¹⁸⁶ Comp.: Clulow, *European Maritime Violence and Territorial States*, p. 81.

¹⁸⁷ Comp.: Tremml-Werner, *Audienzen und Korrespondenz*, p. 80.

¹⁸⁸ Comp.: Ravina, *Japan in the Chinese Tribute System*, p. 357.

again led to accusations of piracy of the company.¹⁸⁹ To be able to compete with the geographical advantage of the Portuguese, the Dutch soon got interested into Taiwan, an island that has not been paid much attention to by Ming China and Tokugawa Japan so far. In 1593, 1609, and 1616, three attempts had been undertaken by Japan, prior to the arrival of Dutch envoys on the island, in order to look for opportunities to integrate the island into a Japan-centred tributary system.¹⁹⁰ As the islands political organization was not suited for tributary relations, which required a unified kingdom to be able to fulfil the function of a vassal state for the shogun, the Dutch made use of the political vacuum to establish a colony in 1624.¹⁹¹ After that – especially after the beginning of the 1630s – Japanese silver trade flourished and Taiwan proved itself sufficient to fulfil the Dutch aim to increase its market share, although the shogunate continued to impose restrictions on foreign trade with the releases of the *sakoku* edicts between 1632 and 1639.¹⁹²

According to the definition of *sakoku*, which means “closed country” literally translated, the assumption lies at hand that the first half of the 17th century was shaped by restrictions of foreign relations and bans of foreign influence in Japan so that the archipelago in the end completely isolated itself within its own domain. While it remains a fact that Japanese international relations indeed declined after the 1630s,¹⁹³ the assumption of a complete isolation cannot be held upright in consideration of the merely selective way in which the Tokugawa decided who to maintain international relations with, which is best made evident when looking at the scope of the policies themselves. While Christianity was forbidden and the Portuguese were expelled due to their missionary activities, the Dutch – after a few years of diplomatic conflict with the Tokugawa – were allowed to keep up their trading activities to contribute to the supply of what the *bakufu* demanded from international relations still – legitimation of the shogun on the one hand, and foreign products like silk and porcelain on the other.¹⁹⁴ Contradicting the assumption of the 1630s in Japan as a decade of international isolation, the Dutch re-established diplomatic relations the very same time and re-integrated themselves into the Japanese *ka-i* system that was only about to complete its development of institutionalization through Tokugawa foreign policies.

¹⁸⁹ Comp.: Laver, *The Dutch East India Company in Early Modern Japan*, p. 4.

¹⁹⁰ Comp.: Stephen Turnbull, *Onward, Christian Samurai! The Japanese Expeditions to Taiwan in 1609 and 1616*, in: *Japanese Studies*, 30:1 (2010), p. 4.

¹⁹¹ Comp.: Turnbull, *Onward, Christian Samurai*, pp. 17f.

¹⁹² Comp.: Laver, *The Dutch East India Company in Early Modern Japan*, p. 4.

¹⁹³ Comp.: Batten, *To the Ends of Japan*, p. 46.

¹⁹⁴ Comp.: Hellyer, *Defining Engagement*, p. 49.

After Dutch re-integration into the order of the Tokugawa, controlling them, however, did not stop there but became even more systematized as ritualized practices that had to be repeated every year. In 1634, the VOC was ordered to dispatch delegations in order to visit the shogun from now on in annual intervals – one year before the *sankin kōtai* system became institutionalized for the western daimyo.¹⁹⁵ The similarities between the system of alternate attendance for the daimyo and the way the Dutch were treated, were obvious, even for the latter who soon figured out for themselves to be part of the very same system, although differences existed.¹⁹⁶ Neither did they possess the rank of samurai, nor did they get any financial support from the government in order to pay for their accommodations on the way and the entourages who accompanied them, like foreign ambassadors usually did.¹⁹⁷ To nevertheless conduct such logistically complex and expensive journeys every year in order to maintain trading relations shows their importance for the company's business in SouthEast Asia.¹⁹⁸ The end of roughly 30 years of continuous restrictions of Dutch trading rights in Japan demarcates the final forced movement of all trading activities of the VOC to *Deshima*, an artificially created island of about 1,3 hectare land at the port of Nagasaki in 1641.¹⁹⁹ What often was seen as an isolation of the country, in fact, only was a centralization and neat adjustment of foreign relations according to strict Tokugawa policies. “Even as Japan had grown more politically powerful, populous, wealthy, and socially specialized, it was becoming more closely knit into both the East Asian and global communities.”²⁰⁰ Accordingly, economic and population growth in the first half of the 17th century went hand in hand with a variety of international interactions with the only difference that they were organized from now on increasingly by one central authority instead of decentralized participation.

In the first half of the 17th century, the Tokugawa based their policies on the aim to further consolidate stability within Japan.²⁰¹ Since the successful unification of the archipelago, the rule of the Tokugawa shogunate was never shaped by the aim of territorial expansion, as it often occurred in Europe at the time. All measurements, from receiving embassies to gain legitimation as the new ruler of Japan internationally to the establishment of the *sankin kōtai* system to foster control over the daimyo, were undertaken to further institutionalize the

¹⁹⁵ Comp.: Clulow, *The Company and the Shogun*, p. 106.

¹⁹⁶ Comp.: Clulow, *The Company and the Shogun*, p. 108.

¹⁹⁷ Comp.: Clulow, *The Company and the Shogun*, p. 110.

¹⁹⁸ Comp.: Laver, *The Dutch East India Company in Early Modern East Asia*, p. 5.

¹⁹⁹ Comp.: Clulow, *European Maritime Violence and Territorial States*, p. 87.

²⁰⁰ Farris, *Japan to 1600*, p. 199.

²⁰¹ Comp.: Adam Clulow, *A Fake Embassy, the Lord of Taiwan and Tokugawa Japan*. In: *Japanese Studies*, 30:1 (2010), p. 29.

Tokugawa shogunate as the ruling dynasty on the archipelago – backed up more by its strong reputation than actually by force, although also its highly bureaucratic system that revenged every small violation contributed to the effect.²⁰² The result in regard to diplomatic relations between the VOC and Japan was a clash of two contradicting backgrounds, out of which the Dutch experiences in Europe had supplied them with a mindset of diplomatic practices that based on direct negotiations, while Japan highly referred to letters as the principal means of diplomatic communication.²⁰³ Divergences in how relations between states in an international sphere were viewed, therefore, define this field of conflict. While the Dutch originated from the highly competitive European field of interstate confrontations that led to the establishment of a self-perception of absolute territorial sovereignty of one legitimized ruler only, the Japanese experience as an archipelago without much international competition about its territory at the time resulted in different diplomatic practices, that corroborated ideological attitudes of centralization like the *ka-i* system and differentiations of the international arena through dichotomous understandings like *honcho* (“this country”) in opposition to *kora* (“that country”) in order to be able to control the vast extent of the political unit.²⁰⁴ One must not underestimate – as comparisons between 17th century Europe and 17th century East Asia are easily made – that mere geographical indicators already contribute to such contradicting developments in diplomatic communication practices.

Tensions arose out of such different understandings of diplomacy due to the different backgrounds in the beginning of Dutch-Japanese relations, as the aim of the Dutch was to establish trading relations by addressing the shogun directly, which did not conform with *bakufu* standards.²⁰⁵ It needed a long period for the company to get accepted as officials who were legitimized to conduct official trade for a sovereign monarch. The first two official embassies of the VOC to the shogun in Edo from 1609 and 1627 made the Dutch perfectly clear that

²⁰² Comp.: *Clulow*, *European Maritime Violence and Territorial States*, pp. 84f.

²⁰³ Comp.: *Matsukata*, *Contacting Japan*, pp. 80; 92f.

²⁰⁴ Comp.: *Toby*, *Engaging the Other*, p. 5.

I do not mean to indicate that Japan, in comparison to Europe, was not shaped by periods of war and interstate confrontations, as the Sengoku Period gives proof of the opposite. Nevertheless, political unification of the continent under one military hegemon did not take place in early modern Europe, as such aspirations were hampered through changing alliances, which resulted in the European state system of five hegemonial great powers in 1815. In Japan, however, unification efforts of the Tokugawa succeeded, which maintained a common voice for the archipelago in the international arena. Except for two Mongol invasions that failed, the Japanese archipelago hardly ever was endangered militarily in premodern times, which caused a different self-esteem in comparison to a small land-based country like the Netherlands. In comparing definitions of sovereignty between the Netherlands and Japan, I therefore refer to the whole political unities – the United Provinces of the Netherlands and the *bakufu*.

²⁰⁵ Comp.: *Matsukata*, *Contacting Japan*, pp. 92f.

insisting on their sovereignty rights according to a European understanding could not be held upright in front of the far more powerful and therefore also way less compromising Tokugawa shogunate. If trade should be maintained for a long-lasting relationship between the two – especially after the consequential *noitsu jiken* and the failure of the 1627 embassy – own legitimation claims had to be given up in order to meet *bakufu* demands of foreign authorities at the time. When the company attempted to get rid of the necessity to reach back to Prince Maurits of Nassau in the Netherlands for legitimation in declaring Batavia as the new centre from which the Dutch wanted to continue their diplomatic correspondences from now on, Japanese authorities noticed contradictions in Dutch communication.²⁰⁶ Letters written in Batavia were perceived as unauthorized, as they were not backed up by the sovereign figure, they had been used to from the first Dutch embassy in 1609. The result was that letters were rejected, and the Dutch merchants and ambassadors accused as liars, who only claimed to be legitimized by a sovereign.²⁰⁷ From its charter, the VOC was equipped with the rights to seizure land or conduct war on own accounts, which was usually restricted to sovereign monarchs within Europe at the time. Nevertheless, in Japan, insisting on their rights did not work out at all and the company, after roughly three decades of encounters, had to find out about their inferior position, which only left them the choice to simply comply with the shogunate's demands or withdraw from their business there.

As the consequential *noitsu jiken* and its aftermath will show in more detail (chapter V), the 1630s were characterized by a shift of VOC communication to the Tokugawa that henceforth aimed at Dutch subordination as “the shogun's loyal vassals”.²⁰⁸ The integration of the Dutch into the Tokugawa world order therefore happened to a vast amount out of the company's engagement to keep up their trading activities even if they had to – at least *pro forma* – accept Tokugawa hegemony. The decision to commit them not only to official embassies at special occasions like Korea or the Ryukyu kingdom, but to take part in the *sankin kōtai* system every year from 1634 onwards gave them a stage to perform their submission.²⁰⁹ Considering the high controlling effect of the system of alternate attendance, it also becomes clear that Dutch

²⁰⁶ Comp.: Clulow, *The Company and the Shogun*, pp. 93f.

