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**From Blockade to Trade:  
Early Dutch Relations with Manila, 1600-1750**

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In studying the history of Dutch relations with the Spanish Philippines, one is struck by the wealth of information for research on a variety of topics. In spite of this, the subject of Dutch-Philippine relations in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries seems to be a subject unfamiliar to most Asian scholars. This may be due to the fact that scholars interested in the Philippines were not aware of the information on this subject contained in Dutch writings. Even when they became aware of it through Roessingh's 1967 publication,<sup>1</sup> the difficulty of reading archaic Dutch constitutes a distinct handicap. Therefore, any effort that succeeds in tracking down, and translating pertinent writings, is in itself a contribution to the study in this area. Secondly, the nature of Dutch-Philippine relationship changed over time from one characterized by blockade and raid during a period roughly extending from 1600 to 1648 (the Treaty of Munster), to one of international, if unsanctioned, trade. Finally, the findings tend to support the data provided by Quiason<sup>2</sup> and others about the Asian "country trade." They also point up the Dutch preference for a carrying trade, in which they would function as middlemen carrying goods from (secondary)

1. Marius P.H. Roessingh, "Dutch Relations with the Philippines: A Survey of Sources in the General State Archives, The Hague, Netherlands," in *Asian Studies* 5 (No. 2) 377-407. In letters and reports of this period, which were usually written and rewritten by professional scribes and copiers, the spelling of words and names may vary considerably. In this paper, the spelling of proper names conforms to the one used in the document quoted.

2. Serafin D. Quiason, *English Country Trade with the Philippines, 1644-1765* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1966).

suppliers to the consumers. This was the kind of trade they had maintained for centuries in the Atlantic Ocean and the North Sea. One of the topics to be considered in this paper is the contention that Manila was not a closed port during this period. In spite of the papal bulls at the end of the fifteenth century, the demarcation of Spanish and Portuguese spheres of interest by the Treaty of Tordesillas, 1494, the old *mare clausum* theory, and the fifth article in the Treaty of Munster, Manila received foreign European traders into her harbor, albeit under disguise, while Spanish merchants were allowed to visit other Asian "forbidden" trading ports.

The period before 1600 was one of extensive Asian shipping and trading.<sup>3</sup> Malay and Javanese ships took spices and rare woods to the ports of India, while Chinese junks brought silk, porcelain, and metalwork on their voyages to Indonesian and Indian ports. The situation changed somewhat in 1498, when Vasco da Gama reached the Malabar coast. The Portuguese were then able to interfere in the early Asian pattern of trade by trading directly between Europe, India, and China, by way of Malacca.

The Dutch, who had been conducting much of the carrying trade in Asian goods in Europe, went through a difficult period when the Spanish king, Philip II, who after 1580 also reigned over Portugal, decided one year later to close the port of Lisbon to the Dutch, in retaliation for the declaration of independence by the Dutch United Provinces. For a while, the Dutch continued to come to Portuguese and Spanish ports, thereby risking confiscation of their ships. Meanwhile, however, they eagerly pursued ways to find their own route to the sources of Asian goods by valiant voyages into unknown territories.

More successful were their searches for secret maps showing the Portuguese Asia route. In 1592, not only were they able to put their hands on such maps, but they also received information from Jan Huygen van Linschoten, a Dutchman, who returned to his home country after having lived in Portugal and India for about nine years. That same year, some Amsterdam merchants sent Cornelis de Houtman to Lisbon to ferret out secret information about Asian trade. This journey was so successful that three years later he was in command of four small ships sailing to the west

3. J.C. van Leur, "On Early Asian Trade," in *Indonesian Trade and Society* (The Hague, 1955), pp. 3-144.

coast of Java, where they arrived in due course. More expeditions followed, fitted out by groups of merchants in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Middelburg, Hoorn, and other cities, until, in 1602, they were combined into the *Generale Vereenichde Geoctroyeerde Oost-Indische Compagnie* or VOC for short, and the Dutch United East India Company.

#### ORIGINS OF DUTCH POLICIES ON THE PHILIPPINES

The United East India Company aimed at bypassing Lisbon altogether in obtaining the coveted spices and other products of Asia from their sources in Ceylon, India, Malacca, the Moluccas and Japan. The feasibility of this aim had already been proven, since no less than thirty-nine Dutch trading ships had returned from the Indies by 1602, thirty-six of which were fully loaded with mace, nutmeg, cinnamon, cloves, and pepper.<sup>4</sup> In these ventures, the ships' route was around the Cape of Good Hope, discovered by the Portuguese. The Moluccas, at this time, were under the control of Spain by virtue of the union of Portugal and Spain under King Philip II. It was this combined power that allowed Philip to close the Lisbon harbor to the Dutch, as well as to inherit the Portuguese rights to the Moluccas. To protect the Spice Islands from other European trading nations, Spain committed the resources of the colony closest to the Moluccas, namely the Philippines. Because the Spanish base for its naval and commercial operations in the Philippines was Manila, it was inevitable that this port would be drawn into the Dutch policy of confronting the Spaniards. One of the Dutch aims was to try wresting control of the Moluccas from Spain by weakening the Spaniards in Manila, the cornerstone of the Spanish presence in both the Philippines and the Moluccas.

