

Cover Page



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Author: Cheng, Weichung

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NICOLAES IQUAN BEFORE 1627

CHAPTER TWO

NICOLAES IQUAN BEFORE 1627

Shadow over the Sino-Japanese transit trade in Manila after 1617

Although they had served for a long time as the backbone of Spanish and Portuguese maritime expeditions, after the Spanish king declared an embargo against Dutch shipping in 1580 Dutch mariners now set sail into the Iberian-dominated waters in Asia and the Caribbean seas under their own flag. Two decades later, after intermittent attempts by various companies to gain a share in the spice trade of the Indonesian Archipelago, the Dutch authorities decided to establish one unified East India Company in order to concentrate forces and find a more efficient way to exploit the long-distance trade to Asia. In 1602 the Dutch United East India Company (Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie, VOC) was granted a charter which allowed it to operate in the hemisphere between the Straits of Magellan and the Cape of Good Hope.¹

When the Dutch arrived in the Indonesian Archipelago in the last decade of the sixteenth century, their primary goal was to procure spices. Once they had arrived in the Moluccan Archipelago, they sought an ally in the Sultan of Ternate, the local rival of the Sultan of Tidore who was supported by the Portuguese. Because the Portuguese feared that they would not be able to ward off the Dutch menace on their own, they called in the assistance of the Spaniards in Manila. They considered them natural allies because, since 1580, Portuguese and Spain had been ruled by the same monarch.² Not until the spring of 1610, after the Dutch had gained a real foothold on Banda and Ternate, did they feel that they could retaliate against

¹ Femme Simon Gaastra, *De geschiedenis van de VOC* [The History of the Dutch East India Company] (Zutphen, Leiden/Walburg Pers: 1991), 13-23.

² Dirk Abraham Sloos, *De Nederlanders in de Philippijnsche wateren voor 1626* [The Dutch in Philippine Waters before 1626] (Amsterdam, J.H. de Wit: 1898), 11-2.

CHAPTER TWO

this aggression and began to blockade Manila Bay.³ On 22 September 1609, while he was sailing with a squadron of four ships from Ternate *en route* to Manila Bay, actually in sight of his goal, François Wittert successfully captured twenty-three richly loaded junks which were also making for the bay. Just over half a year later, on 25 April 1610, he himself was attacked a Spanish fleet of eight ships and totally defeated.⁴ Since eventually all the booty the Dutch had captured was retrieved and returned to its original owners, this blockade barely caused a ripple among the Chinese and Japanese traders there. However, this defeat embarrassed the Dutch so much they returned to consolidate their position in the Moluccas until 1614 when the governor of the Moluccas, Laurens Reaal, felt confident enough to strike another blow at the Iberian enemy. His attempt was doomed to failure because, caught by the turn of the monsoon, his fleet was not able to reach Manila Bay.⁵ As he face this new Dutch threat, the governor of Manila, Don Juan de Silva, called for assistance from both Mexico and Goa. His plan was to assemble a large force with which to drive the VOC out of the Spice Islands once and for all. On 7 February 1616, he sailed at the head of a spectacular fleet consisting of ten galleons, three yachts and four galliots towards Malacca where he planned to rendez-vous with a relief fleet from Goa. Once this large Armada was merged, his first plan was to crush the Dutch base in Bantam in Java and, once this had been accomplished, to sweep away the remaining Dutch garrisons in the Moluccas.⁶ On 9 February 1616, a Dutch fleet under the command of Joris van Spilberghen arrived in Philippine waters. Assuming the presence of the large Spanish fleet somewhere in the vicinity, before launching an attack, he decided to sail to the Moluccas first and gather a bigger fleet, composed of seventeen vessels there. Only on 12 October did he find out that about half the original force

³ Sloos, *De Nederlanders in de Philippijnsche wateren*, 23-5

⁴ Ibid. 24-5.

⁵ Ibid. 30-1.

⁶ Ibid. 33.

NICOLAES IQUAN BEFORE 1627

had been left behind in Manila: namely eight big ships, three big galleons, and five to six frigates. When this news was received, the admiral of the newly joined fleet, Jan Dirksz Lam, decided to blockade Manila Bay in the winter of 1616 and the early spring of 1617. In that period the Dutch captured four richly loaded Chinese junks as well as two Japanese junks, but failed to capture the Spanish silver galleons from Mexico. Lam sailed his fleet a little to the north along the west coast of Luzon, expecting to capture more Chinese junks sailing for Manila in March 1617.⁷ After the fleet had been dispersed to intercept the Chinese junks, the Spanish fleet suddenly sailed out of Manila Harbour and sank the Dutch admiral's ship, the *Nieuwe Son*, and burned two more ships in a sea battle on 18 April 1617. The remainder of Dutch ships were able to escape and still managed to hold onto the five captured Chinese junks. Later, they were able to waylay the Spanish vice-admiral's ship and plunder all its cargo. When the main Spanish fleet returned from Malacca, the new governor of Manila, Geronimo de Silva, (Don Juan de Silva had passed away in Malacca) immediately dispatched seven ships to Ternate to hunt down the Dutch fleet. Unfortunately, this *escadre* ran into a serious gale in October and never reached its destination.⁸

