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Martha Chaiklin. *Cultural Commerce and Dutch Commercial Culture: The Influence of European Material Culture on Japan, 1700-1850.* Leiden: Research School, 2003. 275 pp. No price listed (paper), ISBN 978-90-5789-086-4.

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Clocks, Glass, and Firearms: The Impact of European Manufactures on Early Modern Japanese Society

In *Cultural Commerce and Dutch Commercial Culture*, a published dissertation, Martha Chaiklin examines the impact of European material culture on Japanese society from 1700 to 1850. Chaiklin's work focuses on the Dutch trade in manufactures, and clearly demonstrates that the importation of finished goods into Japan was far greater than previously understood and correspondingly the impact of European material culture on the daily lives of the Japanese in the early modern period was significantly more pronounced than imagined. The trade was carried out between the Nagasaki kaisho (a Shogunal organization established in 1698 that controlled day-to-day trade activities) and the Dutch East India Company (VOC), which disbanded in 1799, and thereafter through Dutch officials. A key theme in this work is that the century and a half of commercial exchanges did not take place within the context of European imperial dominance. Rather, it was the Japanese who structurally and organizationally defined and controlled their interactions with the Dutch, and it was Japanese wants and desires that determined the items traded. This is reflected in the title *Cultural Commerce*, which is a clever borrowing of Pierre Bourdieu's concept of "cultural capital," wherein an individual's likes and dislikes are, in part, a product of a lifetime of accumulated cultural knowledge based on one's broader social experiences and environmental influences.[1] In this sense, Chaiklin stresses that Japanese tastes for European manufactures were driven by local proclivities derived from Japanese social circumstances.

Cultural Commerce is organized thematically into two parts. The first offers a detailed description of how goods were exchanged in Nagasaki and ultimately how they found their way into Japanese hands throughout the archipelago. This section is more than a mere droll recounting of the mechanics of trade; it is here that Chaiklin lays out her argument that trade was largely determined by Japanese cultural preferences. The last half of *Cultural Commerce* highlights the broad dissemination and acculturation of European technologies in Japan.

In the first part, Chaiklin casts a very broad net in examining how European manufactures entered Japan during this period by including the following categories as forms of trade: official company trade, private trade, smuggling, theft, gifts, and official requests. Legal trade, which was carried out by employees of the VOC and included both company and private transfers of goods, accounted for the vast majority of European manufactures that entered Japan. Chaiklin minimizes the importance of smuggled goods because her research shows that they comprised a fraction of the total imports and that most smuggled items were not manufactures, but rather European commodities, like tortoise shell, narwhal horn, and saffron. Likewise, theft represented a meager mode of entry for European manufactured items into Japan and was mostly carried out by Japanese laborers and Dutch slaves working on Deshima who opportunistically made off with measured goods, like sugar. *Cultural Commerce* also discusses gift giving as an important lubricant for establishing and maintaining trade relations. For Chaiklin, gift giving is important because a majority of the goods given in these transfers were such manufactured items as carpets, mirrors, glassware, and bottles. The last mode of exchange examined in *Cultural Commerce* is written requests by Japanese officials for specific items. VOC documents term these *eisen*, or trade good requisitions, and show that most of the items requested were manufactured objects.

In this initial discussion of trade, Chaiklin makes important observations regarding Dutch and Japanese relations in the early modern period. The first is that economic interaction was not carried out by a dominant imperialist power, nor was it merely a product of economic stimuli; rather, it was largely controlled and dictated by the Japanese. Japan was not a colony, so the Dutch were

forced to adhere to Japanese requirements if they wished to trade. This is underscored by Dutch attempts to curb private trade in the seventeenth century, which were exchanges carried out by individuals in the VOC for private gain. Private trade, which may have accounted for as much as 30 percent of all trade, undermined the VOC's monopoly on trade with Japan and cut into the company's overall profits. The Japanese quashed Dutch attempts to halt private trade, because the city of Nagasaki had come to depend on this form of exchange. In addition, in 1685 the Japanese placed restrictions on the use of copper and silver to pay for Dutch imports. The Dutch were forced to accept payment in kind instead of bullion for many of their trade items. Furthermore, a substantial amount of the manufactured items that changed hands were driven by Japanese desires as exemplified by formal requests of Japanese officials. Chaiklin also demonstrates that requests from Japanese officials played a role in trade earlier than previously thought. Here, she challenges Omori Minoru's assumption that Japanese requests began around 1685, the year private trade was officially recognized. Chaiklin's research of VOC archives shows evidence of written requests by Japanese officials for specific goods as early as 1648. *Cultural Commerce* also challenges Omori's claim that the Dutch were generally lax in filling Japanese requests. By carefully examining Dutch *eisen* documents, Chaiklin concludes that the Dutch filled nearly 90 percent of all Japanese special orders.