Fortunately for the Dutch, the Spanish had other enemies as well to keep them busy. They also had to contend with the Moros, sea-raiders from Mindanao and Sulu; with the Chinese, on whom the Spaniards depended for their silk trade; and with the Japanese, who had no love for the Spanish missionaries from the Philippines, who were trying to convert Japan. Since the enemies of one's enemies are potentially one's friends, Dutch tactics against the

4. Francois Valentin, *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indien* (Amsterdam: Mr. S. Keyzer, 1862), p. 126.

Spaniards included a careful use of these external forces in plotting against the enemy. It is not surprising that the period up to 1648 was characterized by Horacio de la Costa, the Filipino Jesuit historian, as a period of "alarms and incursions" for the beleaguered Spanish colonists and their Filipino subjects.<sup>5</sup>

Knowledge about the strengths and weaknesses of the Spanish Philippines was understandably one of the key objectives of early Dutch policies with regard to Manila. Olivier van Noort, the first Dutch admiral to sail to the Philippines in 1600, expressed this clearly in his evaluation: "These islands themselves have no riches, but most important is the trade of the Chinese, who come there everywhere to barter and who are very subtle in their dealings."<sup>6</sup> The seeming poverty of the Philippines, apart from its value as an entrepôt for the exchange of Mexican silver and Chinese silk, had led Roessingh to assert that the Dutch had no territorial ambitions with regard to the Philippines.<sup>7</sup> This view is supported by an official policy statement in a 1642 report sent by Governor-General Antonie van Diemen and his Council in Batavia to the VOC Board of Directors in the Netherlands:

The Spaniards in Manila are already rather afraid of the power of the Company, and we are confident that, if this business is attempted seriously, we could take possession of it, but whether the Company would gain any profit from this conquest, as private Spanish merchants are doing, is to be doubted, because, according to information received, the Philippines are more of a burden than a profit to the Castillian king, which is not what the Company is after.<sup>8</sup>

The clearest statement of Dutch policy with regard to the Philippines is found in the instructions the VOC command in Batavia gave to Marten Gerritsz Fries. The latter referred to these instructions when he wrote a report on 9 August 1646, lying with his ship near the island of Capul in the Central Philippines, waiting to ambush the Spanish galleon from Mexico. The instructions ordered him:

5. Horacio de la Costa, S.J., *Readings in Philippine History* (Manila: Bookmark, 1965), pp. 44-64.

6. O. van Noort, "De Reis om de Wereld door Olivier van Noort, 1598-1601," in *Linschoten Society* series, vol. XXVII, p. 113.

7. Marius P. H. Roessingh, "Nederlandse Betrekkingen met de Philippijnen, 1600-1800," in *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde* (Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1968), p. 488.

8. "Generale Missiven van Gouverneurs-Generaal en Raden aan Heren XVII der Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie" in *Rijks Geschiedkundige Publicatien*, vol. 2 ed. W. Ph. Coolhaas p. 173.

1. to try capturing the Spanish return ship from Ternate. In addition, to conquer the Spanish fort Costy, and demolish it;
2. to cruise in the area of the Embocadero, the Cabo Espiritu Santo, and Cagayan, in order to catch the Spanish silver ships coming from Acapulco;
3. to attempt closing the Bay of Manila, which, if successful, would be disastrous to the annual return ship to New Spain;
4. to impede and cut off the traders coming from China, which strategy was expected to benefit the Dutch East India Company's efforts in Taiwan.<sup>9</sup>

The logic behind these instructions was simple. The aim was to weaken the Spaniards by interdicting all shipping bound for Manila. This was calculated to produce a triple effect. First, since Manila's mainstay was trade, a blockade would be disastrous to its viability. Second, it would boost the Dutch war chest and trading capital if ships were captured carrying silver from Mexico, or spices from Ternate. Furthermore, it would divert the valuable Chinese junk trade from Spanish to Dutch-controlled ports in Taiwan and other points south of Manila. It is these strategic considerations of power and finance that make the Dutch naval challenge and the Spanish response in the first half of the seventeenth century understandable.

#### DUTCH SEA BATTLES IN PHILIPPINE WATERS, 1600-48

The order to watch, hinder, impede, blockade, and capture Spanish and Chinese ships found in the vast sea lanes of the Philippines must have put a heavy burden on the Dutch fleet assigned to this mission. The ships' crews had to be constantly vigilant, ready to attack other ships, and also to be on the defensive against attacks from Spanish ships. Even more crucial was the matter of logistics. Far from their home base, and cruising in unfriendly territory where it was hard to take in drinking water and fresh provisions, the Dutch found their mission extremely difficult.

Before 1648, the Dutch fleet had engaged the Spanish navy in a series of major battles in Philippine waters, many of these en-

9. Letters and Papers sent over from the Indies to the Gentlemen XVII and the Chamber Amsterdam, usually referred to as O.B. (Overgekomen Brieven). In this article, the reference will be as follows: OB-year-VOC-no.-page, so in this case: OB 1646 VOC 1160 p. 454.

counters resulting in Spanish victories. The earliest of these occurred in 1600, before a coordinated naval strategy of weakening Manila by a blockade was formulated. In 1600, Olivier van Noort entered Manila Bay with two ships, where he was attacked by two Spanish war galleons. In the resulting engagement, there was much hand-to-hand fighting as the two enemy flagships were locked in a deadly struggle. When the Spanish ship disengaged, apparently to avoid catching fire from the burning Dutch ship, the galleon revealed a gaping hole in her bow, which caused her to sink with the whole crew. The ship of van Noort managed to escape to Borneo with five men killed and twenty-six wounded. The other ship was taken by the Spaniards, and most of its crew killed.<sup>10</sup>

The next three encounters, in 1610, 1617 and 1625, were part of a coordinated naval operation, and were fought off the shores of Bataan peninsula near Witters Island, called Playa Honda by the Spanish.<sup>11</sup> In the 1610 naval encounter, the Dutch lost three of four ships, resulting in the death of Captain Francois Wittert (sic), at Witters Island, named in his memory. The next major sea battle took place in April 1617, when Jan Dirksz Lam engaged Admiral Ronquillo at sea, ten to eleven miles north of Manila Bay, near Witters Island. In this battle, Lam lost three of his nine ships, while inflicting heavy damage on the Spanish navy.

