

“Intelligence-gathering” episodes in the “Manila-Macao-Taiwan Triangle” during the Dutch Wars

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In the studies of the military conflict between Spain and Portugal against the Dutch (and eventually the English) in Chinese waters during the first half of the 17th century there is a topic, usually neglected, that can help us to understand better the fight for power in the area: the Spanish fortress of Jilong (Taiwan). This fortress played its role in a strategic area that reached even up to Macao. In fact, the relationship between the city of Macao and Taiwan in Western annals can be traced back as far as 1582, when the Nao of Macao bounded for Japan was shipwrecked in Taiwan. It continued until the middle of the 17th century when Nicolas Iquan, a Chinese born in Macao, used Taiwan as a base of his dubious business. But, in many other moments in between we can see how Macao and Taiwan were somehow related in different substantial ways.

In this study I will present three particular episodes of military “intelligence-gathering” when communication among these cities was more active. First, I will mention the case of the Dominican Bartolomé Martínez, who in 1619 suggested in a long report gaining a foothold in Taiwan to oppose the Dutch blockades, and how the report ended later in the hands of the Dutch. Afterwards, we will see the role of the Macanese Salvador Díaz, who was made prisoner by the Dutch in 1622 when he was going from Macao to Manila, and later remained in Taiwan until he escaped back to Macao (1626) with valuable information about the Dutch. Third, I will discuss the unsuccessful projects of “Union of Arms” issued in Lisbon and Madrid, in order to unite the armies of Manila and Macao to fight the Dutch forces of Isla Hermosa. As a result, we can see eloquent images of this trend when Portuguese cartographers portrayed the Macao peninsula and the Formosa Island in a single scenario, emphasizing their strategic position.

The Dutch framework

The external history of the Iberian colonies in the first half of the 17th Century can be defined as an increasing harassment from the Dutch ideological, political and economic competitors. We can observe it through a myriad of sea battles, blockades, shipwrecks, captives and deserters providing information, etc., from the Moluccas Islands in the South, to Japan in the North. If we study this encroachment only based on the information gathered from Spaniards and Portuguese—which are the passive actors of this naval offensive—it is difficult to have a complete understanding of all

these military actions.¹ But if we supplement the perspective with the reports of the actors leading the offensive—the Dutch—a more logical comprehension of the whole scenario emerges: a systematic pattern of seasonal blockades against the Iberian colonial harbors to undermine their economic feasibility and eventually to replace them.

At risk of over simplifying such a complicated panorama of half a century, there are five periods of Dutch encroachment that coincide roughly with the first five decades of the 17th century. The first decade (1600-1609) started with the appearance of Olivier Noort in the first blockade of Manila in December 1600. From then on the Dutch started occupying some points in the main area of spices production, The Moluccas, by removing the Portuguese from there. The Spaniards took a first counteroffensive in 1606, when Governor Pedro de Acuña recovered from the Dutch some former Portuguese settlements in Moluccas, initiating the Spanish presence in the spice area.

The second decade (1610-1619) coincides almost with the 12-Year Truce (1609-1621), a peace accord that, in fact, was ignored in the East. The Dutch tried now to drive the Spaniards from the spice-producing region. The Dutch have realized that the Spaniards were not only strong competitors in the Moluccas, but also they were aware of how the Dutch were taking advantage of their spice profits to wage the war in Europe against them. Even if the place was large enough for these two competitors, and for any one who may have wished to join, both colonial powers thought that their respective victory in Europe was somehow attached to the exclusion of the other in this region. Consequently, the Dutch started making assaults to the Spanish posts in the Moluccas, cutting off the yearly aid from Manila, inciting the natives, like the *Moros* of the South, against the Spaniards, and directing attacks on the Spaniards in the Philippines, particularly by systematizing the blockades to Manila.

Dutch interest in conquering Manila was not really to occupy the Philippines (because they could not supply the attractive silver of Mexico), but to suffocate economically the archipelago, and consequently to expel the Spaniards from the area. They would try by way of either catching the galleon from Acapulco or disturbing the Chinese trade with Manila. Were the Dutch to succeed the Spanish would have left the place of their own accord. Moreover, if the achievement of their final goal was to take so long, in the meantime the Dutch would try to pocket the silver of the in-coming galleons or the silk of the out-coming ones, or just to plunder the Chinese ships from Fujian bound for Manila. During this period we have registered six blockades, as well as the second Spanish counteroffensive, the one led by Juan de Silva in 1616 (exactly, ten years after that of Acuña). The voyage of Dominican Bartolomé Martínez dovetailed with the last blockade of this decade, becoming the first “intelligence-gathering” episode in the Taiwan-Macao-Philippine scenario that we are

¹ The first study on these battles must be the one of Fernando Blumentrit, *Filipinas: ataques de los holandeses en los siglos XVI, XVII y XVIII*, Madrid.

going to discuss later.