²⁰⁷ The attempt of the Dutch at Batavia was to assert “their rights to engage in independent diplomacy without reaching back to the United Provinces” in 1627. The Japanese regime, however, first and foremost demanded Dutch embassies' and representatives' statements to remain consistent, which caused a clash in diplomatic relations in that year. The Governor of *Formosa*, Peter Nuyts, even once claimed himself as equal to the shogun and heavily insisted on his acceptance as a legitimate ambassador by Japanese authorities, which promptly led to a rejection and even the abolishment of trading relations between Japan and the VOC. Comp.: Clulow, *The Company and the Shogun*, p. 94. Matsukata, *Contacting Japan*, pp. 84f.

²⁰⁸ Clulow, *The Company and the Shogun*, pp. 95-97.

²⁰⁹ Comp.: Laver, *The Dutch East India Company in Early Modern Japan*, p. 26.

subordination out of the perspective of the Tokugawa required more control than other foreign authorities. Intelligence and curiosities that the Dutch carried with them were of great interest to the *bakufu* and committing the Dutch to the duty of annual visitations at the shogun's court provided them with a specific rank and place in Tokugawa hierarchy, which effectively pacified the previously conflicted relations of the company to the shogunate.²¹⁰ This shows that the Dutch, despite their successful colonization of other parts of SouthEast Asia like Batavia or Taiwan for example, had to integrate themselves into the diplomatic system according to a Japan-centred world order that was applied so neatly by the Tokugawa shogunate that it allowed no exceptions. Again, the influence of the warring states of the Sengoku period needs to be underlined, as these one and a half centuries of endemic warfare strongly influenced the Tokugawa's aim for control. At least, Tokugawa hegemony on the archipelago emerged out of the background of warring states, which made necessary overriding policies in the early Edo Period in order to keep the country unified. The *sankin kōtai* system was introduced to secure peace within Japan, while at the same time even foreign forces like the Dutch had to be given a place within a Japan-centred world order.

V. The Re-establishment of Diplomatic Relations after the *Noitsu Jiken* – the “Nuyts Incident”

In the 1620s, tensions arose between the VOC and the *bakufu* that would lead to serious misunderstandings and a temporary ban of diplomatic relations between the two sides, which the Dutch only could re-establish through absolute submission under Tokugawa authority and even the extradition of one of their governors to be put under Japanese jurisdiction. This governor in question was Pieter Nuyts (1598 – 1655), a young ambassador who – despites his young age and inexperience – was made responsible for the crucial task of leading an embassy to the shogun's court in order to seek for negotiation.²¹¹ His intentions obviously failed, which not only set diplomatic relations on ice for several years, but also made him the central figure who was made solely responsible for an incident that occurred from unfavourable

²¹⁰ The custom of presenting gifts to receive gifts in return was already used by the VOC from their very first encounters in the region onwards, whereby the Dutch made use of presenting their cannons as tribute, as many Tokugawa shoguns of the time were very interested in western military technology. Comp.: *Laver*, *The Dutch East India Company in Early Modern Japan*, p. 4.

²¹¹ Comp.: *Blussé*, *Bull in a China Shop*, p. 103.

circumstances rather than from personal failure of one individual. In spite of their roughly two decades of diplomatic experience with the Tokugawa shogunate, Nuyts' embassy of 1627 was only the second official embassy to the shoguns court and – regarding the inappropriately equipped first embassy of 1609, even the first one that met the requirements of an embassy suitable to represent a sovereign in an appropriate and promising way, equipped with a lavish array of gifts in order to fulfil the company's aims.²¹² Diplomatic experience with the Tokugawa shogunate therefore was scarce not only to Nuyts but to the whole VOC as well, and the embassies failure rather derived from wrong assumptions about how diplomacy functioned according to a Japanese understanding, resulting in a misjudgement of the situation with far-reaching consequences.

a. Dutch Formosa – the Colony on Taiwan

First, differences of opinion that were crucial to the Dutch undertaking of dispatching an embassy in the first place were the conflicting interests of both sides into Taiwan. The *ka-i* system, in the way it took form under the Tokugawa, mainly relied on the Ryukyu Islands and Korea as neighbouring countries to strengthen ties with and to receive tribute from – which is reflected in the usage of Satsuma domain, respectively Tsushima as windows to the “outside world” to especially these territories.²¹³ But that does not mean that attempts to integrate foreign authorities into a Japan-centred tributary order focussed on these two countries exclusively. Already in 1593, Hideyoshi demanded tributary payments from Taiwan by threat.²¹⁴ Using the favourable geographic position of the island for the establishment of indirect trade with Ming China was tempting.²¹⁵ Still, however, Hideyoshi's thoughts of military expansion that led his focus to the other side of the East China Sea might also have let him take action, which is reflected in his threat of violence if Taiwan disobeyed.²¹⁶

After the Tokugawa took over, interest in Taiwan still prevailed, as Ieyasu made effort to achieve diplomatic normalization right at the beginning of his reign by attracting foreign authorities as potential vassals who would legitimize his reign. Between 1600 and 1604, he

²¹² Comp.: *Clulow*, *The Company and the Shogun*, p. 60.

²¹³ Hellyer refers to these territories of cross-border interaction as “portals”, while Batten describes them as “mouths”. Comp.: *Hellyer*, *Defining Engagement*, p. 20. *Batten*, *To the Ends of Japan*, p. 44.

²¹⁴ Comp.: *Tremml-Werner*, *Audienzen und Korrespondenz*, p. 77.

²¹⁵ Comp.: *Turnbull*, *Onward, Christian Samurai*, p. 5.

²¹⁶ Comp.: *Tremml-Werner*, *Audienzen und Korrespondenz*, p. 77.

dispatched various official letters to foreign authorities in order to achieve international recognition, which shows the openness of Japan to foreign relations at the time.²¹⁷ As normalization with Ming China was difficult to establish due to the claims of both countries as a centre that would not declare itself subject to any other foreign authority, making use of foreign authorities as intermediaries in Sino-Japanese trade soon became an objective for the *bakufu* as well.²¹⁸ The requirement in order to be recognized as a country capable of serving as a vassal state was a clear political structure as a unified state under one ruler who would be able to dispatch legitimized embassies in order to visit the shogun at his court and contribute to his claimed centrality. That such requirements even were self-evidently assumed for foreign countries to exist, becomes evident in consideration of the list of Tokugawa orders for the expedition to Taiwan, where such requirements were not even mentioned.²¹⁹ Accordingly, the two missions of the Tokugawa to Taiwan in 1609 and 1616 made clear that such structures did not exist on the island and the shogunate's attempts to integrate Taiwan into the *ka-i* system were resisted militarily by local villagers.²²⁰ With the unsuccessful mission of 1616 – occasionally the year of Ieyasu's death, where also a shift in Tokugawa foreign policies took place – official Japanese interest in the island declined. For private merchants, Taiwan still remained important in order to make use of the favourable geographic position that allowed for trade of Japanese silver against Chinese silk.²²¹ Out of a political point of view, however, the shogunate decided against integration out of lacking requirements, which left Taiwan part of the same political vacuum between SouthEast Asian states that Arano and Batten already describe.²²² Due to the lacking interest of Tokugawa military expansion, the Dutch could make use of favourable circumstances and establish a colony themselves, which led Stephen Turnbull to his evaluation of the situation that “Taiwan was theirs for the taking. Instead, free from the niceties of East Asian protocol, the Dutch snatched Taiwan from under their noses.”²²³ The assumption of “European cultural superiority or technological ingenuity”²²⁴ as the reason for the successful colonization accordingly is disproven and room for European manoeuvring in

²¹⁷ Among others, those were China, Korea, the Philippines, Patani, Cambodia, Siam, and England. Comp.: Clulow, *The Company and the Shogun*, p. 51.

²¹⁸ Comp.: Turnbull, *Onward, Christian Samurai*, p. 6.

²¹⁹ Comp.: Turnbull, *Onward, Christian Samurai*, p. 7.

²²⁰ Comp.: Clulow, *A Fake Embassy*, p. 30.

²²¹ Comp.: Clulow, *A Fake Embassy*, p. 32.

²²² Comp.: Arano, *The Formation of a Japanocentric World Order*. And: Batten, *To the Ends of Japan*.

²²³ Turnbull, *Onward, Christian Samurai*, p. 19.

²²⁴ Clulow, *A Fake Embassy*, p. 24.

the region again only was left due to the mere lack of interest of East Asian societies in military expansion.

Around the same time when the Tokugawa re-organized diplomatic relations according to the *ka-i* world view, also the VOC underwent an establishing process that led to various adaptations and strategic repositioning throughout the first half of the 17th century. The constitution of its charter and the rights that the company had equipped, made possible to react to changing circumstances with a huge amount of flexibility. The first two decades of the century therefore were characterized by an increasing creation of stable diplomatic ties with various SouthEast Asian countries. The amount of diplomatic correspondence soon began to create the need to improve the speed of responses, as reaching back to the Netherlands to refer to the monarchical figure Prince Maurits of Orange, who the company used to claim sovereign legitimation from, could take more than a year.²²⁵ Furthermore, the success of the VOCs undertakings in the Southeast Asian region due to the plurality of countries to trade with led to a quantity of trade factories that soon caused organizational problems, which Blussé describes as follows:

“By the beginning of the 1620s, after two decades of vigorous growth, the VOC had overextended its operations: merchants stationed at the various trade factories throughout Asia were acting on their own initiative, without regularly submitting clear accounts of their profits and losses, and the upkeep of the large number of forts erected on the Spice Islands weighed heavily on the budget.”²²⁶

As a consequence, crews often exceeded their orders when they saw the possibility to enrich themselves while conducting a campaign.²²⁷ What followed, therefore, was a necessary re-shaping of the VOCs international relations in the region that would foster control over the company's enterprises. The new Governor General, Jan Pieterszoon Coen (1587 – 1629), who would lead the VOC from 1619 to 1629, therefore established the fort of Batavia as the VOCs new centre from which diplomatic relations in the region should be organized from now on. After the conquest of Jayakarta, Batavia was erected as a metropolis in the region and the Governor General became more a ruler than a simple chief merchant, as has been the case until

²²⁵ Comp.: *Clulow*, *The Company and the Shogun*, p. 64.

²²⁶ *Blussé*, *Bull in a China Shop*, p. 99.