A few years later, during the early 1620s, plans to obtain the monopoly trade on China were taking shape. In 1622, the Dutch established a trading post on Pehou, one of the Pescadores islands between Formosa and China. During the negotiations about opening up trade relations, the Chinese insisted that the Dutch leave the Pescadores and settle on Formosa, or elsewhere outside Chinese territory. The Dutch gave in and moved to Tayouan (Taiwan) Bay on South Formosa in 1624.<sup>12</sup> The next year, Pieter Muysier was sent with six ships from there to the Philippines to meet with eleven ships of a fleet sent by the States General and Prince Maurits, sailing east via America and Acapulco. They were to capture Chinese junks, and possibly attack Manila. These two

10. Dirk Abraham Sloos, *De Nederlanders in de Philippijnse wateren voor 1626*, pp. 8-10.

11. Witters Island can be identified on a 1753 map: *Nieuwe Afteekening van de Philippijnse Eylanden gelegen in de Oost-Indische Zee tussen Formosa en Borneo*, by Joannes van Keulen, Amsterdam, in Dr. Domingo Abella, Portfolio I of Philippine maps.

12. Sloos, *De Nederlanders in de Philippijnse*, pp. 37-45.

fleets, as it turned out, never met.

Instead, seven Spanish ships attacked Muysers' fleet in April 1625, near Muysers' Bay, between Cape Bolinao and Witters Island.<sup>13</sup> Muysers lost the ship *Victoria*, but repulsed the Spaniards with three of his ships so well that the flag of the Spanish admiral's ship was lowered. The Dutch interpreted this to mean that de Silva had been killed. At any rate, the Spaniards let the Dutch ships go, while they themselves went ashore. Muysers left the following month.

During twenty-five years, Dutch fleets had entered Philippine waters on sixteen different occasions, mainly with the purpose to do harm to the Spaniards by crippling their trade. Their investments had paid off in the number of Chinese junks captured near Manila. However, this practice could have given the Dutch a bad name, and in view of the newly opened trade relations with China the continuation of such a strategy became a point of consideration, as shown by the following observation, contained in a letter from Governor de Wit of Formosa to Governor General de Carpentier, of 29 October 1625: "We have not received any complaints from China about the two junks captured by Muysers and the imprisoned Chinese." Fear of losing the China trade connection stopped Dutch naval operations in the Philippines for a while.<sup>14</sup> Besides, the Spanish had opened a trading post at Keelung (Ki Lung) on the northern side of Formosa, and the frequency of Chinese junks trading with Manila had been diminishing since 1621. Dutch naval concentration shifted to cruising the waters around Macao and Malacca.

Following the capture of Malacca from the Portuguese (1641), the Dutch navy returned to the Philippines in 1642, cruising near Cabo del Espiritu Santo and Manila from February to July. The primary focus of the Dutch in Philippine waters had turned to capturing the silver galleon, instead of Chinese junks. To this purpose, commander Anthony Jacobsz Engels left Ternate in three successive years to go to Cabo del Espiritu Santo in 1634, 1635, and 1636. After cruising there until July, watching in vain for the coveted galleon, he would then sail on to Tayouan to follow up

13. For the location of Muysers' Bay see the map by Joannes van Keulen, *Nieuwe Afteekening van de Philippijnse*.

14. Sloos, *De Nederlanders in de Philippijnse*, p. 100 and in L.C.D. van Dijk, *Neerland's Vroegste Betrekkingen met Borneo, den Solo-archipel, Cambodja, Siam en Cochîn-China*, p. 285.

further instructions.

Similarly in June 1639, Matthijs Quast and Abel Tasman, who were sent to discover the gold- and silver-rich islands east of Japan,<sup>15</sup> had instructions to first visit Manila and sail through San Bernadino Strait while on the lookout for a returning silver galleon. Many more attempts followed in 1641, 1642, 1644, etc., until 1648, but none ever captured a silver galleon.<sup>16</sup> Two of the better known expeditions during these years are the ones under the command of Admiral Marten Gerritsz de Fries in 1646 and 1647. De Fries is reported to have bottled up two Spanish galleons and two other ships inside the Bay of Tigauw, near the Embocadero de Espiritu Santo, where the Spanish had been awaiting the arrival of the galleon from Acapulco in 1646. The blockade lasted only one month, because the Dutch lost many men, not just from battle, but mostly from lack of fresh victuals. When the Dutch fleet retreated, the Spanish ships pursued them. On 30 July 1646, the Dutch fleet stopped, turned their guns on the approaching Spaniards, and a furious sea battle ensued.<sup>17</sup>

In a blow by blow description of the naval battle, Admiral de Fries bemoans the fact that the Spanish ships were better built and better armed, while the Dutch had been cruising the hostile waters for five months without sufficient rest nor fresh provisions. Nor, as it turned out, did they have enough gunpowder and bullets. When the smoke cleared, the Dutch had lost the ships *Breskens* and *Visscher*, and two fire-ships. Nineteen men were killed, and fifty-eight wounded in that battle alone.