During the third decade (1620-1629), the Dutch felt confident of taking over the whole Moluccas-Japan corridor and, consequently, that the moment to set foot in Macao, or Pescadores, or other places like Taiwan had arrived. If successful, this would open the door to the total control of the China coastal trade, but they did not forget that—while at war with Spain—they still were in need to get rid of the Spaniards in the Philippines, and for that purpose they would have to continue the seasonal blockades. In this decade, there was a clear difference from the blockades of the previous one, they relied more on their base at Hirado for the operations, rather than Batavia. During this decade the Dutch also managed a short-lived formula of cooperation with the English in their blockades that ended formally after the Amboina Massacre (1623). Ten years again after the previous Spanish counteroffensive, Governor Fernando de Silva launched a third counteroffensive (May 1626) against the Dutch that was continued by his successor, Niño de Tavora (in September 1626 and August 1627), but this time the attacks were directed towards the North, in Taiwan. As a result, the triangle Manila-Macao-Taiwan was more active during this decade. We will mention here the episode of the Macanese Salvador Díaz (1622-1626), who by accident became one of the Chinese links in the gathering of strategic information in this colonial struggle.

The fourth decade (1630-1639) would be quite peaceful in the sense that the Dutch reduced their blockades to Manila, and even no hostilities between the Spanish and Dutch factories in Taiwan were reported, maybe because the Dutch were quite busy trying to establish in Formosa their first territorial colony. Taking the previous time sequence as a reference, in 1636 a fourth Spanish counteroffensive did not happen; nevertheless this year was the moment when the so-called “Union of Arms” projects reached their last impetus. These were projects of military cooperation among all the states of the Crown against common enemies. It also applied to the Far East where the forces of Malacca and Macao were requested to cooperate with those of the Philippines to fight the Dutch. Maybe the image that better epitomizes this ideal project of cooperation is the map of Pedro Barreto in the *Libro do Estado da India Oriental*, published around 1636, where Macao and the Spanish fort of Jilong are portrayed together, “facing” the Dutch factory of Taiwan.

During the fifth decade (1640-1649) the Dutch pressure became strong again. First against Malacca which fell in 1641, and consequently towards Jilong, which fell next year. In that place, the Dutch were using some of the cannons taken from the Portuguese in Malacca. The next target was Manila, which since 1646 suffered a series of intense blockades as it never had before experienced. These years Manila could not conjure any more a response like in the previous times. Even communication between Manila and Macao was non-existent. The only possible counteroffensive was in diplomatic terms, as it happened in the Treaties of Munster of 1648, which news arrived next year, just in time to prolong the *status quo* for the next two and a half centuries.

Bartolomé Martínez crossing a Dutch blockade in his way to Macao

In 1618, after four consecutive blockades, the routine of the Dutch blockade system was quite clear to the Spaniards in Manila. Juan Cevicos, trying to demonstrate that—regardless of the Dutch blockades—communication between Manila and Japan was possible in July during the years 1618 and 1619, offered a very clear explanation on how these seasonal blockades worked, depending on the monsoons. Cevicos was a former sailor of the Manila-Japan route from 1610 to 1622. In 1624, when he was in Omura, on his way back to Spain, he wrote a “discourse” (published in Madrid in 1628) arguing that communication between Manila and Japan during the month of July was possible, even if the Dutch had blockaded Manila that year.

He explained that usually when the Dutch would blockade Manila, they would start between October and March and would continue until May, because their main target was to plunder the galleon coming from Acapulco around May or June. The second target was the Chinese merchants coming to Manila attracted by the silver of the galleon. The Dutch would not wait longer because the monsoon would start blowing in June from the South, and they will have problems in going back to Batavia. On the other hand, if there are not Spanish battleships ready to break the Dutch blockade, the Spanish Governor would face the blockade by sending a notification to China to warn the sangleys of coming for trade or to advise them to delay the trip as late as possible, at the beginning of the monsoon when no more Dutch ships were around. In that case, the Chinese (and the Japanese to a lesser extent, because they enjoyed good relations with the Dutch) would have to press on with their business throughout the month of June, leaving Manila at the end of that month or along the beginning of July.

This model defined the blockade system quite well, and particularly reflected the case of the sixth blockade (12 October 1618 – end of May 1619), the one in which the Dominican Bartolomé Martínez’s trip to Macao took place. Certainly, to preempt a new blockade, Governor Alonso Fajardo sent in September of 1618 one ship to Macao to buy ammunition, to engage in a little trade and, through the embassy of Dominican Fr. Bartolomé Martínez, to warn the mandarins of Guangzhou and Quanzhou against sending sampans to Manila because these would surely run into the Dutch fleet. Of course, the additional goal of Martínez was to assess the possibility of establishing the Dominican order in Macao (something that he had already tried unsuccessfully in 1612). The ship faced strong winds very soon and got wrecked in Zambales (Luzon), although no personal damage was reported, and Martínez remained there waiting for news.