²²⁷ Comp.: *Clulow*, *European Maritime Violence and Territorial States*, p. 79.

the 1620s.²²⁸ A variety of letters was sent to the surrounding kingdoms, which the VOC had established diplomatic relations with, in order to inform them that diplomatic correspondence henceforth should be overtaken by the Governor General instead of the sovereign figure of Prince Maurits, who had been used to claim monarchical legitimation from.²²⁹ Only for the Japanese, however, the VOC did not inform them of this shift – probably out of the reason that explaining such a shift simply was not necessary as long as trade flourished without any obstacles. Coen's plans for the company's business afterwards focussed on the lucrateness of Japanese silver-trade. Out of the need to get access to the Chinese silk-market, which was the most demanded product in Japan, Taiwan soon became the island of interest to achieve the company's aims. The political vacuum that the Tokugawa shogunate did not utilize, therefore, was made use of by the Dutch who forcefully established a trading post in spite of the resistance of the Fujianese population that already had settled there earlier,²³⁰ but also against *bakufu* favour, as Japanese merchants still visited the island regularly in order to conduct trade with Chinese merchants there. In 1623, the VOC erected a fortress on Tayouan, a bay in the north of the island and furthermore wanted to forbid Japanese merchants to enter to be able to establish a monopoly on trade between China and Japan as mediators in order to improve their benefits from their relations to the Tokugawa shogunate.²³¹ As a result, conflict arose around Taiwan due to Japanese claims of Tayouan as the bay where they already had traded with China previous to the arrival of the Dutch.²³² The provisional lack of interest of the shogunate into the island left an opportunity for the VOC to make use of that vacuum in order to establish themselves as *de facto* rulers over Taiwan. Nevertheless, against the Dutch conception of justified rulership over the island due to territorial possession and military control over this possession stood the Japanese assumption of legitimation claims that again called for the justified legitimation of trading relations due to earlier arrivals on the island. Tokugawa logic in accordance with the emergence of the *ka-i* system at the time did not regard Taiwan as appropriate to be recognized as a vassal useful to foster claims of Japanese centrality. Still, some sense of sovereignty over the island was established with the dismissal of the three embassies of 1593, 1609, and 1616 – at least to the extent that Japanese trading rights on the

²²⁸ Comp.: Clulow, *The Company and the Shogun*, p. 65.

²²⁹ Comp.: Clulow, *The Company and the Shogun*, pp. 34f.

²³⁰ Comp.: Turnbull, *Onward, Christian Samurai*, pp 17f.

As Turnbull points out, Andrade even speaks of „a Chinese colony under Dutch control“. Comp.: Tonio Andrade, *The Rise and Fall of Dutch Taiwan, 1624-1662. Cooperative Colonization and the Statist Model of European Expansion*. In: *Journal of World History*, 17 (2006).

²³¹ Comp.: Clulow, *A Fake Embassy*, p. 31.

²³² Comp.: Blussé, *Bull in a China Shop*, p. 95.

island had to be secured according to Tokugawa conception. Although, however, sovereignty claims of the Tokugawa over the Dutch VOC – who they regarded as their subjects – also were referred to in the discussion with the reminder of Tokugawa expectations from the company to act in accordance to their will.²³³ “Unlike the VOC, which was obsessed with defining exactly where its sovereignty started and ended”,²³⁴ the Tokugawa shogunate “surrounded itself with peripheral areas that were neither fully part of the polity nor completely independent of it”,²³⁵ including the Dutch company as well. Different assumptions of territorial sovereignty again created conflict due to somewhat contradicting conceptions of international principles that would define absolute sovereignty over territory on the Dutch side, in contrast to a less defined system that rather focussed on status as the guarantor of international influence without exact demarcations of the actual extent of monarchical power of the Tokugawa. Dutch perceptions of sovereign rights clashed with the Tokugawa view of Dutch subordination to the shogunates rule, which, according to Japanese logic, rejected the company’s claims of sovereignty over the island.

The cruciality of Japanese silver-trade to the VOC meant that the security of Tayouan bay as the company’s trading post was key to Dutch operations in East Asia. In order to ensure success, Jan Pieterszoon Coen further promoted Taiwan as a strategically important colony and increased support for the new established Dutch land seizure. In accordance with his measurements to make the VOC more capable of acting in the region, Coen demanded on well-educated young men from Holland, which should promote settlement of Dutch families to effectively establish a colony.²³⁶ Another reason might have been a believe that making people who are young and well educated responsible for the company’s business might reduce disobedience and actions on the own initiatives of VOC merchants without coordination with the Governor General in Batavia, as has been the case until Coen took over.²³⁷ Nevertheless, his attempts to bring young families to the colonies failed and also these “tart and overrated sowers of confusion” – as Jacques Specx²³⁸ described those “young university-trained Company servants in managerial positions” – turned out to be the wrong choice for the company’s success due to their conceited attitude.²³⁹ In any case, the far-reaching negative

²³³ Comp.: *Clulow*, *The Company and the Shogun*, pp. 121-128.

²³⁴ *Clulow*, *A Fake Embassy*, pp. 35f.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*

²³⁶ *Blussé*, *Bull in a China Shop*, pp. 101f.

²³⁷ Comp.: *Blussé*, *Bull in a China Shop*, pp. 100f.

²³⁸ Jacques Specx was interim governor of the VOC in Batavia from 1629 until 1632.

²³⁹ *Blussé*, *Bull in a China Shop*, p. 102.

impact of the *noitsu jiken* caused by Pieter Nuyts as an ambassador, who was representative for this young generation of well-educated men, supports Specx's assumptions.

b. The Failing Embassy and the *Noitsu Jiken*

On 11 April 1627, Pieter Nuyts arrived in Batavia. He was a well-educated university graduate with a doctor in philosophy and legal studies, who had merchant experience only from his employment at his father's trading firm.²⁴⁰ Within only a month, on 10 Mai, he was appointed with the crucial task as *opperhoofd* (Governor) of *Formosa*, where he later on also was sent as special envoy to the shogunal court in Edo – “two extremely delicate missions that nobody else in the Council of the Indies was willing to overtake.”²⁴¹

With his appointment as the *opperhoofd* on *Formosa*, he had the task to secure the trading post and defend Dutch interests in the region to improve the lucrativeness of trade as intermediaries between China and Japan. That Japanese private merchants commonly had made use of the same bay where the Dutch lately resided, led to conflicts of interest that peaked in the interruption of trading relations between the VOC and Japan as a consequence of the *noitsu jiken*. Sovereignty claims of the Dutch over the island made them prevent Japanese private merchants from travelling freely within Taiwan.²⁴² Also, on some occasions, trading goods of those merchants were confiscated out of Dutch conceptions that justified such sovereignty acts.²⁴³ The most important Japanese merchant for the purposes of this thesis was Hamada Yahei, a trader from Nagasaki who had frequent business in Taiwan at the time. He was one out of various merchants who had detected the lucrativeness of using the islands geographic position for private trade with China and therefore led the ships of the powerful entrepreneur family Suetsugu there in regular intervals as the captain of Suetsugu Heizo's fleet.²⁴⁴ Hamada therefore soon got in touch with the Dutch as his new rivals and relations were characterized by increasing hostility which originated in the conflicting interests of Japanese merchants who

²⁴⁰ Comp.: *Blussé*, *Bull in a China Shop*, p. 102.

²⁴¹ *Blussé*, *Bull in a China Shop*, p. 103.

²⁴² Comp.: *Clulow*, *European Maritime Violence and Territorial States*, p. 87.

²⁴³ Comp.: *Clulow*, *The Company and the Shogun*, p. 211.

²⁴⁴ The vast extent of lucrativeness becomes evident in consideration of the amount of silver that Heizo Suetsugu had dispatched to Taiwan. One example was a ship loaded with 300 000 taels of silver (about 3,7 tons, which was equal to the annual tax income of a large Tokugawa province). Comp.: *Clulow*, *A Fake Embassy*, p. 32.

refused to pay fees in order to lay anchor at a bay where they had been conducting trade for years.²⁴⁵ In order to improve his stance on Taiwan, but also to better up his own position in front of the shogunate, Suetsugu Heizo made up the plan to invent a faked embassy consisting of some Taiwanese villagers to present the shogun a political leader of the island.²⁴⁶ Although none of the centralized structures existed on Taiwan that the Tokugawa demanded for the establishment of tributary relations, Heizo attempted to “transfer the sovereignty over the island of Formosa to the ruler of Japan, Tokugawa Iemitsu.”²⁴⁷ In presenting the shogunate a political leader – if only invented – Heizo and his captain, who gathered the villagers, dressed up as representatives of a sovereign, tried to integrate Taiwan into the shogunates *ka-i* world order and prevent the Dutch from further exploiting their rights on the island to the disadvantage of Japanese private trade.

This fake embassy was sent to Edo in 1627 and it did not remain the only embassy that reached for the shogun's court at the time. The very same year as Heizo had made up his delegation of dressed up Taiwanese villagers, out of coincidence, the VOC had dispatched a well-equipped and carefully planned mission led by the young ambassador Nuyts themselves. After decades of experience in international contact of VOC embassies with rulers of the SouthEast Asian region, the VOC had learned what was required in order to set up an embassy adequate for an audience at a sovereign's court who did not claim anything less than worldwide centrality of his seat.²⁴⁸ Including the ambassador Nuyts and his personal entourage out of four servants, two bodyguards, and two secretaries, the embassy counted thirty-four participants, carrying with them a lavish array of gifts out of which four heavy cannons from Europe were the most important and valuable ones.²⁴⁹ In comparison to the first embassy to Edo in 1609 that was prepared hastily and therefore only barely fulfilled the formal requirements of an official delegation, Nuyts' envoy clearly met the expectations of a sovereign representative, which therefore let VOC officials await nothing less than the successful completion of the delegations tasks.²⁵⁰

That the embassy failed and Nuyts had to leave without being given an appointment with the shogun had various reasons. The objectives of the embassy were on the one hand the re-establishment of formal contact by showing the *bakufu* the company's goodwill in bilateral

²⁴⁵ Comp.: *Blussé*, *Bull in a China Shop*, p. 95.

²⁴⁶ Comp.: *Clulow*, *A Fake Embassy*, p. 34.

²⁴⁷ *Blussé*, *Bull in a China Shop*, p. 95.

²⁴⁸ Comp.: *Toby*, *State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan*, p. 59.

²⁴⁹ Comp.: *Clulow*, *The Company and the Shogun*, p. 75.