Considering their lack of drinking water and fresh produce, and consequently the rapidly rising number of scurvy patients, it is not surprising that the Dutch occasionally would send a boat ashore to search for victuals. One such landing reportedly penetrated two miles inland in the province of Tamarinos (Camarines?), where they "with little resistance, destroyed and burned the village of

15. Until far into the 17th century many Europeans believed that gold-and silver-rich islands were found further than Japan. Sebastian Viscaïno described them as *ricas de oro y plata*. The Dutch director at Hirado (Japan), Willem Verstegen requested the Governor General of Batavia to organize an exploring expedition which was this particular one of Matthijs Quast and Abel Tasman. This was referred to by M. Kanai, "Nederland en Japan, 1602-1680" in M.A.P. Meilink-Roelofz, ed.; *De V.O.C. in Azie*, p. 211. Also in J.K.J. de Jonge, *De Opkomst van hes Nederlandsch Gezag in Oost-Indie*, vol. 5 p. cxxx.

16. Dijk, *Neerland's vroegste betrekkingen met Borneo*. Paragraph 5, 1634-1661, pp. 285-307, gives an overview of these accounts.

17. OB 1646 VOC 1160, p. 363-66.

Tagesuan with the church St. Jago, and carried away as booty around 60 heads of cattle, which were used with satisfaction in restoring the fleet's condition . . . ."<sup>18</sup>

One of the reasons for their failure to capture the silver ship, according to de Fries, was the diligence of the Spanish who had set up fires as warning signals all along the coastline, where the influence of the Spanish missionaries was widespread. Such signals were lighted wherever and whenever there seemed to be danger for the galleons. This monitoring and warning system was effectively kept up until the silver ship had escaped the Dutch ambush.<sup>19</sup>

In surveying the pattern of Dutch-Spanish sea battles, a few significant facts stand out. One is that during these early decades, it was important to collect as much information as possible about the lay-out of the Spanish settlements and fortifications, and about the movement of ships between Manila and other regions. In 1637, a report from Batavia<sup>20</sup> contains a statement by a certain Bastiaen Leenwa, who, in spite of his Dutch-sounding name, declared that he was born in Manila, and had sailed for two years on Spanish ships to Acapulco, had then gone on the Spanish return ship to the Moluccas and the Spanish fortress Gamma Lamman, from which place he apparently deserted to the Dutch East India Company. Leenwa provided the Dutch with a schedule of the comings and goings of the Spanish galleons, as well as the number of guns and soldiers on each ship.

Sometimes, information came from unexpected sources. The earlier mentioned Captain de Fries wrote in his report of 1647, that, three days after his ship's arrival near the island of Tagima, where they planned to await the advent of the Spanish ships from Ternate, a proa with fifteen Pampango<sup>21</sup> soldiers and a Spanish lieutenant came from the Spanish fortress at Zamboanga nearby, fully expecting to welcome the Spanish fleet. Promptly taken prisoner, the lieutenant gave them a great deal of information, which was then reported to Batavia.

18. OB 1649 VOC 1170, p. 475.

19. OB 1647 VOC 1160, p. 466.

20. OB 1637 VOC 1120, pp. 790-91.

21. OB 1646 VOC 1160, p. 455. That these Pampango soldiers were so easily identified could be due to the fact that the Dutch in Batavia had become familiar with the various foreign settlements in and around the city, which included: "Bandanese, Malays, Pampangos from Lucon . . ." in F. de Haan, *Priangan*, p. 4, Batavia, 1910.

A second observation, one also made by the VOC's Directors upon reviewing the failure of Dutch campaigns, is that the Dutch dissipated their naval strength by dispersing into several squadrons, engaging the Spaniards in different places. De Wittert was attacked by de Silva in 1610 while having only three out of his four ships under his command. In 1617, when Lam spotted Ronquillo with seven galleons, he had only three ships under his immediate command. He had set out with ten ships but one ship had been dispatched with reports and patients to Ternate, three other ships were stationed at Witters Island, and three more ships were further north, too far to reach before the attack occurred. Lam lost three of his ships. Again, in 1647, when illness and death hit de Fries's fleet near Manila, where he lost four of his six ships in battle, the absence of his vice-admiral de Goyer, who was on the east coast of Luzon with seven more ships, made the situation very precarious for de Fries.

Not a single concerted attack was aimed at Manila, precisely because the strategy was not to capture it, but to bring it to its knees through the disruption of its lifelines of Chinese and Mexican trade. The financial consideration in these attempts at capturing the Acapulco silver ship overshadowed the naval objective of destroying the Spanish fleet.

A third observation concerns an interesting cluster of Dutch shipping directions, which reveal where Dutch strategic missions originated. Analysis of the records reveals that, of the approximately three dozen Dutch missions entering Philippine waters between 1600 and 1648, half came out of the Ternate area, a quarter out of the Formosa area, three came across the Pacific, and the others from Batavia. It shows how seriously the Dutch took the capture of the Spice Islands into their naval policy. While they failed to destroy the Spanish colony in the Philippines, they did succeed in driving them out of the Moluccas and the area of Ternate. The Spanish loss of the Moluccas was complete when, by 1663, all Spanish garrisons were pulled out from there and the Southern Philippines in order to strengthen the main Spanish stronghold in Manila against the Chinese.