The prolonged struggle between the Spaniards and the Dutch cast a long shadow over both the Sino-Japanese transit trade and the Sino-American trade in the Manila emporium, because many Chinese junks which sailed between China and the Spaniards in Manila, in the island of Luzon, with goods and provisions were intercepted. It was not long before the Dutch expanded the scope of the blockade when Commander Lam gave orders to the ships cruising in Macao waters not only to capture Portuguese carracks but also to seize any Chinese junks sailing to or back from Manila.⁹ One of

⁷ Ibid. 39-40.

⁸ Ibid. 41-2; For a detailed study of this naval battle, c.f. : Tien-tse Chang, 'The Spanish-Dutch naval battle of 1617 outside Manila Bay', *The Journal of Southeast Asian History*, 7(1966), 111-121.

⁹ Sloos, *De Nederlanders in de Philippijnsche wateren*, 41-2.

CHAPTER TWO

these ships, the *Oude Son*, captured one big and six small Chinese junks in the waters between Macao and Cochin-China in May 1618 and the booty was sold in Japan soon afterwards.¹⁰

The Chinese merchants in Hai-ch'êng, who were the principal investors in the Manila trade, must have had inklings of this Dutch-Iberian strife before 1618. When a local scholar Chang Hsieh published his book '*Tung-His-Yang K'ao*' in 1618, he mentioned, 'in the 45th year of Wan-li (1617) [the Dutch] attacked and wantonly plundered Chinese merchants outside the ports of Luzon. The ship owners were distressed'.¹¹ In May 1619, when the Dutch captured three more big Chinese junks near Manila Bay, they were informed that seven of the Chinese junks which visited Manila annually had delayed their voyage on account of a Spanish warning.¹² In Japan, one of the principal Chinese merchants residing in Hirado, Li Tan, requested the chief merchant of the English East India company, Richard Cocks, to issue him 'letters of favour' or passports for his and his friends' junks which were due to sail to Cochin-China and Taiwan. Apparently he secured these documents to avoid possible capture by Dutch ships. Eventually in the spring of 1618, Cocks issued nine 'letters of favour' and six English flags.¹³

This generous English assistance to Chinese traders in Japan was not continued into 1620 because the English and Dutch had signed a common resolution in Bantam on 28 April 1620 to form a collegial 'Council of Defence (*Raad van Defensie*)'. Under its auspices, on 31 May 1620, two

¹⁰ Ibid. 47.

¹¹ Chang Hsieh, *Tung-his-yang k'ao* [Authenticated Knowledge of Eastern and Western Oceans], (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1981) , 130. cf. Chang, 'The Spanish-Dutch naval battle of 1617', 117. note 20.

¹² Sloos, *De Nederlanders in de Philippijnsche wateren*, 48.

¹³ Richard Cocks, *Diary of Richard Cocks, Cape-merchant in the English Factory in Japan, 1615-1622 : with correspondence*, 2 vols., ed. Edward Maunde Thompson (London : Whiting and Co., 1883) , II, 9. 26 Jan.; 19, 27 Feb.; 1 Mar. 1618; 21, 4 Mar; 6 Mar.

NICOLAES IQUAN BEFORE 1627

Dutch ships and two English ships were dispatched from Bantam to cruise the waters between China and Japan. They carried instructions to capture not only any Iberian vessels, but also to take any Chinese junks sailing to and from Manila they happened to come across.¹⁴ As it sailed north, the fleet was joined by more ships on the way. By the time it arrived in Hirado, the fleet consisted of ten sturdy ships. When it departed to execute its mission in the spring of 1621,¹⁵ most of the junk skippers decided to not to venture out of the harbours of Japan, as Richard Cocks reported, 'Because the Dutch men of war have closed off their trade, only a few dare to look ahead and make any plans.'¹⁶ The Hai-ch'êng merchants in China had also been forewarned by the Spaniards and postponed the sailing date of their seven richest Manila-bound junks in the spring of 1621 to avoid possible losses. Despite all these precautions, another five junks were captured by the united Dutch-English fleet.¹⁷ In sum, the Dutch-Iberian rivalry in the Moluccas gradually shifted to Philippine waters and the East and South China Seas. Those who suffered most from this conflict were the Chinese junk traders who depended on the Sino-Mexican and Sino-Japanese transit trade in Manila. Seizing the opening which presented itself when Manila was temporarily removed from the list of suitable transit trading harbours, it was proposed that the foreign coasts of Cochin-China and Formosa be used as replacements.