The same story can be read in one of the Jesuit annual letters.² This letter

² Navas & Pastells, *Catálogo ...*, vol. VII, pp. xxix-xxxi. The Jesuit report seems to complement the letter that at the beginning of August 1619 was sent to the King by the Secular Cabildo and by the Governor informing of the presence of a large Dutch fleet at the entrance of Manila bay, and the way he

continues telling us how that year blockade started. On 12 October, five Dutch ships appeared in Manila “to rob the boats of China, as it happened the previous years”. In November they allowed a Japanese ship with *chapa* of their emperor to enter the city, because the Dutch contained themselves from harassing them, in order to keep safe the factory they have in Japan. They continued during winter and spring. Meanwhile, Fr. Martínez was stationed in Lingayen, where he received orders of going to Cagayan (Northern Luzon), to take a new ship to continue the trip to Macao. Martínez, left finally Cagayan on January 1619, but a big storm forced him twice to look for shelter in the coast of Taiwan. Finally he reached Macao, but was forbidden by Portuguese to make his embassy to Chinese authorities and returned to Manila.³

At the beginning of May new Japanese ships arrived and also were allowed to enter the bay by the Dutch. Along this time the governor Alonso Fajardo was preparing the defense and he was able to gather 2 big ships, 2 mid sized ships, 2 *pataches* and 4 galleys. When the Dutch knew that the Spaniards had a force ready to fight, they left the place, and went on pillaging a native town in Ilocos, before leaving the archipelago. According to the report, some Dutch galleons were sunk and this was confirmed by sightings of ship parts, masts, etc., that appeared a few days later on the seashore of that Ilocos town.

The importance of the Martínez’s trip lies in the document⁴ that he wrote—upon his return to Manila and his experience of this new blockade—on the advisability of setting a fort in Taiwan, in a place called Pacan (probably Beigan, near Tainan) where a port already existed, to secure the Fujian-Manila trade to face the growing Dutch threat. His main idea regarding the strategic position of Taiwan against the Dutch was to make Pacan—much closer to the Chinese port of Haiteng—an extension of the Manila market. In this way once the Dutch were near Cagayan, the Spaniards in Pacan would be informed immediately, and from there a quick notice would be sent to Chinese vessels “that no cloth may be sent out, or, if so, that it should be loaded on small and swift-sailing vessels that will be difficult to capture.”

Martínez also considered that Isla Hermosa would be an important help in the Acapulco route in both directions. If, when arriving from New Spain, the Dutch were lying in wait for them they could go for the meantime to Hermosa before reaching Manila. Also, when going back to Acapulco, this route could be “much safer than to pass close to Japan”. Martínez thought that this measure would be safer and cheaper than to organize an alternative Spanish fleet to face all the Dutch blockades.

The report of Martínez made sense up to a certain extent, but its exaggerated insistence on the necessity to find a place in Isla Hermosa at any price, made it suspicious of covering another interest, that of establishing a Spanish base near Japan and China to be used for missionary purposes at a time when the difficulties encountered by the missionaries were growing. In fact, in 1627, Cevicos, upon

dealt with it (*Ib.* p. xxxii). Some echo of this blockade in Álvarez, *Formosa...*, pp. 35-36; *SIT*, p. 54)

³ Pablo Fernández, *Dominicos donde nace el Sol*, Barcelona, 1958, p. 76.

⁴ APSR (Avila), Formosa, Tomo 1, ff. 371-377. (This document can be found also in José E. Borao, *Spaniards in Taiwan* [later on this book will be quoted as *SIT*], vol. 1, Taipei, 2001, pp. 40-47).

receiving news in Madrid of Spanish plans to enter Isla Hermosa, strongly opposed these moves with another “discourse”, saying that this would not solve anything, and would only be justified as a way to expel the recently established Dutch.⁵

But Martínez was “prophetic” about the Dutch intentions, and at the end of his report he added with a kind of certainty: “It is said that the Dutch are trying to settle on this island at 24° ... And if while awaiting his Majesty’s permission, the enemy should establish them first, then the land will be lost and cut off from all trade. This will do the King no service, as this matter could have been solved in time and without any cost. Once the Dutch have settled, it will be very difficult to send them away because they will fortify themselves as required to destroy India and Manila.”

It seems that those who took Martínez’s report very seriously were the Dutch, who intercepted the document and translated it around 1621, as it is recorded in Dutch archives.⁶ To what extent this document was considered important by the Dutch before dispatching Cornelis Reijersen in 1622 to join the Anglo Dutch Fleet of Defense and to conquer the conquest of Pescadores, and even Macao, is something that we cannot yet determine. Broadly speaking, when comparing both versions we find a strong similarity, but the last third part of the original text is missing in the translation, and that the organization of paragraphs of the Dutch text is totally different from the original. The reason behind may be the fact that—when it ended up in Dutch’s hands—it was written under some sort of code. In any case this document tells us how the western colonizers had realized the strategic importance of Taiwan as an entrepôt for their commercial activities

The Macanese Salvador Díaz at the service of the Dutch (1622-1626)

Martínez had stated erroneously in his report that for the time being there was nothing to fear from the Dutch because at that moment they were at war with the English.⁷ But on 17 June 1619, the English and the Dutch governments signed the agreement known as “Treaty of Defense” by virtue of which they united forces to fight against the Portuguese and Spanish monopoly in the Far East. The news of this agreement reached Bantam and Batavia in the spring of 1620 and forced the English and the Dutch to put aside their old grievances and return their confiscated goods. Under this new formula of cooperation with the English, the “Anglo-Dutch Fleet of Defense” was created⁸ and soon afterwards part of the fleet reached Manila.⁹ All the commanders were to form a Council in charge of taking all the relevant decisions. If we compare the timing of this blockade with the previous ones, the main difference is

⁵ AGI, Filipinas 20 (*SIT*, pp. 106-111)

⁶ VOC 4866; Het Utrechts Archief, Family Archive Huydecoper, N. 621 (*SIT*, pp. 48-53).