#### THE CHINESE CONNECTION

The East-India Company had already seen the importance of Formosa in controlling the South China-Manila trade. Pieter

Nuyts, in a letter to the Gentlemen Seventeen of the VOC, shows clearly the role of Formosa in the Dutch-Spanish struggle for trade supremacy. He pointed out that the only support of the Spaniards lay in the China trade. Accordingly, if the Dutch would succeed in depriving them of this trade, and lessen their profits from it, the Spaniards would be compelled to abandon their best settlements in Macao, Manila, Malacca, Timor, and the Moluccas. He therefore urged the VOC: "It is of the utmost importance that we make ourselves masters of Kelang, and send a sufficient force there in order to do this . . . . We must do our utmost to destroy the trade between Manila and China, for as soon as this is done, we firmly believe that Your Excellencies will see the Spaniards leave the Moluccas, and even Manila, of their own accord."<sup>22</sup>

Instructions to Captain Witerboon on catching the Chinese junks returning to China from Manila, urge him to take extra care: "that your presence around the northern part of Luzon will not be discovered. To further that aim, do not, as a rule, fly the prince [of Orange]'s flag, but Chinese flags . . . in order to catch all junks off guard . . ." <sup>23</sup> The captain was further instructed to stop all junks he would meet, take possession of them, either through intimidation or force, then personally take inventory (they remained bookkeepers, even in piracy!), and transfer Dutch soldiers and sailors to the Chinese junks, thus adding those ships to the Dutch fleet in Philippine waters. It was realized that the capture of all those junks could make travel awkward for the Dutch ships. In that case, the instruction was to put the Chinese on two of the worst junks, and send them, with sufficient victuals, back to China, with a stern warning that, should they be found in Philippine waters again, they would not be let go alive. However, if the crew turned out to be residents of Manila, or other towns of Luzon, they should be sent to China, but brought back to Batavia as prisoners. Thus on 22 May 1625 one of Muysers' ships, for example, took 219 Chinese, captured from a junk that returned to Manila from the Chincheo River, to Batavia.<sup>24</sup> We may surmise from the foregoing that many Dutch trading goods from the Philippines were not purchased, but constituted the spoils of war.

22. Pieter Nuyts to the Governor-General and Councillors of the Dutch East India Company, Fort Zeelandia, 10 February 1729, in William Campbell, *Formosa Under the Dutch* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1903), pp. 53-55.

23. OB 1645 VOC 1147, pp. 486-88.

24. OB 1626 VOC 1087, pp. 331-2.

This strategy could not be maintained indefinitely, since the risk of Chinese antagonism against the Dutch would in the long run be counterproductive to Dutch commercial interests. Preventing the Chinese to trade in Manila would mean that they would not be able to secure the silver they really wanted in exchange for goods. The Dutch did make some attempts to trade with Mexico directly, once in 1657 through negotiations, and again in 1745-46, when two Dutch ships were sent to Acapulco.<sup>25</sup> The prospect of obtaining Mexican silver outside the Spanish trade in the period before 1648, when the Dutch-Spanish war was going on, was clearly nil. Since neither the Chinese, nor the Spanish, could be dissuaded from continuing the profitable trade in Manila, and since the Dutch had failed to dislodge the Spaniards from their Manila stronghold, the Dutch eventually had to find a way to join the Manila trade once the policy of blockading was discontinued after the Treaty of Munster.

#### BATAVIA-MANILA COVERT TRADE, 1648-1750

The fifth article of the Treaty of Munster stipulated that the Spaniards should not extend their trade in the East Indies, while the inhabitants of the United Netherlands should refrain from frequenting the Castillian places in the East Indies. If these provisions were to be taken in the strictest sense, the Dutch would never be able to trade in Manila, nor the Castillians in Batavia. But because profit is more powerful than any treaty, the hostilities generated during the Dutch-Spanish war gradually yielded to a strange mixture of subterfuges and conventions that allowed *de facto* trade to flourish between Batavia and Manila. One of the conventions was to refrain from using a European flag when trading with Manila. Also, Asians were frequently substituted as heads of the ventures, while the European traders acted as supercargoes or interpreters, or simply adopted Asian-sounding names.

In 1645, even while the Manila blockade was still in force, Pedro de la Matte came from Manila to Makassar with 70,000 *reales*. He took up residence there in order to engage in trade. With reales from Manila and cloves from the Moluccas he set out to buy cloth, silk, and especially iron from a Macao Portuguese. With all

25. OB 1746 VOC 2638, pp. 1823-30.

these items that were in great demand in Manila he hoped to make big profits.<sup>26</sup>

The VOC did not lag in its attempt to sell goods in Manila for Spanish reales, through deals with Danish merchants. Barend Pessaert, formerly a Dutch civil servant involved in the VOC trade with Japan, had managed to become the head of the Danish settlement in Coromandel, India.<sup>27</sup> (This fluidity in national loyalties was not uncommon in that era.) Earlier, in 1638, Pessaert had offered the services of the Danish ships to the Spanish crown against the Dutch, promising to provide the Spanish Moluccas with rice from Macassar, in exchange for cloves. He had also offered copper and iron, and other products from Japan to meet Spanish needs in the Philippines. When Pessaert's ships were captured by the Dutch, his Danish crew dissociated themselves from his anti-Dutch ideas.