²⁵⁰ Comp.: *Ibid.*

relations and, on the other, to talk about Tayouan to explain the VOCs proceedings there.²⁵¹ In order to counteract Heizo on Taiwan, the company had the “intention of stressing Dutch sovereignty over the island.”²⁵² Yet, the VOCs undertaking based on heavy misconceptions of the situation so that Nuyts was not even allowed to claim his concerns during his stay. At first, the shift of the Netherlands to Batavia as the place, where the VOC derived their legitimation from, never was explained to Tokugawa officials and in the letter, which the embassy brought along, too was not mentioned but left unexplained and self-evident.²⁵³ The *bakufu*, however, still was well aware of the first embassy of the VOC to Edo in 1609 and only had to refer to the notes of the officials taken at the time in order to uncover this inconsistency.²⁵⁴ Former references to the “king of Holland” (Prince Maurits) were left out and instead the letter was signed by Jan Pieterszoon Coen, the Governor General at Batavia, which rejected the shogunate’s requested prerequisites for foreign embassies to be dispatched by a legitimized sovereign. After decades of diplomatic contact in the SouthEast Asian region, the VOC had made experiences with the formal requirements of communication, which had to be conducted through correctly formulated letters as one of the crucial prerequisites for official embassies.²⁵⁵ Nevertheless, in the case of the Tokugawa, the company still made the misconception of miscalculating international communication by insisting on direct negotiations with SouthEast Asian monarchs – a practice that was uncommon in the region of the time.²⁵⁶

Also, on other occasions, Nuyts proved himself as too inflexible in adapting to Japanese expectations and demands of an ambassador, who was leading an embassy to the shogun’s court. Accordingly, as his embassy arrived in Edo and was housed in a temple instead of a daimyo’s residence, Nuyts openly showed himself very displeased with this type of accommodation, although it was seen as a “natural sight for hosting large processions of diplomats”.²⁵⁷ Also, earlier at his arrival in Hirado, he refused to stay on his ship and wait to be inspected by Japanese authorities, as has been common for incoming vessels. Instead, he referred to his status as ambassador and insisted that such measurements must not be compulsory for his person.²⁵⁸ Such expectations of how an ambassador should be treated in

²⁵¹ Comp.: *Clulow*, *The Company and the Shogun*, pp. 71f.

²⁵² *Blussé*, *Bull in a China Shop*, p. 95.

²⁵³ Comp.: *Clulow*, *The Company and the Shogun*, p. 74.

²⁵⁴ Comp.: *Clulow*, *The Company and the Shogun*, p. 81.

²⁵⁵ Besides an official state letter, embassies in early modern East Asia consisted of an ambassador, processions, and gifts. Comp.: *Clulow*, *The Company and the Shogun*, pp. 44f.

²⁵⁶ Comp.: *Matsukata*, *Contacting Japan*, pp. 92f.

²⁵⁷ *Clulow*, *The Company and the Shogun*, p. 78.

²⁵⁸ Comp.: *Clulow*, *The Company and the Shogun*, pp. 77f.

Nuyts' view derive from the different understanding that he had carried with him from European experiences, where the ambassador was seen as a deputy of the monarch who – as his representative – made claims to be treated with the same honours like the sovereign himself.²⁵⁹ Different assumptions of sovereignty rights and justified claims in the sphere of international diplomacy at the time mixed with the high inflexibility of a young ambassador in charge of a crucial task caused diplomatic misunderstandings that promoted conflict. Regarding the fundamental misconceptions of the VOCs headquarter in Batavia in communication, however, personal failure of Nuyts due to his temper was not the only reason for the embassy's rejection.²⁶⁰ The VOC and the Tokugawa rather had different views on how international diplomacy functioned so that simple misunderstandings in communication already could lead to a whole delegation's failure despite its well-preparedness. After the letter of Nuyts' embassy was handed over in Edo, the delegation had been kept there for weeks and Nuyts had been interrogated by Japanese authorities in order to make them understand the actual relation of the embassy to the shogunate. The unexplained shift from the Netherlands to Batavia as the place from where the letter was dispatched, led to confusion of the Japanese if the Dutch delegates indeed were dispatched from a legitimized ruler, as was a necessary prerequisite in order to take part in diplomatic relations as an integrated part of the *ka-i* system in the first place.²⁶¹ Long discussions between interrogators and the Dutch ambassador show that the Tokugawa shogunate clearly made an effort to understand what kind of country the Netherlands were and how they were organized.²⁶² Nevertheless, Nuyts' claims that the Governor General and the "king of Holland" were equals did not match with Tokugawa conceptions after the *bakufu*'s officials had asked witnesses afterwards, who confirmed that the Governor General was more an official than a sovereign.²⁶³ Tokugawa officialdom concluded therefore Batavia to be a vassal of the "king of holland" and any further diplomatic contact to the shogun as illegitimate.²⁶⁴ Any attempts of Nuyts to seek possibilities of direct negotiations with the shogun failed, an appointment was rejected and Nuyts' entourage was sent home without achieving anything. After all, room for direct negotiation never existed for the Dutch on

²⁵⁹ Comp.: Petr *Mat' a*, Zeremoniell. In: Friedrich *Jäger*, Enzyklopädie der Neuzeit, Bd. 15 (Stuttgart, 2012), pp. 453f. *Clulow*, The Company and the Shogun, p. 84.

²⁶⁰ Comp.: *Clulow*, The Company and the Shogun, p. 60.

²⁶¹ Comp.: *Clulow*, The Company and the Shogun, pp. 81-83.

²⁶² Comp.: *Matsukata*, Contacting Japan, p. 85.

²⁶³ Comp.: *Clulow*, The Company and the Shogun, p. 87.

²⁶⁴ Comp.: *Ibid.*

Japanese ground in accordance with the Japanese *ka-i* system, as it “left little room for the idea of an ambassador as negotiator and no space for direct talks with the court.”²⁶⁵

Although the procession to Edo was a consequential failure for the ambassador, the incident that should lead to several years of banned trade for the VOC with Japan only happened after Nuyts’ return to Tayouan as a result of what had occurred during the journey.²⁶⁶ At the same time when the Dutch had dispatched an embassy to the shoguns court, out of coincidence, the Nagasaki merchant Heizo did so too with a hastily prepared delegation made up of illegitimated villagers in order to embarrass the VOC and get advantages for himself by pleasing the Tokugawa in presenting them a further foreign authority to integrate into the *ka-i* system.²⁶⁷ The occurrence of both embassies from Taiwan at the same time led to confusion at the court in Edo. Early successes of Heizo’s embassy soon diminished, as some of his delegates got infected by smallpox, which hampered their progress.²⁶⁸ Nuyts, who soon caught up and found out about the faked embassy, too did not leave out any opportunity to loudly accuse the illegitimacy of Heizo’s embassy with the aim to improve his bargaining position to demand a Dutch monopoly on using Taiwan as a trading post.²⁶⁹ The result was a rejection of both embassies after Heizo’s delegation as well was not perceived as a legitimate representation of a sovereign. The failure of Nuyts’ undertakings therefore soon enticed him to blame the Japanese merchant, instead of accepting his responsibility.²⁷⁰

Out of revenge, after Hamada (Heizo’s captain) returned to Taiwan once again with the villagers he had taken for the embassy, Nuyts ordered to take away their gifts from the *bakufu* and imprisoned them. In turn, Heizo took Nuyts hostage at his own office and only released him after he had promised to restore the villagers’ freedom and make up for their losses.²⁷¹ Reports of the incident back in Nagasaki immediately led to the ban of trading relations with the company, causing tremendous losses for the VOC due to their reliance on Japanese silver to fuel their business success in the region. For both, Nuyts’ and Hamada’s careers, the incident had far-reaching negative consequences. While the latter lost his favour after his protector, the *bugyō* in Nagasaki, had died under mysterious circumstances, his Dutch opponent was ordered

²⁶⁵ Comp.: *Clulow*, *The Company and the Shogun*, p. 90.

²⁶⁶ The embassy was equipped with a lavish array of gifts, as there was no doubt for the headquarter that the procession would lead to success. After the embassy still failed, Nuyts had to face heavy accusations for his misbehaviours during his travel to Edo. Comp.: *Clulow*, *The Company and the Shogun*, pp. 60ff.

²⁶⁷ Comp.: *Clulow*, *A Fake Embassy*, p. 36.

²⁶⁸ Comp.: *Clulow*, *A Fake Embassy*, p. 37.

²⁶⁹ Comp.: *Ibid.*

²⁷⁰ Comp.: *Blussé*, *Bull in a China Shop*, pp. 95. *Clulow*, *The Company and the Shogun*, pp. 225f.

²⁷¹ Comp.: *Blussé*, *Bull in a China Shop*, pp. 95f.

to Batavia in order to explain what went wrong.²⁷² After several attempts to restore friendly relations to the Tokugawa, Jacques Specx – the successor of Jan Pieterszoon Coen – made an exceptional decision in VOC history. After years of imprisonment in Batavia, Nuyts was handed over in 1632 to be put under Tokugawa jurisdiction as a means to make up for the company’s misbehaviour.²⁷³ “This extradition of a company servant to a foreign despot was an unprecedented step in the annals of the Company. Never before and never afterwards was a high official of the VOC put at the mercy of an Asian monarch and forced to ask forgiveness for his past actions.”²⁷⁴ Even Nuyts himself was well aware of the outstanding meaning of this intention, as he wrote in his letter of defence:

*“Dat ik mij aen de ed. heeren mayores om de compagnies dienst in dese landen te doen eenmael verbonden hebbe, onder welckers eedt, ordre ende revocatie ick staen, ende geen andere.”*²⁷⁵

„That I once committed myself to the *ed. heeren mayores* to do service for the company in these lands, under whose oath, order, and revocation I stand, and no one else.”

Nuyts continues to use the last phrase – “*ende geen andere*”, “and no one else” – several times in order to insist that only the company should be responsible for his concerns, rejecting his extradition to be put under Japanese jurisdiction. In a couple of paragraphs, he explains that such undertakings were uncommon also to England, France, “and so on also all the [other] nations.”²⁷⁶ This makes it an unusual practice in international relations according to his view and he continues his argumentation with the claims that such a behaviour would undermine the whole authority and sovereignty (“*autoriteyt ende souverainiteyt*”) of the company.²⁷⁷

*“Dat de particuliere Nederlantsche provintien van alle de tijden gebat hebben ende noch hebben het recht de nonrevocando, dat is, van geen indicature van provinciale rechters te trecken tot een hooger rechter ofte den prins, (...) hoe veel te meer sal dit gelden tegens eene buyten de unie ende de Japanders.”*²⁷⁸

²⁷² Comp.: *Blussé*, Bull in a China Shop, p. 96.

²⁷³ Comp.: *Clulow*, The Company and the Shogun, p. 241.

²⁷⁴ *Blussé*, Bull in a China Shop, p. 106.

²⁷⁵ Stukken betrekkelijk Pieter Nuyts, gouverneur van Taqueran, 1631 — 1634. In: *Kronijk van het Historisch Genootschap*, 1853 (Utrecht), p. 186.

²⁷⁶ Stukken betrekkelijk Pieter Nuyts, gouverneur van Taqueran, 1631 — 1634, p. 187.

²⁷⁷ Stukken betrekkelijk Pieter Nuyts, gouverneur van Taqueran, 1631 — 1634, p. 187.

²⁷⁸ Stukken betrekkelijk Pieter Nuyts, gouverneur van Taqueran, 1631 — 1634, p. 187.

“That the particular Dutch provinces since all times had and still have the right of *nonrevocando*, that is, to pull away no jurisdiction from provincial judges to a higher judge or the prince, (...) how much more shall this count for someone outside of the union [the United Provinces of the Netherlands] and the Japanese.”