⁷ *SIT*, p. 46

⁸ See the *carta annua* of Father Roman in Navas & Pastells, *Catálogo ...*, vol. VII, pp. xxxvii-xxxviii.

⁹ Only three Dutch ships went to Manila to observe the situation, and to see if they had a chance to capture the galleon San Nicolas that was coming with two ships. Later it went to the encounter with the rest of the fleet.

that the fleet would be able to prolong the blockade several weeks during the month of June, but instead they will have to spend the rainy monsoon in Japan.

The seventh blockade started in the early summer of 1620.¹⁰ It was too late and after few weeks the Dutch went to Japan, capturing along the way a sampan and a Portuguese frigate near Macao. Later, part of the fleet laid in wait for the Acapulco galleon in Espiritu Santo Cape and engaged in battle. The Dutch flagship was damaged and later sunk, but the two others managed to reach Hirado on 26 July of that year.

The eighth blockade of Manila started on January 1621. Few Spanish ships were there; others were absent or had been destroyed by previous storms or fights. Governor Fajardo was unable to do more than to hold the walled city against a possible attack that never happened, and the Dutch went back to their factory in Japan at the end of June. It was around this time that the Dutch and the English captured a Japanese ship on which two religious friars were on board, one Dominican and one Augustinian, who were released to Japanese authorities, omitting that they have caught them after assaulting the Japanese ship. According to the Spanish report of the Jesuit Fr. Alonso Roman, the Dutch informed the Japanese that the only way to stop missionaries going to Japan was to destroy Macao and Manila, and they would do so if they were provided with three or four thousand Japanese warriors. The Japanese not only refused, but even ordered to inspect that the foreign ships when leaving Japan were without Japanese on board.¹¹

The ninth blockade of Manila started a little earlier, in December 1621. In April 1622, they captured another junk that (considering the timing) should have been the one of the Macanese Salvador Díaz. In May, they were again in front of Cavite and afterwards they moved towards Macao, where they blockaded the Portuguese colony from mid May to mid June.

But during that blockade something special happened for the future of the Anglo-Dutch coalition. During this time a big fleet of eight sails commanded by Cornelis Reijersen, which had left Batavia on 10 April, arrived to help the overall operations with orders from Coen, the Governor of Batavia, of establishing a fortified settlement in Pescadores, and, if convenient, to attack Macao. The English felt disappointed because the equal partnership was destroyed, and they split and went to Japan. Eventually, the Dutch were defeated by the Portuguese of Macao. Then, the remaining Dutch ships from the old Fleet of Defense plus some of the ships of Reijersen created a new fleet that tried now to look for some spots without European infrastructure. Pescadores Islands were chosen for that.¹² This formula of Anglo-Dutch cooperation ended formally after the “massacre of Amboina”, in which ten English traders, ten Japanese and one Portuguese were put to death by the Dutch authorities who considered them as intruders in their monopoly. After that the English

¹⁰ *Catálogo...*, p. xxxvi. A description of the activities of the fleet in Van Dyke, “The Anglo-Dutch fleet of Defense, 1618-1622”. In Leonard Blussé, *About and Around Formosa*, Taipei, 2003, pp. 61-81.

¹¹ *Catálogo...*, p. xlv

¹² *SIT*, p. 63

ceased to be serious competitors in the great archipelago, and marked the beginning of Dutch ascendancy in the Indies.

As it is well known, the Chinese told the Portuguese to move from Pescadores, and they suggested their going to Taiwan. At the end of 1623 they explored Taiwan and started to occupy the area of Tayouan, becoming this place the new base to harass the Fujian-Manila trade. Certainly, in 1624, another fleet of 7 Dutch ships arrived at Manila Bay, but the *Maestre de Campo* and former Governor Geronimo de Silva defeated them. Again, on 4 February 1625, Captain Pieter Muysier arrived in front of Cavite. His first goal was to capture Chinese junks which he did on two occasions. In one of them, it turned out that 219 Chinese residents of Manila or other towns of Luzon, returning from the Chincheo River, were present. His second goal was, if possible, to attack Manila with another expected reinforcement that never met.¹³ The Spaniards attacked Muysier fleet on 12 April, between Cape Bolinao and Witters Island. Muysier lost his ship *Victoria*, but the Dutch defended themselves and were easily allowed to leave the place.