Pessaert, however, somehow managed to continue to trade. In 1643-44, he had a cargo of 25,000 stingray skins bound for Japan. When Batavia heard of this, the Company quickly decided to seize the ship, for fear of spoiling the Japanese market, where all Europeans, except the Dutch were prohibited from trading. Ultimately, Pessaert and Batavia reached an agreement, whereby the Company would sell the stingray skins in Japan on his account. In exchange, Pessaert would take a cargo of Fl. 31,707, consisting of cloth, cinnamon, iron, and pepper, to be shipped in his boat and sold in Manila against Spanish reales for the Company. Pessaert was killed by Philippine natives before reaching Manila. His Danish companions, however, continued to Manila where they were well received, and a profitable trade took place. But shortly before they could return to India, they were arrested as spies. The cargo and their ship were placed under embargo and sold for a good price. The VOC lost Fl. 12,000, i.e., the balance of the cargo given minus the proceeds of the stingray skins sold in Japan for Pessaert.<sup>28</sup>

Neither this failure, nor the fifth article of the Treaty deterred the Dutch from opening up trade relations with Manila. In an official contact in 1657, the VOC proposed to the Spanish ambassador that trade be opened between Batavia and Manila. The Company offered to take oriental products to America in exchange for

26. Letter from the Council of the Indies to the Gentlemen Seventeen of the VOC in the Netherlands, 17 December 1645 in J.E. Heeres, *Bouwstoffen voor de Geschiedenis der Nederlanders in den Maleischen Archipel*, p. 238.

27. Roessingh, 1968, "Nederlandse Betrekkingen," p. 494, fn. 43.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 495, fn. 47.

silver, even extending credit to the Spaniards, payable in the Netherlands. Although such offers were attractive to the financially needy Spanish government, the fear of Dutch trade expansion did not allow them to accept the offer. Moreover, there was the interest of the Seville and Cadiz merchants who would have suffered a loss in import and export duties.

Some Spanish merchants did see the value of the Dutch proposal, provided the Asian goods exported were outside the monopoly of Seville. Manila merchant Johan d' Erguesa, who visited Batavia several times to trade, suggested that the cargo should consist of iron, wax, cinnamon, pepper, cloves, ebony, and ivory.<sup>29</sup> These items, if taken directly from Manila to America, would be much cheaper compared to similar items coming from the Netherlands, which had to be transported via Cadiz, Seville Porto Belo near Panama, and finally to Acapulco. The difference in transportation costs was a great lure to any trade. Johan d' Erguesa, as it turned out, was actively involved as early as 1658 in obtaining these products from Batavia for resale in Manila, and, we suspect, in America.

In February 1665, Johan d'Erguesa was in Batavia again, carrying 6,000 reales and a letter from the governor of Manila, containing a request that the Dutch abandon the trade with Manila. And yet, in the context of the 6,000 reales that the envoy was carrying (the envoy's name was not mentioned in the letter), the letter can be construed as only a formality. D'Erguesa engaged in business for five months, with great success. He bought a larger ship, and returned to Manila with a cargo worth 10,000 rixdollars. He was also loaned a Dutch navigator and six sailors.

A different pattern also occurred. In that same year, 1665, a Ternatan freeburgher, Crijn Leendertsz Geel, returned from Manila. He had been received and treated courteously there. This is not surprising when we learn that Governor van Voorst at Ternate had officially obtained a seapass for him from his Spanish colleague at Gamma Lamma earlier. The captain-general or governor-general in Manila, Diego de Salcedo, wanting to show that he knew his duty and was not willing to contradict orders from the king of Spain, issued a letter of protest to van Voorst. It stated, that it was not in his power to allow the Dutch merchant to come again without the express consent and permission of the king of Spain,

29. *Ibid.*, p. 496.

since such treatment was contradictory to the peace treaty between the king and the States-General in the Netherlands. However, Geel was verbally informed that the Dutch were welcome to Manila with a pass from Siam, Cambodja, or Makassar. Obviously a non-Dutch disguise was very acceptable to the Spaniards.<sup>30</sup> The Dutch understood how business was done in Manila, for in a letter from Batavia to the Gentlemen Seventeen, dated 30 January 1666, there is the following statement: “. . . for if there is something to be traded in Manila, it needs to be done in silence and by connivance.”<sup>31</sup>

Another transaction took place in Malacca in 1669. The governor and council there reported to Batavia that a Chinese junk, having earlier arrived from Cochin China on its way to Manila, under skipper Goussesiecko, had now returned from there. Pretending to have come from Johor, he had been admitted and allowed to sell his commodities, consisting of various fabrics, wheat, and iron. He had brought back 4,000 pieces of each, as well as sugar, sappan wood, and tobacco. Since this rather experimental voyage had been considered fairly profitable, both parties were in favor of continuing to trade there.<sup>32</sup> A similar trade relationship had developed between the Dutch at the Aytthaya office in Siam with Spanish merchants from Manila between 1665 and 1662. The Spaniards brought gold, silver, and benzoin in exchange for cloth. The transactions were done with the approval of the VOC directorate in Batavia as long as it was kept secret.<sup>33</sup>

Another, well-documented, attempt at covert trade occurred in 1686, and revolved around a Polish gentleman-trader, Don Theodoris de St. Lucas.<sup>34</sup> He is reported to have left from Porto Novo for Manila, having persuaded some Dutch gentlemen, including Mr. Ryckloff de Bitter, son-in-law of the governor Laurens Pit, and the merchant Evert Christoffel Lanius, to put up money for a trading enterprise with Manila. The Polish trader returned with very little money and had been forced to leave most of the commodities in Manila. Yet, he was able to talk the other participants into sinking more money into the venture. They bought a new

30. *Ibid.*, p. 498.