The argument with which Nuyts wanted to persuade his investigators of staying under the jurisdiction of the VOC is particularly interesting as it gives insight into the perceptions of law among the Dutch at the time. As an organization that was keen on maintaining its own legal sovereignty, the self-image of Nuyts in this particular paragraph underlines the Dutch conception of territorial integrity. He argued that such an extradition would not meet common practices in the Netherlands as well as in other countries and therefore even formulated it as an act that would backfire on the company’s claimed legitimation as sovereignly acting organization. In sum, Nuyts mentions 18 arguments for his defence against the intended transfer of his person to Japan, out of which the above-mentioned examples probably present the most persuasive ones. Regarding the establishment process of the VOC in the region as a company acting in fact like a sovereign in diplomatic relations with Batavia as its centre, fostering sovereignty claims of the VOC for the sake of trade certainly was important and caution was needed in order to keep up good reputation. Nevertheless, exactly that necessity of securing trading relations of the company underlines the importance that the Japanese silver trade had for the Dutch. If Nuyts indeed was aware of the exceptionality that his extradition presented in history, is only indicated in his formulations. Still, the fact that such a step was only taken once in centuries of VOC history shows the desperate situation the company saw itself in, to bet on such a venture as the last hope for restoration of trading relations.

In 1633, Nuyts was sentenced by the council of the VOC in Batavia. The judgement consists of a detailed examination of his misdemeanours to the burden of the Dutch nation’s reputation and, although one-sided in respect to the actual events, gives relevant insight into the process. Much room is given to rather personal offences, which Nuyts allowed himself to commit. Accordingly, his relationship and marriage with a woman from Taiwan, although Nuyts was already married, has been condemned by the council to clearly denounce his “dirty and improper desires” (“*vuile ende onbetamelijcke lusten*”).²⁷⁹ He was accused of spending up to three weeks in a row with his beloved rather than fulfilling his duties in office. But also, the lavish expenditures for her presents are documented in much detail. At various occasions, the

²⁷⁹ Stukken betreffende Pieter Nuyts, gouverneur van Taqueran, 1631—1634, p. 195.

council points out to the extraordinary gifts that Nuyts gave her. In general, most of his misdemeanours mentioned, were the economic losses for the company that resulted out of his misbehaviours to the burden of the company's undertakings in the region. The scene when Nuyts arrived in Japan and rejected to wait on the ship to be investigated by Japanese authorities due to his status as ambassador, shows how such connections were made in the council's argumentation:

“(...) waer nyt ontstaen is, dat door sijn pracht seer excessive ende extra ordinaires onkosten tot lasten van de compagnie gevallen sijn, dat hij mede sonder eenige insichte op sijn arrivement in Japan sich seer impertinentelijck aen lant vervoegt heft, oock sonder de visitateurs aan boort te verwachten, directelijck tegen des keyzers mandaten, ende sich voorts seer hoochmoedich tegen verscheyden sonder respect van qualiteyt verthoont.”²⁸⁰

“(...) whereby it happened that, due to his splendour, very excessive and extraordinary expenses to the burden of the company accrued; that he further, without any insight at his arrival in Japan, even without waiting on board for the investigators, went on land very impertinently, [heading] directly against the emperor's [shogun's] mandates and further presented himself very arrogantly towards various without respect of quality.”

This passage shows how the council linked his personal mistakes like his overly expensive procession to Edo to the impertinent actions toward Tokugawa officials. It becomes clear that both played an important role in the decision-making process at Nuyts' trial, as such links between misbehaviour and economic losses in VOC argumentations occur various times throughout the roughly twelve pages long sentence. It is remarkable, however, that worsened relationships to Japan as the result of Nuyts' failure only hardly ever are mentioned. Instead, personal misbehaviour such as his tendency to enrich himself on the company's expenses and his relationship with a Taiwanese woman appear overly emphasized in the document. The far-reaching consequences of interrupted trading relations are only prescribed with short expressions of great losses to the company as a result of Nuyts' failure, which clearly does not represent the tremendous effect of being cut off from silver trade. One must consider that this trial concerned all of his misdemeanours during his office as Governor at *Formosa* and therefore highlights his crimes of personally enriching himself on the company's expenses. Nevertheless, more emphasis on the consequences that the incident had for the company would have been

²⁸⁰ Stukken betreffende Pieter Nuyts, gouverneur van Taqueran, 1631—1634, p. 198.

expected. It so appears that Nuyts enjoyed a huge amount of autonomy, as he restricted the access to his trading post's earnings and expenses to himself only, without granting the merchants insight into the numbers. The young university-trained ambassadors that Coen wanted for the VOC in order to foster organized action of the company, ironically turned out to act with high autonomy, which is reflected in the numerous accusations of Nuyts overextensions of his agency rights.

The final paragraphs begin with a few words of comprehension in which the council shows some kind of understanding of Nuyts situation in referring to “Japanese attacks against his [Nuyts'] person” (“*der Japanders attentaten tegen sijn person*”).²⁸¹ It continues, however, with a conclusion of the overwhelming majority of criminal offenses that led the council to sentencing him guilty.

*“(…) dat gemelte Pieter Nuyts (...) gesuspendeert is is van sijne gage, tractement ende qualiteyt, blijvende alle sijne middelen in handen van de compagnie gesequestreert tot naerder verantwoordige van gemelten Nuyts, cum expensis.”*²⁸²

“(…) that [the here] mentioned Pieter Nuyts (...) is suspended from his gage, contract and quality; all his means stay in the hands of the company until sequestered to the next responsible of [the here] mentioned Nuyts, cum expenses.”

His son, Laurens, in the meantime already had died in a Japanese prison in 1629 and Pieter Nuyts himself as well should remain locked up in Japan until 1636, which shows the vast consequences of the failure of a young ambassador, who was made solely responsible for the thoughtless decisions of a company to burden an inexperienced ambassador with a crucial task that was difficult to fulfil in the first place. While a certain share of blame of Pieter Nuyts cannot be denied due to his harsh and uncompromising way of insisting on his status, the disadvantageous circumstances of his mission, which even the centre in Batavia was not fully aware of at the time, highly contributed to the unfavourable result.

²⁸¹ Stukken betrekkelijk Pieter Nuyts, gouverneur van Taqueran, 1631—1634, p. 203.

²⁸² Stukken betrekkelijk Pieter Nuyts, gouverneur van Taqueran, 1631—1634, p. 204.

c. The Release of Pieter Nuyts – Restoring Friendly Relations

After Nuyts had been handed over to imprisonment in Japan, the VOC made effort to learn from the experience that the last embassy had made, where Batavia wanted to establish itself as the centre from which to organize diplomatic relations with Japan from now on. The failure of their undertaking in 1627 led to a change in VOC rhetoric that contradicted earlier practices of the company in the region. Instead of deriving legitimacy from the Netherlands or Batavia – both places under Dutch rule – the company's efforts now tried to abandon that behaviour in order to draw legitimation from the Tokugawa themselves directly. Company servants repeatedly communicated to Tokugawa authorities and agents to be loyal vassals of the shogun who are willing to serve him in any way as his subjects.²⁸³ After the shift of rhetoric in the 1620s, where diplomacy should henceforth be conducted via Batavia as the source of legitimation, the next shift occurred only a decade later, which – instead of further claiming own legitimation – from now on gave up all of such aspirations of presenting themselves as equals according to European sovereignty conceptions between states.

At first sight, such a radical change might be surprising, regarding the aspirations of regaining Dutch integrity by sentencing Nuyts' due to causing bad reputation to the Netherlands and handing him over to be put under Japanese jurisdiction. The answer lies within the aims of the company in Asia in the first place, as indicated by their charter. The overarching goal was neither the maintenance of political sovereignty nor the establishment and expansion of Dutch power in the first place, but rather to expand their market share in competition to other – out of a Dutch perspective most importantly European – agents in the region.²⁸⁴ So, the company's interests first and foremost were economic ones, and any strategic step was taken in order to further trading activity and promote business affairs. This also counts for the sentence of Nuyts, for he was not arrested and handed over to Japanese jurisdiction for defending Dutch integrity

²⁸³ Comp.: *Clulow*, *The Company and the Shogun*, p. 96.

²⁸⁴ Comp.: NL-HaNA, *Nederlandse Factorij Japan*, 1.04.21, inv.nr. 1. The charter of the VOC explicitly defines the aim "to maintain and expand trade to profit the United Company" as the reason for the far-reaching rights that the organisation was granted. (Full citation: "To ensure that the purposes of this United Company are achieved to the greater benefit of these United Provinces, to maintain and expand trade to profit the Company, we do hereby licence the abovementioned Company with the conditions as follows."). Comp.: *Reynders/Gerritsen*, *A Translation of the Charter of the Dutch East India Company*, p. 6. On another occasion, also the Spanish and Portuguese enemies of war of the United Provinces were addressed directly in the charter, highlighting their rivalry in the region in front of others: "If it should occur that Spanish or Portuguese ships or those of another enemy attack the ships (...)." Citation taken from: *Reynders/Gerritsen*, *A Translation of the Charter of the Dutch East India Company*, p. 7.

and sovereignty, but for presenting himself as too inflexible to adapt to the strictly defined demands of Japanese ceremonials and rules. His lack of success in Japan did not make up for the high expenses of the company for the lavish array of gifts that he shared. It is not said that presenting himself more flexible in his dealings with the Tokugawa would have led the embassy to more success. Nevertheless, it becomes evident that such flexibility was requested and accepted even if it meant to proclaim Dutch subordination if it was for the sake of trade. The shift from further insisting on its own Dutch sovereignty to subordination under Tokugawa hegemony in the early 1630s therefore occurred as a result of the experiences made in earlier encounters, which showed the company limits in diplomatic relations to a state that was far more powerful. Any attempts to further influence relations in depending on the VOCs own patterns were rejected and abandoned for the wish to integrate themselves into a Japanese order of how international relations were conducted. Out of the aim to secure the Japanese market for the company's profits, integration into the *ka-i* system therefore happened voluntarily and the Dutch contribution to that result must not be underestimated.

After the company had handed over Nuyts to his imprisonment in Japan and communication had changed as a result of the unfavourable events of Nuyts' embassy, relationships between the VOC and the Tokugawa improved. This was not only reflected in the company's profits that started to take off after silver trade could be resumed and the colony on Taiwan could be held. But also, communication to *bakufu* officials improved, as records from the *Deshima Dagregisters* give proof of.