At the end of the first part of *Cultural Commerce*, Chaiklin discusses how European manufactures were distributed throughout Japan by examining the marketplace beyond the port of Nagasaki. Chaiklin begins her inquiry into distribution networks by discounting Timon Screech's discussion of *ran* (an abbreviation that refers to Holland and things Dutch) in *The Western Scientific Gaze and Popular Imagery in Later Edo Japan: The Lens within the Heart* (1996), which drew clear distinctions between Dutch and Chinese imports and placed *ran* on a pedestal while marginalizing things Chinese. Chaiklin correctly argues that, for the Japanese in the Edo period, *ran* was conceptually a facet of *kara*, a term derived from the Chinese character for the Tang Dynasty that generally referred to foreign imports. This is an important distinction for Chaiklin, because *karamonoya* (literally, shopkeepers dealing in Chinese goods) sold many Dutch manufactures in large cities in Japan at this time and played an important role in the distribution of European material culture throughout Japan. In fact, European manufactured items were so widely known among the Japanese populace that by the late seventeenth century unscrupulous merchants had begun to sell knock-offs of Dutch imports in Edo.

The second part of *Cultural Commerce* offers case studies of three of the more conspicuous European imports: clocks, glassware, and guns. Clockwork was a technology used in timepieces, music boxes, and automata, and was readily adapted by Japanese artisans. An example of this is the pillar clock, a narrow vertical device that easily fit in a Japanese home and came complete with interchangeable timescales that indicated seasonal time changes. In Japan, it proved to be a more practical chronometer than the larger, bulkier European clock. Glasswork, like clockwork, was an important European technology that the Japanese strove to master. Dutch glass imports came in a wide array of items, including bottles, windows, mirrors, containers, beads, hair ornaments, fish bowls, toys, and wind chimes. And, even though Japanese craftsmen lagged behind their European counterparts in the production of quality glassware until well into the nineteenth century, Chaiklin demonstrates that glass was a material that was available to most Japanese in some form. Here, *Cultural Commerce* again takes Screech to task, this time for his assertion that the Japanese use of glass was not widespread.

The final case study challenges the central thesis of Noel Perrin's *Giving Up the Gun: Japan's Reversion to the Sword, 1543-1879* (1979) that the Japanese stopped using firearms during the Edo period. Chaiklin forcefully demonstrates that the gun was an integral feature of Japan's warrior society by showing that hunting with firearms was normative behavior and the inclusion of guns in the annual weapon's tax, which required local lords to provide arms for the Tokugawa, was constant throughout the period. The most interesting way in which the author highlights the broader social awareness and importance of guns in Japanese society is by examining the use of the weapon in common idiomatic phrases wherein the firearm referred to something that was less than genuine. Chaiklin notes that to "tell a gun" referred to a lie, a "gun doctor" was synonymous with a quack, and a "gun story" was synonymous with a tall tale. The author also offers a plausible explanation for Japan's failure to make advances in firearms during the period, arguing that, during the two and a half centuries of peace that typified the Edo period, improvements in gunnery were not a necessity.

Cultural Commerce is based on a variety of Dutch and Japanese source materials. Dutch research is centered on documents in the VOC archive and the *Factorij Japan* in the Netherlands. The two most significant types of sources that Chaiklin uses are the *dagregisters*, which

were logbooks filled with observations related to business, politics and culture, and the *eis* lists, or special orders made by Japanese officials. Chaiklin also makes use of a wide array of printed Japanese language materials ranging in scope from official sources, like the *Hankacho*, and Nagasaki Criminal Records to the writings of Ihara Saikaku.

Chaiklin's work makes a significant contribution to the history of Dutch trade in Tokugawa Japan in a number of ways. First, *Cultural Commerce* challenges the notion that the Tokugawa regime was uninterested in trade and allowed Dutch-Japanese commercial contacts as a means of gaining knowledge about the West. Chaiklin's work clearly shows that the Japanese were interested in trade in general and European manufactures in particular. Lastly, *Cultural Commerce* demonstrates that the impact of European material culture on Japanese society was far greater than previously understood and shows that the Japanese were avid adapters of imported technologies in ways that were socially and culturally meaningful to them. In a nifty bit of historical judo, Chaiklin essentially argues that, while Dutch imports had an impact on Japanese society, Japanese cultural imperatives insured a high degree of Japanese agency in this ongoing process of acculturation.

Note

[1]. Pierre Bourdieu, "Forms of Capital," in *Readings in Economic Sociology*, ed. Nicole Woolsey Biggart (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 280-291.

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