31. Van Dijk, *Neerland's vroegste betrekkingen*, pp. 262-63.

32. OB 1669 VOC 1266, p. 906.

33. George V. Smith, *The Dutch in Seventeenth Century Thailand*. Center for Southeast Asian Studies Special Report No. 16, pp. 62-65.

34. OB 1692 VOC 1495, pp. 397-99.

ship, decked it out with Polish flags, after which Don Theodoris sailed to Paliacatte, where he was wined and dined by the governor Laurens Pit and the fiscal Joannes Lampe, then given a passport, and provided with some bales of cinnamon and colored cloth from the Company's warehouses, after which he departed for Manila. The informant of all this, the merchant Joannes Eduards, who had been invited to join, but had refused, reports with obvious glee, that the whole venture turned out less than successful, because in the end the participants received a poor return on their capital that had been tied up for three years.

One would be wrong to assume that the Dutch East India Company was oblivious of what was going on, or that they approved of Company servants exporting goods for their own account. In the case of the Polish trader, where there was sufficient evidence, an investigation was instituted. The Company sent the "Independent Fiscal General," Ploos van Amstel, to look into the matter, and the governor was charged with having acted contrary to the interests of the Company. The Fiscal General also informed the governor, that the man carrying the name and title of Don Theodoris de St. Lucas, was in fact a former servant of that nobleman, so that their having been so accommodating to a lowly impostor made the whole incident even more embarrassing.

In 1717, there is a report showing a different tendency in the pattern of Dutch-Spanish trade. A Dutch captain, Reynier Breneur, Freeburgher of Ternate, reports that his ship and goods were taken by the Spanish in Magindanao, and transported to Manila. He petitioned the officer-in-charge to have at least his five slaves returned to him, but was told that one more petition would land him in the jail under the fort.<sup>35</sup>

In 1716, a Portuguese captain, Manuel Pereira Ramos, was on his way to Macao, but met with such heavy winds that he discontinued his voyage and came to Batavia instead. He reported among other things, that business had been very bad in Manila at that time.<sup>36</sup> However, this same captain returned to Batavia the next year, with his cargo from Manila. Aboard was also a Spanish passenger, Don Joan de Torralba y Balcasar, the son of the governor-general of Manila, who pleaded to be admitted as a passenger on one of the Company's ships returning to Holland, from where he

35. OB 1717 VOC 1882, pp. 14, 15.

36. OB 1716 VOC 1862, p. 2140.

could continue his journey to Spain, because, as he declared, that route was faster than going by way of New Spain. The request was granted.<sup>37</sup>

In 1718, there was another request for assistance by Manila. One particular item was always in great demand: anchors. This time, the governor of Manila sent General Don Ferdinando Angula: "a person of my greatest esteem and friendship, and of the greatest repute in these islands,"<sup>38</sup> to Batavia, in order to facilitate the governor's request for anchors and cordage, for which he had brought the necessary payment in cash. The governor assured the Dutch governor-general of his lasting gratitude and friendship, and bade him to accept as a token of these sentiments a team of six mules, especially bred and selected in the Philippines, twelve pots of chocolate, twelve silver-ornamented betelnut sets, twelve pairs of stockings from Laguna, twelve bamboo containers filled with fruit, two dozen jugs from Guadalajara, and two jars of Havana snuff, which presents the governor-general was asked to distribute to the other gentlemen (of the Council), according to his own discretion. Don Ferdinando also asked, as a special favor, to deliver a bundle of papers to Don Domingo de la Cantolla, secretary of the high (court of) Inquisition in Madrid. This letter was written in Latin and translated into Dutch.

In later years, when the profits of the Company began to diminish greatly, the Dutch sought ways to improve their business with Manila. In 1736, the Directors wrote to Batavia, asking specifically: Who are the Manila traders, and what commodities do they deal in? They inquired what kind of merchandise from the Company's own branches in Bengal and Coromandel might be popular in Manila. Such goods might then be sent to Malacca, to be sold to the Manila traders coming to that place.

The answers to those questions were contained in a long letter by Batavia's Director-General of Commerce, J.P. Schagen. In it, he explained that, after questioning a few residents who knew Manila traders and had received them in their homes, he had learned that, aside from cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg, black pepper, and benzoin, the Manila traders had sometimes bought lead, Dutch iron, fabrics woven with gold and silver threads, and Bengal cloth, also chintz, of both the finest and the coarse kind (the former could be

37. OB 1717 VOC 1876, pp. 2472-74.

38. OB 1718 VOC 1890, pp. 1734-35.

debited in Manila, the latter in New Spain). However, since there now were traders in Coromandel who would take their merchandise straight to Manila, there had been no demand for these fabrics. There was indeed a strong demand for cinnamon, for which the merchants were prepared to pay in Spanish silver, badly needed by the Company. The Director-General gave as his opinion, that it would not pay to send merchandise from Coromandel to Malacca. It might, however, be worthwhile to send Company ships to China to buy floss silk there directly, without the intermediary of Chinese, or Macao Portuguese, traders, who yearly brought in tea. This might be successful, he wrote, "since it is certain that the Manila merchants do not sail directly to China, so that the silk would then have to be bought from the Company. Even if the Chinese and Macao merchants cannot be prevented from bringing in silk, all their silk could be stored by the Company, as is done with the tea, of which the Company has the pre-sale. . . ." <sup>39</sup>

The Director-General further wrote that he was sorry to read the Director's complaint that the French, the Portuguese, and especially the English, were doing a thriving business in piece goods and other merchandise, a business in which the VOC had not managed to participate. He reminded the honorable gentlemen that Batavia's most important commodity at that time was cinnamon, and in this respect business had been especially good.