“Wij recommandeerde onse saecke geheel inde gredegumste van sijn persoon, (...) voorde latest mael the overvloet dat daerinne volgens belofte sijnen Yver soude gelieven int wreck te stellen, op dat soo d'een als d'ander, t'geene doenelijck was mitsgadersde verlossinge van [heer] Nuyts mocht toegestaen warden, waer op zijn [persoon] antwoorde t'sall geschieden ende sall met de eerste gelegentheytt Takimond (...), daar over sproocken, den [heer Nuyts] vrijheytt sall mede gegeven warden, twijffelt daer niet aen (...) saecke staen heel well ende sullen hoe langer hoe beter gaen.“²⁸⁵

„We recommended our matters wholly in the name of his person, (...) for the last time to abundance that therein according to promise his diligence should be put to work, so by that the one like the other, nothing was possible provided that the release of [Mr.] Nuyts is agreed upon, whereupon his [person] answered it shall happen and [it] shall at the first chance

²⁸⁵ Dagregisters van de factorij te Hirado (Firando) en te Deshima, in: Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Nederlandse Factorij in Japan, nummer toegang 1.04.21, inventarisnummer 53.

be talked about this with Takimond (...), [that Mr. Nuyts] shall be set free, do not doubt that (...) affairs stand well and should continue the longer the better.”

This note was taken down in April 1634 as an example of such positive communication between the company and Tokugawa officials. It becomes evident, as indicated in the last sentence, that “affairs stand well” (“*saecke staen heel well*”) and the company recorded success at the time. The originally used term “*saecke*”, when translated, usually could mean both, “things” or “(business) affairs”. So, the author of this records could have meant either that relations in general stand well, or that business is running smoothly. Both, however, clearly indicates success, regarding that the author does not clearly distinguish between relations to the Japanese or his entrepreneurial activities in this regard. The former notifications also give insight into the communication between VOC and Tokugawa officials, where Dutch demands were received with much courtesy. The author mentions Pieter Nuyts and the negotiations to some authorities of the shogunate in order to demand his release, which shows that the VOC still was concerned with his person and tried to regain his freedom. The Tokugawa official whose name was not mentioned, assured that the request will be passed on to someone called Takimon by the Dutch – probably a high-ranking *bakufu* official. When bilateral relations were improving in the early 1630s, freeing the imprisoned ambassador in order to foster such friendly relations and reach normalization in diplomatic contact clearly became an objective to the company.

That the company, right after sentencing Nuyts to be extradited to Japanese jurisdiction 1632, changed their behaviour and henceforth negotiated to get him back, points out to a certain degree of regret of the company. Indeed, handing over a high-ranked official to be put under the jurisdiction of a foreign authority clearly undermined the VOCs sovereignty, which the company in the decades before was so keen on to hold upright.²⁸⁶ Reactions like the one cited above were part of a whole campaign constructed in order to get Nuyts back and restore the cracked construction of VOC sovereignty and legitimization.²⁸⁷ Whether the extradition of the ambassador was a frustrated step or simply happened out of strategy in order to get access to the Japanese market again does not become fully clear, considering the discussed documents above. While the first reason seems comprehensible in regard to the lack of options the VOC had in order to achieve their aim, the latter cannot be rejected completely. Regret of the decision

²⁸⁶ Comp.: *Clulow*, *The Company and the Shogun*, p. 231.

²⁸⁷ Comp.: *Ibid.*

of the VOC council of justice did not occur before the actual extradition, although Nuyts himself repeatedly pointed out to the violation of the company's claims of sovereignty with this act. The council therefore might have been fully aware of the consequences that such a step would bring along, but still decided to take the damage, if – in turn – trade could be resumed, and profit could be reached again. Negotiating the release of Nuyts in the aftermath of his extradition took place out of possibilities to stress company objectives when diplomatic relations to the Tokugawa began to improve again. Communication was reshaped to encounter the Tokugawa with devotion and the Dutch accepted the hegemonial claims of the shogun formally. In order to please the new-gained friendship, having a Dutch ambassador imprisoned in Japan might have seemed improper, which also could have let the VOC make effort to restore him. Out of a strategic calculation to regain access to the Japanese market that worked out, grew the company's wish to achieve normalization, which shows that the extradition had been a very delicate decision in the first place. Although well aware of the far-reaching consequences and the risk that extradition of a high-ranking VOC official would bring with it, the company decided for it, ready to take those aftereffects and trying to improve their situation again after their crucial relationship with the Japanese was restored.

Regaining authority over Nuyts happened in 1636 and required the company to conduct another symbolic act of submission in order to achieve their aim. If one could count the extradition of Nuyts to Japan as a symbolic act to show Dutch servility, the lavish array of gifts to the shogun that the company prepared for their *hofreis* in 1636 could be viewed in the same way, which made it an attempt to let the shogunate set their imprisoned ambassador free in exchange.²⁸⁸ The enduring interest of the Tokugawa in Dutch curiosities were to the advantage of the company, as pleasing the *bakufu* with rarities as gifts often could be used in order to improve the VOCs bargaining position.²⁸⁹ In the *Deshima Dagregisters* such gifts just appear as a list of items, as if they were a further expenditure for their undertakings in the region.²⁹⁰ Nevertheless, the meaning of such gifts as means to enhance reciprocity between giver and recipient must not be underestimated.²⁹¹ Gift-giving served as “social mechanisms with which to bind people together in a complex web of obligation and reciprocity.”²⁹² Not only in Japan, but in the whole SouthEast Asian region, such practices had a long tradition in diplomatic

²⁸⁸ Comp.: *Clulow*, *The Company and the Shogun*, p. 231.

²⁸⁹ Laver refers to Derrida's thoughts on the reciprocity of gift-giving, who states that gift giving always occurs with a motive of self-interest in mind of the giver. Comp: *Laver*, *The Dutch East India Company in Early Modern Japan*, p. 20.

²⁹⁰ NL-HaNA, *Nederlandse Factorij Japan*, 1.04.21, inv.nr. 53.

²⁹¹ Comp.: *Laver*, *The Dutch East India Company in Early Modern Japan*, p. 26.

²⁹² *Ibid.*

relations and political organization, as it had the favourable effect for rulers who had to maintain control over vast territories that administration was easier when people were made permanently dependant on each other.²⁹³ When the Dutch set foot in the region, they soon adapted to gift-giving as a language suitable to improve their stance in negotiation, with an expensive rarity (out of a Japanese point of view) only in mind, when their aim required extraordinary expenses in order to achieve VOC objectives.²⁹⁴ Throughout the Edo Period, the company presented gifts such as camels, buffaloes or exotic birds, which were perceived as rare curiosities that gave proof of the far-reaching influence of the shogun to receive presents even from the most distant lands known to the Tokugawa.²⁹⁵ But also military weapons and western technologies were imported, especially in the early years of the *bakufu*.²⁹⁶ In the case of Pieter Nuyts, the delegation of 1636 brought along a chandelier that was crafted in the Netherlands with the intention to improve the company's position in the region as a gift for a foreign authority.²⁹⁷

In advance to the delegation sent to the capital in Edo, another request reached the Japanese that now was formulated even more directly than the concerns mentioned in 1634:

“Dese Gouverneur [Nuyts] is nu 4 jaeren door de hooge overighijts last in gevangenis geweest, sijn soon is (...) in gefangenis gestelt ende daer gestorven, sijn (...) huysgesin als vrouw & kinderen sijn tot Jaccatra near hem toegecomen & mede alle vergaen, dat bijnae daer niemant van is overgebleven (...). Daeromme bidden alle de Capitijns dat [uwe] hoogheeden hem doch sijnne Misdaet willet vergeven, ende naer sijn lant vertrecken laeten, wij bidden dat [uwe] hoogheeden dese karitate geliest te doen, weest doch genadichen laet hem eer hem de doot haelt near sijn lant strecken.”²⁹⁸

“To the disadvantage of the vast majority, this Governor [Nuyts] has now been imprisoned for four years, his son was put in prison where he died, his family, wife and children, came to him in Jakarta and all perished as well, so that there hardly anyone is left (...). Therefore, all the captains request that your highnesses may forgive him his misdeeds

²⁹³ Note that such practices were at the heart of how feudalist Japan under Hideyoshi was administered. Those who allied with him as loyal vassals in battle were rewarded with the right to govern his land as their daimyo, which created a complex web of reciprocity that tied lord and vassal together. Also under the Kamakura and Ashikaga *bakufu*, practices of gaining feudal rights for military service were common. Comp.: *Vaporis*, *Tour of Duty*, p. 11.

²⁹⁴ Comp.: *Laver*, *The Dutch East India Company in Early Modern Japan*, p. 15.

²⁹⁵ Comp.: *Laver*, *The Dutch East India Company in Early Modern Japan*, p. 1.

²⁹⁶ Comp.: *Ibid.*

²⁹⁷ Comp.: *Clulow*, *The Company and the Shogun*, p. 247.

²⁹⁸ NL-HaNA, *Nederlandse Factorij Japan*, 1.04.21, inv.nr. 53.

and let him leave to his country; we ask your highnesses to do us this favour, show mercy after all and let him leave for his country before death takes him.”

The request noted in the *Deshima Dagregisters* of February 1636 starts with an enumeration of Nuyts’ losses throughout his four years of imprisonment to emphasize the wide range of severe consequences that the ambassador had to face since his arrest started. This on the one hand surely should lead Tokugawa officials to the conviction that this poor ambassador already had suffered enough for his misdeeds convicted. On the other, however, the shift in VOC rhetoric again is remarkable, when compared to the sentence of his trial back then in Batavia, where the concerns about his family – his wife in especially – were highly condemned. To use family here as a reason to explicate a tragical fate of an imprisoned man who already had lost everyone dear to him therefore shows that language was used in this regard in order to benefit VOC objections. It cannot be assumed that the council of justice or other high-ranking officials of the company had changed their opinion concerning Peter Nuyts’ family affairs. Using his family situation therefore as an argument to foster justification for setting him free rather must be seen as a means for conviction in order to regain sovereignty rights over the ambassador. With the reference to all the captains (“*alle de Capitijns*”) – meaning probably those officials who were somehow involved in trade to Japan – clearly more effort is made to reach their aim than in earlier accounts. Also, Tokugawa officials now are addressed directly, which shows the serious concerns of the company to finally regain sovereignty rights over the remaining of Nuyts.

Later that year, in March, the *Deshima Dagregisters* show that concerns in regard to Pieter Nuyts finally should be solved:

“Eyntelijck quamen int gespreck wegen de verlossinge van heer Nuyts ons mistroostich ende qualijck tevreden thoonende dat daer noch geen eynde van gecomen was, recommandeerde & baeden sijn Excellentie seer nederich, dat sijnne saecke dese reyse mocht warden affgedaen.”²⁹⁹

“[We] finally came to talk about the release of mister Nuyts, [when we] showed ourselves worried and concerned that this still did not come to an end; [we] recommended and asked his excellence very humbly that his case should be solved this travel.”