Muysier might have had to spend the monsoon in Tayouan, because the governor of Zeelandia, De Witt, wrote to Governor General de Carpentier on 29 October 1625 that this year they had not received any complaints from China about the two junks captured by Muysier and the imprisoned Chinese, but fearing of losing the China trade connection they stopped naval operations in the Philippines for a while. For the first time, during the traditional months of blockade (December to July), the Spanish records stated that “the enemies didn’t show up”¹⁴, because they were stationed in Zeelandia, as it was witnessed by Salvador Díaz. What had happened with Salvador Díaz during this time?

We know the interesting story of Díaz because of the report he wrote once back in Macao, in April 1626, after his escape from Dutch captivity.¹⁵ In his report he gave an accurate geographical description of Tayouan Bay, detailing the fortifications of the Dutch, the villages of the Japanese and Chinese and the four native villages, Chacam, Saulan, Guanni and Maotao (which Dutch sources refer to as Sinkan, Soulang, Caccluan and Mattaw), providing population figures and giving the first complete general description of the whole bay.

Also, the moment he chose for his escape was very propitious because the Dutch fleet that was usually cruising the Chinese waters docked there. He said: “Presently, four ships are docked there; each one equipped with 24 artillery pieces; and all four all always around. One of them came from Japan with provisions, while the others remained”. He added other details of minor ships and of Japanese and Chinese vessels.

¹³ The States General of Holland and Prince Maurits had sent a fleet of eleven ships sailing East via America and Acapulco to meet the six ships of Muysier, something that never happened. The *interim* governor Fernando Da Silva (1625-1626) said in a letter to the King on August 1625 that these eleven ships left Holland in 1624, caught 3 more in Peru, and with all of them reached Terrenate with 800 men. (See Navas & Pastells, *Catálogo ...*, vol. VII, p. lxiii).

¹⁴ As stated by Bishop Serrano in a letter to the King (Blair & Robertson, *The Philippine...*, vol. 22, p.89).

¹⁵ BN, Mss 3015 (*SIT*, pp. 61-69)

Probably the best legacy of his information was the map drawn by Pedro de Vera in Manila, based on his descriptions and sketches, which compared with a modern one results very accurate. He emphasized the fact that at that time Dutch fortifications and their military strength were very poor, and the Dutch, scattered as they were in different areas, feared a Spanish attack from the Philippines.¹⁶

The fear of the Dutch in Tayouan had some grounds. In fact, Governor Fernando da Silva, expecting further attacks, developed a policy of defense of the archipelago. In 1626 a small Spanish fleet of two galleys under Carreño, the commander of the Cagayan army, had been moving around Ilocos since February until April, with the ultimate goal of going to Taiwan. Finally they received the order of the Governor of establishing a post in Northern Taiwan, as he did in May. Strictly speaking this was not a counterattack, as it was not directly targeted against the Dutch. The real counteroffensive came in September, one month after the arrival of the new governor Niño de Tavora and of the information of Salvador Díaz, which was probably one of the main reasons for the move. Strong winds made the fleet to fail in its purpose, and Tavora—convinced that he still had a chance—tried again the following summer after the arrival of the galleon from Acapulco. In 1627 the galleon arrived a little late, creating a dangerous delay in this new military expedition, which finally left on 17 August. It was too late. Suddenly the monsoon blow strongly and also most of the ships had to return to Cavite heavily damaged.¹⁷

Probably this Spanish pressure diverted the Dutch action towards Macao because during that summer four Dutch sails set up a blockade to the port to capture the annual galleon bound for Japan. Under the command of Captain Joao Soares Vivas four galliots faced the Dutch ships on 18 August, destroying the flagship *Ouwerkerk* and dispersing the fleet. According to Boxer, the Portuguese had asked Manila for help, and Governor Niño de Tavora sent the galleon *Peña de Francia* to Macao, one of those initially bound for Isla Hermosa, arriving when the problem was settled. After this disappointment, the commander Juan de Alcarazo set sail for the Gulf of Siam to revenge old grievances, seizing a Japanese junk on the way in May 1628, thus raising the tension between Manila and the Bakofu. In any case, a rare case of military cooperation between Manila and Macao had happened. Was it the beginning of a new era of understanding and cooperation?

¹⁶ We can mention a kind of parallel story, the trip of the Jesuit Adriano de las Cortes from Manila to Macao. This voyage started on 25 January 1625, just before the Dutch blockade of this year. After leaving Manila, his boat had some problems and finally had a shipwreck in Fujian, where he stayed captive for a year. Later he was released to the Portuguese in Macao, arriving to this city on 21 February 1626. Finally he reached Manila on 26 May of the same year. During his year of captivity he gathered a lot of information on the Chinese society, making a valuable report. See Adriano de las Cortes, *Viaje de la China* (Ed. Beatriz Moncó), Alianza Editorial, Madrid, 1991.