We get some idea of the volume and value of the Manila-Batavia trade from the following statistics. During the period 1727-37, it was estimated, that the Manila trade in Batavia had a yearly turnover of Fl. 216,405, yielding profits of 484 percent. The largest sale was in cinnamon: Fl. 173,625, with a yearly profit of 870 percent, but nutmeg was the most profitable, at a fantastic 6695 percent. A comparison of the 1738 report with the summary of the total trade with foreign nations at Batavia during the 1734-35 period, shows that the Manila trade comprised half of this total. <sup>40</sup>

As for the question concerning the origin of the traders, J.P. Schagen wrote that they seemed to be of various nationalities, namely: Portuguese, "or those who only carry that name," French, Armenians, Moros, Gentives (Hindus), and also some Spaniards, "actually not born in Spain, but born in those islands from Spanish ancestors." This mixture of nationalities of the traders is

39. OB 1738 VOC 2395, pp. 1947-60.

40. Roessingh, 1968, "Nederlandse Betrekkingen," p. 500.

also apparent in an extract from the Malacca customhouse ledger, listing ships coming from and going to Manila in 1740. It shows, for example, the following names: Francisco Carvallio, French captain on the ship *Samsun*; Jean Rees Dubois, Malabarese captain on the *Nossa Narateha*; Richard Dunn, French captain on the *Nadersan*; Paulus de Cachet, Armenian captain on the ship *St. Thomas*. The incongruity of names and nationalities as noted, gives an inkling of the rules governing entry and trade in the ports of destination. The ships on which they sailed were between 100 and 500 tons, and armed with from 8 to 16 guns. Their cargoes consisted mostly of piece goods when sailing to Manila. Going in the other direction, they carried Spanish reales and cowry shells.<sup>41</sup>

An interesting example of the intermingling of trade and diplomacy is reflected in the visit by the Company's emissary, Jan Louis de Win,<sup>42</sup> who came to Manila in 1744 as a "minister" of the Company on a warship, eager to present his credentials. Yet his warship contained a large cargo of cinnamon. Aside from its diplomatic and commercial aims, the mission's main focus was on the silver run. The English had been at war with Spain in Europe since 1739. In 1741 and 1743, a Spanish ship and silver galleon had been captured by the English, which diminished mercantile supplies, especially silver. This not only badly affected the Manila traders, but also the VOC in its inter-Asiatic trade. This was the reason why the Company would have gladly taken over the Acapulco trade, but the Spaniards did not want this trade to be under Dutch control.

By this time, the Western powers trading in Southeast Asia were carefully monitoring the Spanish Philippines. If any signs of imminent chaos would emerge, this would open up opportunities to take over the control from Spain. The very presence of competing Western forces very probably accounted for the fact that it took eighteen years before one of those foreign powers attacked Manila. On 2 January 1762, England again declared war on Spain, after Spain had joined the Seven Years' War on the side of France. Two days later, the British Cabinet unanimously approved a proposal to send an expedition to Manila, and before the year was out, Manila fell, on October 6.

41. OB 1740 VOC 2848, pp. 1268-78.

42. OB 1743 VOC 2615, pp. 1581-1610.

## CONCLUSION

The evolution of Dutch-Spanish relations over trade in Manila shows an unmistakable shift from open hostility to tacit cooperation. The failure to cripple or capture the Manila trade does not negate the VOC organizational power. On the contrary, the blockade of Manila and the fear it caused throughout the archipelago provided another display of Dutch naval and organizational power on a grand scale.

The shift that took place at mid-century was inevitable given the fact that Spanish Manila was the only port in Asia that brought together Chinese trade goods in exchange for the coveted silver from Mexico. The Dutch attempt to blockade Manila thus appears not only as an effort to destroy or weaken an enemy but also to divert Chinese trading junks from a hostile Manila to ports friendly to the Dutch. Because the VOC continued to need Mexican silver to buy the Chinese goods and because the Spaniards continued to control the source of silver in New Spain, Manila was allowed to prosper as a major entrepôt.

The Treaty of Munster succeeded in eliminating open rivalry and enmity between the two European trading ventures in Asia by delimiting trading spheres for the Dutch and the Spaniards. Such formal policies, however, could not prevent the creative energies of free enterprise and the love for profit from finding ways to circumvent official trade bans. The notable covert trade, eventually gaining the upperhand over treaty policies, is a latent function of manifest claims of commercial monopolies. This trade relationship was a mutual indispensable exchange with Spanish silver and Dutch spices as the two main products.

At the outset of this paper it was suggested that Dutch primary sources could elucidate the contention that Manila was not a closed port. From the VOC records it can be concluded that the suspected and hinted at covert trade did occur not only with the English as Quason had shown, but also with the Dutch.