²⁹⁹ NL-HaNA, Nederlandse Factorij Japan, 1.04.21, inv.nr. 53.

This paragraph in the *Dagregisters* is the earliest proof of how the ambassador could be obtained back. References to the next travel (*reyse*) – meant is the *hofreis* – show Dutch involvement in the *sankin kōtai* system as a possibility to seek negotiation. What did not work out with the embassy of 1627 now seemed well possible due to improved communication to the *bakufu* in the 1630s. After all, this text excerpt mentions that articulating their concerns became feasible more easily and that requests regarding the imprisoned Pieter Nuyts did not fall on deaf ears.

The recording of these negotiation happened in March 1636 and therefore was taken down immediately before the Dutch delegates left Nagasaki to attend the shogun in Edo. The passage is immediately followed by a detailed enumeration of gifts that the delegation brought with them for various purposes. The most important present was a chandelier that was made especially for such an occasion.³⁰⁰ It was a lavish gift for the Tokugawa shogun that would only be carried along in special occasions like for the current concerns of the VOC regarding the remain of their former ambassador. Pleasing the shogun with a gift that highly exceeded the usual value of gifts brought to the court in Edo, the Dutch aimed at increasing their bargaining position by presenting the Tokugawa exactly those rarities that they wanted in order to foster their claims as centre of the world with influence reaching across the globe.³⁰¹ Due to the geographical distance of the Netherlands to Japan, the Dutch were granted an audience to the shogun only in adaptation to strict ceremonials that would allow the spectators to immediately understand their rank in Tokugawa hierarchy. In comparison to Ryukyu embassies and delegations from Korea, who were allowed to come a little closer, the Dutch had to remain in the back of the audience hall.³⁰² They were required to crawl on all fours and keep their faces to the ground so to be prevented from looking up at the shogun, as becomes clear in notes of Engelbert Kaempfer's diaries.³⁰³ Furthermore, Dutch embassies often were ordered to act foreign, conducting Dutch dances, wearing Dutch clothes and speaking their native language.³⁰⁴ The fact that they were often referred to as *kōmō* (red hairs) by the Japanese further gives proof of the exoticness that was attributed to the Dutch delegations.³⁰⁵ The whole ceremonial of their

³⁰⁰ Comp.: *Clulow*, *The Company and the Shogun*, p. 247.

³⁰¹ Comp.: *Laver*, *The Dutch East India Company in Early Modern Japan*, p. 15.

³⁰² Comp.: *Clulow*, *The Company and the Shogun*, pp. 112f.

³⁰³ Comp.: Engelbert *Kaempfer*, *Kaempfer's Japan. Tokugawa Culture Observed*. Edited, translated, and annotated by Beatrice M. *Bodart-Bailey* (University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1999), p. 359. Also consider: *Clulow*, *The Company and the Shogun*, p. 18.

³⁰⁴ *Laver*, *The Dutch East India Company in Early Modern Japan*, p. 31.

³⁰⁵ Distinguishing between Japanese and foreigners became increasingly linked to hairstyles in the first half of the 17th century. Throughout the Edo period, foreigners often were viewed as “hairy barbarians” in contrast to

attendance was aligned in order to meet *bakufu* demands of the Dutch to perform “an act of submission in an audience that made it perfectly clear the Tokugawa commanded an allegiance of even foreigners from the farthest reaches of the globe.”³⁰⁶

Next to the chandelier, the *Deshima Dagregisters* also mention more common gifts, which were brought along to be handed over to the shogun. Two Persian carpets, twelve pistols, and some clothes amongst other silk ware are mentioned that altogether should convince the shogun of answering the Dutch extraordinary expenses for his honour with the release of Pieter Nuyts in return – which was successful.³⁰⁷ For the 4th July of the same year, the *Deshima Dagregisters* contain the following note:

“[D]es Avonts arriveerden hier 2 posten oste Expresse booden uyt Eedo, mede brengende brieven van den Heer van Firando aende regente alhier, mitsgaders aen ons int particulier, als mede aende Heere Nuyts inde welcke ons sijn Excellentie Adviseert ende aenschrijft dat sijnne Mayestijtt den 1de dach der 5de maene sijnde 4de Juny de Excellentie Nuyts near sijn Lant vrij te mogen vertrecken toegestaen heft, item dat gem sijnne Mayestijtt 200 schuyten silver aen ons vereert hadde.”³⁰⁸

“In the evening, two couriers arrived from Edo, who carried with them letters from the lord of Firando [Hirado] for the regents here, respectively for us in particular, as his excellence informs us and writes to us in regard to Mr. Nuyts, that his Majesty allowed his excellence Nuyts to leave for his country on the 1st day of the 5th month, which is the 4th June, and that his Majesty honoured him with 200 *schuyten* of silver for us.”

The message that the Dutch officials at Nagasaki received from Edo gives proof that the delegation was successful and that the chandelier as a gift fulfilled its purpose as a further symbolic present to explicate the VOCs *pro forma* subordination under the *bakufu*. Until today, the chandelier of the Dutch can be seen in Nikko at the sight where Tokugawa Ieyasu was buried.³⁰⁹ That the shogun was very pleased with the present is indicated with the 200 *schuyten* of silver that they decided to grant the Dutch in addition to the release of Nuyts. After four years of imprisonment of the ambassador, the VOC could finally re-establish their sovereignty rights

the samurai class, who usually appeared shaved with a hair knot. Comp.: *Toby*, Engaging the Other, pp. 190-251.

³⁰⁶ *Laver*, The Dutch East India Company in Early Modern Japan, p. 30.

³⁰⁷ NL-HaNA, Nederlandse Factorij Japan, 1.04.21, inv.nr. 53.

³⁰⁸ NL-HaNA, Nederlandse Factorij Japan, 1.04.21, inv.nr. 53.

³⁰⁹ Comp.: *Clulow*, The Company and the Shogun, pp. 252f.

over the former Governor and finally re-achieve normalization between the two sides. In the very same years where the *bakufu* released numerous edicts to restrict foreign influence on the archipelago, the Dutch managed out of own effort and a huge amount of flexibility in giving up their sovereignty claims in communication to the shogunate to further integrate themselves into Tokugawa policies, so that a well-ordered system of how foreign relations were conducted could finally be applied, following Japanese wishes.

Most evidence for the henceforth subordination of the VOC probably was the result of the Shimabara rebellion in 1637/38 where the VOC even supported the shogunate's forces militarily with assisting sea fire against their Portuguese opponents. The event should have a striking impact on European relations with the shogunate, as the result was the defeat of the uprising and the ban of the Portuguese from Japan in 1639.³¹⁰ Even decades later, Engelbert Kaempfer, a German who had travelled India, Persia, Russia, and Japan, describes the course of the Shimabara uprising in his writings.³¹¹ He highly condemns the Dutch proceedings in joining sides with the Japanese, when Kaempfer describes them as “people who (...) easily permitted themselves to be used in the destruction of those with whom they basically shared the same belief and the path of Christ”.³¹² One must not forget that Kaempfer wrote out of a Christian perspective with some temporal distance to the actual event, which might have tempted him to condemnation of the company's undertakings out of sheer profitability. Considering the events before 1637, it becomes clear, however, that VOC involvement in actual Japanese military missions was only a matter of time. Since the VOC had changed its rhetoric against the Japanese and claimed themselves to be loyal vassals of the shogun, ready to act whenever needed, Japanese plans in making use of Dutch maritime technology took form.³¹³ The original plan was to use Dutch forces in order to attack the Spanish bastion at Manila, which was prevented through domestic uprisings that occasionally started in 1637 in Kyushu – the Shimabara rebellion.³¹⁴ On February 19th, the Dutch got the order from a Japanese official at Hirado to dispatch their ships and take part in defeating the Christian rebellion by providing aid through sea fire.³¹⁵ It lasted until April 15th with the defeat of the rebellious Christians and the acknowledgement of VOC service as vassals for the *bakufu*. That Shimabara remained an exception of Dutch military aid provided to the shogunate might have been out of coincidence,

³¹⁰ Comp.: Clulow, *The Company and the Shogun*, p. 169.

³¹¹ Kaempfer, *Kaempfer's Japan*, p. 188.

³¹² Comp.: *Ibid.*

³¹³ Clulow, *The Company and the Shogun*, pp. 121-123.

³¹⁴ Clulow, *The Company and the Shogun*, p. 123.

³¹⁵ NL-HaNA, *Nederlandse Factorij Japan*, 1.04.21, inv.nr. 53.

as international threats did not emerge in the decades afterwards.³¹⁶ The Portuguese were expelled in 1639 and Dutch military service henceforth continued with the provision of intelligence about foreign affairs (*fusetsugaki*) at their annual visits to the court in Edo.³¹⁷

VI. Conclusion

Contradicting the assumption of the 1630s as a decade of Japanese international isolation that banned foreign influence, the Dutch experiences on the archipelago at the time led to the opposite effect of re-integration into Japanese foreign relations after the *noitsu-jiken* had been solved. Instead of the ban of international influence, the organization of foreign relations according to the *ka-i* system under the Tokugawa in the early Edo Period shows that possibilities to maintain diplomatic ties existed, if objectives that corroborated Japan as a centre surrounded by subordinated vassals were met. As has been shown in the first chapter, what “Japan” was at the time cannot be equated to a homogeneous territory defined by strict national borders in the sense of modern nation states but underwent several changes even within the period covered in this thesis. Tendencies show, at least, that from a conglomerate of several independent daimyo in the Sengoku Period, the hegemony and institution of the *bakufu* under the Tokugawa promoted early beliefs of proto-national ties established through central government measures while the *sankin kōtai* system as an institution furthered economic and cultural exchange amongst the various former independent states. Although fiefdoms of especially western *tōzama* daimyo maintained a high level of autonomy that strengthened their connections internationally instead of restricting them, early tendencies of increasing awareness of the archipelago as an integrated unity existed. In this regard, the two supposedly contradicting perspectives of the denial of Japan as a state on the one side, and the emphasis on daimyo’s huge amount of integration into Japan as a single political entity on the other, both approaches contain comprehensible assumptions. As Japanese unification was achieved through cohesion rather than force, especially the western domains retained much room for manoeuvring, which was restricted stepwise by the central government in centralizing foreign relations while keeping the daimyo busy with compulsory tours to attend the shogun throughout the early Edo Period.

³¹⁶ Comp.: Clulow, *The Company and the Shogun*, p. 128.