¹⁷ *SIT*, p. 101

The projects of “Union of Arms” during the thirties’ stalemate (1630-1639)

The Count-Duke of Olivares who acted as Prime Minister of Philip IV from 1621 to 1643 inspired the politics of the so-called Union of Arms. The idea was to have all the territories under the same crown contribute each, according to their capacity, to the defense of the empire. This system took shape in 1625, with promising results. The Portuguese recovered Bahia (Brazil) which was seized by the Dutch the year before. However, the Duke’s idea failed on the whole and even caused the secession of Portugal and Catalonia in 1640. In the East, the attempt to implement this system aimed to unite the Portuguese forces of the East Indies with those of the Philippines to oppose the Dutch forces, but this never really happened, although several orders were issued.¹⁸

Before 1625, we can trace how this formula of cooperation was already in an emerging shape in the East. According to Videira Pires,¹⁹ as early as 1609, when commerce between the Portuguese and Spanish colonies was prohibited in the Far East, it was ordered that the governments of Manila and Macao help each other to face the Dutch and English menace. Videira also points out that Philip IV sent messages to promote Hispano-Luso armies cooperation against the Dutch in 1622 and 1624 (as in 1630, 1634 and 1639). The same Salvador Díaz stated in 1626 in his report: “Before this happens [i.e., the Dutch receiving aid], this city [of Macao must] unite with Manila so as to fall upon them while their forces are weak and, without doubt, they can be done away with. There are no more than 220 men scattered throughout the place, and most of them are vile, miserable and uneducated”.²⁰

In 1627, we can see the first reference made in Madrid about the Union of Arms in the Far East by Juan Cevicos when he was moving in the circles of the Court. In his above mentioned discourse he said, in a wording close to the one of Olivares: “It seems very advisable... to immediately drive out the Dutch from Isla Hermosa, if there is any possibility and determination, by uniting all the forces of the Philippines, and, if it not enough, with those of Macao, to whom the question is so vital... because Isla Hermosa lies in the route from Macao to Japan”.²¹

But regarding the formal orders given by the king himself after 1625 to the governors of Macao and Manila to cooperate in expelling the Dutch under the “Union of Arms” scheme, there are five documented cases applying to the Taiwan scenario, in a concentration of five years: 1628, 1629, 1630, 1632 and 1633. Let us see briefly one by one. First, in Lisbon, on 18 March 1628, King Philip III of Portugal (Philip IV of Castile) sent a letter to the Viceroy of Portuguese East India Francisco de Mascarenhas, asking him to send relief ships to Malacca, and “from there, launch a

¹⁸ For an overall view see Jonathan I. Israel, *The Dutch Republic and the Hispanic World, 1606-1661*, Clarendon Press, Oxford.

¹⁹ Benjamin Videira Pires, *A viagem de comércio Macau-Manila nos séculos XVI a XIX*, Museu Marítimo de Macau, 1994, pp. 19, 22.

²⁰ *SIT*, p. 68

²¹ *SIT*, pp. 108-109

major assault through the Union of Forces and dislodge them from Isla Hermosa”.²²

On 31 January 1629, the king sent again from Lisbon a letter to the new viceroy of Portuguese East India, Miguel de Noronha, Count of Linhares, informing him of his previous order and asking again to send relief ships to Malacca so that these might be used to fight the Dutch in Isla Hermosa, “and through the Union of Arms, launch a major assault to dislodge them.”²³ Among the Dutch the same need of exclusion was extended, as we can see in a letter written few days later, on 10 February 1629, by Pieter Nuyts: “It is of the utmost importance that we make ourselves masters of Kelang, and send a sufficient force there to do this... We must do our utmost to destroy the trade between Manila and China”.²⁴ In this context we can mention the *Domburch* expedition from Fort Zeelandia to the north of Taiwan,²⁵ to collect information about the Spaniards, for a possible attack.

More evidence comes on 21 April 1630. The king sent from Madrid a letter to the Governor of the Philippine islands, Juan Niño de Tavora, referring to the harmful presence of the Dutch and the need to expel them from Taiwan, with Portuguese help: “This is why it will be good to have them expelled from Isla Hermosa. Do it as soon as possible ... I have ordered the viceroys of India and Macao to assist you in any possible way to carry out this most important task.”²⁶

Two years later, in 14 March 1632, the same message was sent from Lisbon to the Viceroy of East India the Count of Linhares, urging him to unite Macao and Manila in the war against the Dutch. This is the text: “Together with this, I reviewed another letter sent through this route, stating and giving me an account of how, until now, it has been impossible to form the Union of Forces of this state with those of Manila. Nevertheless, it is recommendable to dislodge the Dutch before they fortify themselves in Isla Hermosa. This is why I renewed the orders given to Don Juan Niño regarding this matter, charging him to execute promptly that which you also have been gravely tasked with ... Due to the importance of the matter, Don Juan Niño and you should help each other in discussing the best and the quickest means to deal with everything that has to do with the preservation of that state; and that this may be to the enemy’s disadvantage. Macao must also be informed so that, together, all parties carry out the things unerringly.”²⁷

A year and a half later, on 1 October 1633, the king received answers to his letters, through the Council of State, informing him about the situation in Macao, Manila and Isla Hermosa. But through the repetitive wording in the acknowledging of the orders, and their non-implementation we can figure out that these letters of the king were to be read but not to be obeyed. The Council of State said: “If the armed forces of India and Manila unite for the enterprise in Jakarta, as well as for the other

²² ANTT, *Livros das Monções*, livro 25, f. 21 (Mf. 101)

²³ ANTT, *Livros das Monções*, livro 26, f. 113 (Mf. 797)

²⁴ William Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch*, Trubner, London, 1903, pp. 53-55.

²⁵ VOC 1101, ff. 376-379 (*SIT*, pp. 139-142)

²⁶ AGI, Filipinas 8 (*SIT*, p. 143)

²⁷ ANTT, *Livros das Monções*, livro 30, fol. 25 (Mf. 487)

proposal presented to Your Majesty, they can also attempt to storm Isla Hermosa, since [the matter] is of great importance and will be less costly [to bring about.] And if both [objectives] are met, then the land would be free of the Dutch and prepared to be under the greatest protection of the States of India and Manila.”²⁸ In other words, if the “Union of Arms” was difficult to achieve in the Peninsula scenario, in the East it was something beyond the possibilities of the Iberian states. To assess if such an early understanding among Iberian nations was impossible or not, we can consider that a similar formula was settled among the Dutch and the English, and it worked during 1620-1623, but finally it turned out to be not of real cooperation but of strategic coalition.

The term “Union of Arms” still existed before the independence of Portugal, but its meaning was switched to have a more practical sense. In 22 January 1637, during a Junta of Government summoned by Governor Hurtado de Corcuera to discuss the topic of dismantling the forts of Isla Hermosa and Zamboanga, Captain Álvarez de Castro argued: “The Union of Arms is the main factor behind the conservation of monarchies; thus divided, the forces fall.”²⁹ This is very interesting because he now used the words “Union of Arms” in the sense, not of cooperation of different nations of the same crown, but to refer to the concept of “concentration of power” inside a colony. This easy swift of the meaning reveals additionally how poorly rooted was Olivares’s idea among his subjects.

The map of Pedro Barreto around 1636 rather aptly exemplifies the still delusional vision of the Crown which considered the taking of the Dutch fort of Isla Hermosa an “easy” task. The fort appears surrounded by the city of Macao and by the Spanish fort in Jilong. It appears that the Crown was unaware of the geopolitical changes of the situation since 10 years ago, when Niño de Tavora launched the unsuccessful third counterattack. The Crown was still thinking with the same categories. In addition, a careful study of this map shows how it continued using the information provided by Salvador Díaz’s depiction of the Dutch area ten years earlier. Now the initiative was totally with the Dutch, who during the rest of the decade resumed their “intelligence” efforts by preparing a decisive attack against the Portuguese and Spanish spots.

From the point of inflexion of 1640 to the peace of Munster in 1648

In 1640 war erupted again and the Dutch started a furious offensive against Iberian territories throughout the whole Orient. First, Malacca fell after 130 years in Portuguese hands and Goa was cut off from Manila. In the same year the two nations also became disunited in Europe by a Portuguese revolt of independence. In this situation, Macao thought that it should be disconnected from the Dutch-Spanish war;

²⁸ AGI, Filipinas 8

²⁹ AGI, *Escribanía de Cámara*, 409-B, ff. 20-24v & 76-83

in some way it happened to be like this. Meanwhile, what happened in Jilong? In August next year, the Dutch attempted for the first time to take the Spanish post but they failed. The following year was to be decisive for this endeavor. From February to July, a Dutch fleet cruised the Espiritu Santo Cape and Manila without success. But in August, the Dutch made a second and definitive attempt against Jilong, using some cannons taken from the Portuguese in Malacca.

The conquest of Jilong started on 10 August, when Captain Harouse arrived in Fort Zeelandia with his soldiers, coming from the Pescadores, and the council of Tayouan decided to send him on a military expedition to expel the Spaniards from Jilong. One of the reasons for this decision was the difficulty of predicting when the promised reinforcements from Batavia would arrive. On 17 August, Harouse's fleet sailed to the north. The fleet consisted of 690 strong: 369 soldiers, 222 sailors, 48 Chinese, 8 Javanese, 30 Quinamese and 13 slaves. The battle started on August 19 and the Spaniards surrendered on 26 August. The long awaited Batavia reinforcements finally arrived in Tayouan on the 5 September 1642 under the command of General Johannes Lamotius who had new orders from Batavia to conquer Jilong. At that time the results of Harouse's campaign were not yet known. This was why Traudenius and his Zeelandia council decided to dispatch Lamotius' fleet to Jilong to assist Harouse. However, in the brief period between the signing of the instruction and the departure of Lamotius' fleet, the chief steersman Simon Cornelis unexpectedly showed up in Tayouan bearing the news that Jilong had been conquered.³⁰ Nevertheless, on 9 September Lamotius departed for Jilong as planned, arriving there on the 13th and taking over the command.