³¹⁷ Comp.: *Ibid.*

In a similar development, the Tokugawa aimed at re-defining the archipelago's position in the world with increasing awareness of Japan as a centre on its own, to control the former independent provinces. In legitimizing the shogun's central position in this, embassies from abroad were received and shown off in front of a numerous audience on their parades to and from the capital, which demonstrated the *bakufu's* influence reaching even to foreign authorities. Again, the thesis argues that the construction of a *ka-i* world view did not happen artificially in demand of a clear international position of the recently unified territory solely, but, instead, rather happened out of the need to halt the conglomerate under control of the central government in corroborating the shogun's legitimation ideologically. The roots in the unification process started by Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi with their administrative reforms that laid the basis to effectively govern the unified territory therefore benefitted Tokugawa Ieyasu, who founded a dynasty legitimized from within and acknowledged internationally.

The tool for keeping the daimyo under control was the *sankin kōtai* system that obliged every clan to travel to the shogun's court in annual intervals for several months. Over the first half of the 17th century, this former feudal practice of attending the lord to conduct military service in exchange for their right to govern his fiefdoms, which was already common under Hideyoshi, changed to an increasingly institutionalized requirement with defined rules for the daimyo, reaching from the time of arrival and period of attendance to the permanent maintenance of a household with the daimyo's family as hostages on their own expenses. As a measurement, which therefore usually was restricted to the rulers of inland domains, the thesis highlights the involvement of the Dutch in this process, since VOC merchants were ordered to conduct the same tours in annual intervals in 1634. As the relations between the VOC and the Tokugawa did not go without conflict during the first decades of the Edo Period, with misunderstandings in diplomatic communication, the failed embassy of Pieter Nuyts and a temporary interruption of trading relations, the controlling effect of the *sankin kōtai* system therefore also was applied to give the Dutch a specific rank and place in Tokugawa hierarchy. Furthermore, since relations were complicated in the 1620s and early 1630s, but the Dutch still were granted to maintain their trading outpost (although with many restrictions), the thesis shows that diplomatic relations with the VOC benefitted the Tokugawa shogunate through providing not only economic but also ideological value for the *bakufu's* legitimation in the sense of proving the shoguns influence. The *sankin kōtai* system therefore combined the effects of control over the fiefdoms with the shogunate's legitimation and reputation of power to order daimyo to and from Edo at wish, showing many similarities to the constituting effect of

Tokugawa legitimation in the *ka-i* system, what the specific role of the Dutch in this process gives proof of.

In diplomatic relations between the VOC and Japan in the early Edo Period, the thesis shows the complexity of interaction between two political bodies which derive from varying international contexts. With experience only from other SouthEast Asian societies, the VOC did not arrive completely unprepared in its early years in Japan and used an invented monarchical figure to claim legitimation from, which was required in order to conduct trade with Japan. Contradictions, however, soon appeared when the VOC decided to shift their centre of legitimation from the Netherlands to Batavia, which Tokugawa officials did not tolerate and caused the procession of a well-equipped embassy in command of Pieter Nuyts to fail. The incident that followed on Taiwan, a Dutch colony, where Nuyts afterwards used force to push through his monopoly on trade, led to years of banned trade of the Tokugawa and worsened relations that could only be restored with the far-reaching step of handing over Pieter Nuyts to be put under Japanese jurisdiction. While the huge difference in power between the Tokugawa and the VOC since Clulow's monography is clear, the thesis shows that integration into a Japan-centred *ka-i* order took place through Dutch aspirations to regain trading relations even to the expense of giving up own incentives to establish sovereignty in SouthEast Asia – at least in relations to the Tokugawa – by claiming themselves vassals of the shogun from 1630 onwards.³¹⁸ Discussions of documents regarding Nuyts trial in Batavia and of aspirations in the *Dagregisters* to regain sovereignty of the VOC to the ambassador put under Japanese jurisdiction further make evident the break in the company's rhetoric towards the shogunate, as it was willing to undermine its own sovereignty, which it so hardly had insisted upon, for the sake of assuring trade. Aware of the shogunates demand to maintain diplomatic relations only with subjected vassals, the VOC therefore willingly decided to fulfil the *bakufu*'s wish in order to get access to Japanese silver which was crucial for their trading objectives. Following the release of Pieter Nuyts and the military participation of the Dutch against the Shimabara rebellion, the Dutch integrated further into Japanese policies than any other foreign authority, which VOC participation in the *sankin kōtai* system shows.

To conclude, Japan was shaped by various developments that happened parallelly throughout the early Edo Period, with the aim of consolidating power in the hands of the recently established hegemony of the Tokugawa shogunate. Since the Period of Settlement, policies followed the aim of securing shogunal rule institutionally, which the Tokugawa

³¹⁸ Clulow, *The Company and the Shogun*.

enwidened on international relations with the result of travel and trading restrictions for Japanese and foreigners alike. Releasing policies that aimed at bounding together the provinces was supported by the establishment process of an ideologically and culturally unified “Japan” through the *sankin kōtai* and the *ka-i* system. On the one hand, these institutions put the Japanese in opposition to other international actors through increasingly proto-national Japanese self-perception that made Japanese distinguish themselves from its various Others at the time. On the other, similar measurements were used at the same time to establish political control over domestic daimyo and foreign authorities alike to corroborate the shoguns court as a centre and legitimizing him. The lack of clear definition of the Japanese influential sphere at the time is significant in this development and underlines similarities between the *sankin kōtai* and the *ka-i* system.

Relations between the Dutch and Japan happened within these decades of Japanese redefinition of domestic as well as international policies and VOC agents therefore saw themselves opposed to a way more powerful political entity that only was about to begin with showing off the far-reaching influence it had over the companies trading strategies in the early 1600s. While the coincidental arrival of a shipwrecked Dutch vessel on Japan in 1600 provided the VOC with the lucrative opportunity to establish trading outposts due to friendly attitudes of Tokugawa Ieyasu at the time, the following decades were characterized by continuous restrictions of their trading rights, which the Dutch had to comply with. Even a dispute over Taiwan in the 1620s showed the company its limits, as the insistence on VOC rights as sovereigns on the island were simply not accepted by the *bakufu* and attempts to defend those sovereignty rights by the Governor Pieter Nuyts were revenged with the interruption of trading relations, which, as a result, forced the company to comply with Tokugawa hegemony.

In relation to the development of a *ka-i* system in Japan at the time, the Dutch experience shows the huge amount of inflexibility that the Japanese could afford due to their advantageous and comparatively powerful position. The Tokugawa shaped world order required foreign authorities to *pro forma* submit under their rule and the willingness to send well-equipped embassies for special occasions to take part in a procession to portray the far-reaching influence of the shogun, which left the Dutch with the choice to comply with it or to leave. In contrast to the continuous restrictions of international ties in the early Edo Period, the VOC integrated into Tokugawa foreign policies at the same time on own incentives. It is remarkable, therefore, that this development was a result of the VOC’s effective aspirations in thriving for integration by presenting the *bakufu* what it demanded, rather than achieving a compromise with mutual

accommodation. Since the arrival of the Dutch in Japan, perceptions of shared sovereignty and hierarchically organized interstate relationships on the Tokugawa side clashed with European conceptions of absolute sovereignty over own territory and international communication between monarchs on an equal level. While comparisons between the two different backgrounds of diplomatic practice and how they influenced direct encounters remain open for further research, experiences of the two sides show that pacification of international disputes between the two only could be resolved through integration rather than compromise.

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VIII. Abstract

In der ersten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts richtete das Tokugawa Shogunat (1600 – 1868) seine internationalen Beziehungen nach einer Japan-zentrierten Weltansicht (*ka-i*) aus, welche Japan als kulturellen und politischen Hegemon umgeben von untergeordneten Vasallenstaaten definierte. Seit der ersten Ankunft niederländischer Händler und Kaufleute in Japan im Jahr 1600 bemühte sich die niederländische Handelskompanie (VOC) um Aufrechterhaltung des Silberhandels mit dem Resultat der Aufgabe eigener Souveränitätsansprüche und der Integration in die japanische Ordnung des *ka-i* Systems in den 1630ern. Jene Entwicklung niederländischer Integration in das *sankin kōtai* und *ka-i* System wird in chronologischer Abfolge erläutert, während der Fall des VOC-Gesandten und Gouverneurs von Formosa (Taiwan) Pieter Nuyts im Jahr 1628 hervorgehoben wird. Die Analyse relevanter Passagen der *Dagregisters* von Hirado und Deshima in Kombination mit Dokumenten von Nuyts' Prozess verdeutlicht die Außergewöhnlichkeit seines Schicksals als einziger VOC-Gouverneur in der Geschichte der Handelskompanie, welcher unter fremde Rechtsprechung gestellt wurde, um für seine Taten einzustehen. Wiederholte Versuche der Restitution von Nuyts und niederländische Rhetorik, welche Unterwürfigkeit unter japanische Hegemonie kommunizierte, gipfelten in der Überreichung wertvoller Geschenke 1636 und der aktiven militärischen Partizipation in der Unterdrückung der Shimabara Rebellion 1638, um niederländische Loyalität zu beweisen. Die Unterwerfung unter die Autorität des Shogunes ermöglichte der VOC die Aufrechterhaltung diplomatischer Beziehungen neben Korea und dem Ryukyu Königreich, was einerseits niederländische Handelsaktivitäten sicherte, während andererseits Hegemonialansprüche des Shogunats als Zentrum gefördert wurden, indem niederländische Gesandtschaften als Teil des *sankin kōtai* Systems in Edo (Tokyo) in jährlichen Intervallen empfangen wurden.

In the first half of the 17th century, Japan under the Tokugawa shogunate (1600 – 1868) organized its international relations according to a Japan-centred world view (*ka-i*) that demarcated Japan as cultural and political centre surrounded by subjected vassals. Since the first arrival of Dutch merchants in Japan in 1600, the Dutch East India company (VOC) struggled to meet the shogunate's requirements to maintain silver trade on the archipelago with the result of giving up own sovereignty claims and integrating into the *ka-i* world order in the 1630s. After a chronological approach to explicate the development of Dutch integration into

the *sankin kōtai* system and shogunal *ka-i* conceptions, the incident of the Dutch ambassador and governor of *Formosa* (Taiwan) Pieter Nuyts and its far-reaching consequences for the VOC in 1628 is highlighted. The analysis of relevant passages of the *Dagregisters* from Hirado and *Deshima* as well as relevant documents of Nuyts' trial gives insight into the unique step in VOC history of handing over a Dutch representative to a foreign authority in order to stand up for his misbehaviours. Repeated attempts to regain sovereignty over the imprisoned governor Nuyts as well as Dutch claims of subordination in the 1630s peaked in the donation of a lavish array of gifts in 1636 and the participation in suppression of the Shimabara rebellion to prove Dutch loyalty. Submitting to shogunal authority allowed the VOC to maintain diplomatic relations with Japan alongside Korea and the Ryukyu Kingdom, which ensured Dutch trading activities on the one side, while it furthered the shogunate's claims of centrality in front of its own people by receiving Dutch delegations at the shogun's court in Edo (Tokyo) as part of the *sankin kōtai* system in annual intervals.