To the Dutch, the fall of Jilong came to represent the first domino piece that had fallen, and the final goal of conquering Manila gained momentum. The Dutch continued cutting off the trade of the Chinese junks bound for Manila and created a great naval pressure in the Philippine waters.³¹ The first encounter with Spanish defensive forces happened in 1644, but the main one was in 1646, and it comprised several encounters. In 9 August 1646, instructions by the VOC command in Batavia were given to Marten Gerritsz de Fries, who was lying in Capul island (Central Philippines) waiting for the galleon from Acapulco.³² They ordered him to implement all the previous strategies once for all. Therefore, he was entitled to capture the Spanish return ship from Ternate, to conquer the Spanish fort Costy and to demolish it, to cruise in the area of Embocadero, the Cabo Santo Espiritu Santo and Cagayan, in order to catch the Spanish silver ships coming from Acapulco, to attempt the closing of Manila Bay, impeding the return galleon to go back to New Spain, and finally to cut the Manila-Fujian trade.

De Fries blockaded the Bay of Tingaw (near the Embocadero del Espiritu Santo)

³⁰ VOC1140, ff. 470-473; VOC 1140, ff. 309-312; VOC 1140, ff. 328-330.

³¹ For a general overview of these last years see Ruurdje Laarhoven; Elizabeth Pino Wittermans, "From Blockade to Trade: Early Dutch Relations with Manila, 1600-1750", *Philippine Studies* 35, 1985, pp. 485-504.

³² VOC 1160, f. 454

during one month. There two Spanish galleons and another two ships were waiting for the arrival of the silver galleon to escort it. But finally the Dutch had to leave because they were losing many men for lack of provisions. Finally, on 30 July 1646, a furious battle followed, and the Dutch lost the *Breskens* and the *Wisscher* and other minor ships. The conditions were so bad and the scurvy so rampant that a boat went ashore in Camarines island, reaching the village of Tagesuan, and getting a booty of “60 sixty heads of cattle, which were used with satisfaction in restoring the fleet condition”.³³ Some document mentioned that the failure of de Fries was due to the diligence of the Spaniards, who had set up fires as warning signals all along the coastline, to prevent any Dutch ambush that may have been prepared.³⁴ Next year, in 1647, Captain de Fries wrote that after his arrival to Tagima Island, to await the Spanish ships from Ternate, a boat from Zamboanga under the command of a Spanish lieutenant and fifteen Pampangos arrived to escort the Spanish fleet. De Fries took prisoner the lieutenant getting relevant information that was forwarded to Batavia,³⁵ but nothing more was achieved.

On June 1647, Admiral Martin Gertzen attacked Cavite two times, but he found his death and his flagship also sunk. The rest of the armada went to depredate the Bataan coast. The long series of Dutch aggressions ended when news of the Treaties of Munster (1648) reached the East.

Conclusion

As an overall conclusion of the period, the words of Schurz written many decades ago commenting on the consequences of the Dutch encroachment in the East still stand firm: “When the long series of Dutch aggressions ended in 1648, the Spaniards still held the Philippines and the Acapulco line was yet to continue for over a century and a half. But the traffic’s splendid possibilities of expansion had been checked. Of course, the restrictive policy of the Spanish government played its part in this result, but the cost of the Dutch attacks was irreparable ... However, ... there must be counted in the cost of the Dutch wars: the capture of many Chinese and Japanese vessels with lading for the galleons; the drain of means from small population; the diversion into defense against the Dutch of money and energies that should have gone into commerce; the complete cessation in some years of traffic, and so, the temporary disruption of the whole economic life of the colony...”³⁶

If we look from another angle at the specific years of 1619-1624, and we try to identify who the main beneficiary of these two “intelligence-gathering” episodes was—those in which Bartolomé Martínez and Salvador Díaz were implicated—we must recognize that, in the final analysis, the Dutch had the upper hand. First, the

³³ VOC 1170, f. 475

³⁴ VOC 1160, f. 466

³⁵ VOC 1160, f. 455

³⁶ Schurz, *The Manila Galleon*, Reprint by Historical Conservation Society, Manila, 1989, p. 287.

advice of gaining a foothold in Taiwan to stop the Dutch encroachment, given in the report of Bartolomé Martínez in 1619, was acceptable in the sense that the Spanish Governor decided to implement it in 1626, but ironically it proved to be ineffective because it was done seven years later, when the Dutch had already established themselves in Pescadores in 1622 and next year in Tayouan. Besides, the report's interception by Dutch intelligence probably served as a stimulus to accelerate the Reijersen offensive to open direct Dutch trade to China. Secondly, the magnificent information about the Tayouan factory gathered by Salvador Díaz and later sent to the Governor of the Philippines—that contributed to accelerate the Spanish attacks of September 1626 and August 1627 to dismantle Tayouan factory—had also an opposite effect. The inappropriate moments in which both fleets left Cavite, in the middle of the monsoon season, made the short trip to Tayouan very dangerous. The natural elements were not again on the Spanish side and this third counteroffensive proved to be a new catastrophe; something similar that happened ten years before in the second Spanish counteroffensive. Once again it was proved that to defend a position was much easier than to lead an offensive. Finally, after the loss of some galleons without entering in battle, and the growth of Dutch power in Tayouan, the delusive plans of the “Union of Arms” confirmed once more that the Renaissance spirit of the Spanish forces was totally over, and only it was aiming during the thirties for a Baroque accommodation.

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