Although the Chinese merchants knew the Dutch had been wrestling

¹⁴ Sloos, *De Nederlanders in de Philippijnsche wateren*, 53.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 54.

¹⁶ *Diary of Richard Cocks*, II, 321. Letter from Richard Cocks to the E. I. Company, 13 Dec. 1620. I have revised the text a little in order to fit current English style. The original cited text is 'For that the hollanders, men of war have shut up their trade that few dare look out.'

¹⁷ Willem Pieter Groeneveldt, *De Nederlanders in China: eerste stuk: de eerste bemoeiingen om den handel in China en de vestiging in de Pescadores (1601-1624)*, ('s-Gravenhage : Nijhoff, 1898), 56; *Diary of Richard Cocks*, II, 170.

CHAPTER TWO

with the Iberians in the Moluccas for years, they had not expected that they would have their fingers burned by the fire too. Since the Chinese court, which was increasingly preoccupied with the growing threats posed by the Manchus on the northeastern border, could not be possibly intervene, the merchants' only option was to look for other transit ports from which to continue their business. As mentioned before, the island of Formosa, a 'stateless' area, was seen as suitable replacement. In 1617-1618, the maritime mercenary Chao Ping-chien, who was based in P'eng-hu (the Pescadores Archipelago), attempted to set up a monopolistic trade network connecting Amoy- P'eng-hu- Taiwan(Formosa) and Japan. Chao's chief collaborator in Taiwan, Lin Chin-wu, was a merchant who had lived among other Chinese merchants in Japan. Richard Cocks' diary records that in 1616 he was asked by Li Tan to put up the money to bribe the Chinese authorities through Li Tan's servant 'Liangowne'.¹⁸ It is a matter of recorded history that in 1617 the captured coastal defence officer from Fu-chien, Tung Po-ch'i, was brought back to Fu-chien on a richly loaded Japanese junk by Akashi Michitōmo. Obviously Li Tan's investment had something to do with this enterprise. Therefore, it can be inferred 'Liangowne' should be identified as the above-mentioned 'Lin Chin-wu'. According to a recently discovered tomb inscription found in Ikura Harbour in Higo, a Chinese merchant named Lin Chün-wu was buried there in 1621. In Southen Fu-chienese dialect, the pronunciation of his name is identical to that of Lin Chin-wu, hence Lin Chün-wu would be the correct transliteration of the same name.¹⁹

¹⁸ *Diary of Richard Cocks*, I, 233. 28 Dec. 1616.

¹⁹ Gakusho Nakajima, 'Ch'ao-hsien ch'in-lüeh yü lu-sung mao-i: shih-liu shih-chi-mo Chia-t'êng Ch'ing-chêng tê t'ang-ch'uan p'ai-ch'ien chi-hua[The Invasion to Korea and the Trade in the Philippine Islands: Katō Kiyomasa], in Department of History of Soochow University(ed.), *C'üan-ch'iu-hua-hsia ming-shih yen-chiu chih hsin-shih-yeh lun-wên-chi*[Proceedings of the Conference: a new perspective in study of Ming History in the era of globalization] (Taipei: Department of History of Soochow University, 2007), vol. II, 13-23 at 21.

NICOLAES IQUAN BEFORE 1627

Even though Chao Ping-chien and his network were destroyed in 1618, the smuggling transit trade in Taiwan did not suffer the same fate because Lin Chün-wu was still alive and active in it. Ironically, after Chao Ping-chien was removed by the Grand Co-ordinator of Fu-chien, Wang Shih-ch'ang, in 1618, the same Grand Co-ordinator recruited yet another maritime mercenary, Yüan Chin, also of 'piratical' origin in 1619.²⁰ Obviously, since the Ming court treated Taiwan as a 'stateless area', Chinese and Japanese merchants-cum-smugglers were free to bring capital and goods to the island. By now, the growing numbers of smugglers from the coast of Fu-chien who were rushing to the safe haven of Taiwan generated a security risk. No authorities had been appointed to settle the disputes between the investors and dealers fairly and in no time at all the quarrels among the smugglers degenerated into outright piracy. A retired Fu-chien official, Shên Yen, perceived this lack of order and discipline as a much more serious breach of the peace than were the random acts of piracy,

*'Although the pirates are very fierce when they suddenly burst upon the scene, they cannot sustain [their attack for] long and are easy to eliminate. The real worry is the transit trade in Pei-kang[Taiwan] managed by Lin Chin-wu. It is an exact repetition of the Wang Chih incident. Although it is impossible to blockade the trade with Japan, it is possible to ban smuggling. As long as somebody continues to bring Japanese silver to Pei-kang[Taiwan], the smuggling will continue, even were we to put several smugglers to death every day. Why? Because it is so profitable.'*²¹

Because of their known involvement in the smuggling trade, the Fu-chienese authorities distrusted the maritime mercenaries they recruited,

²⁰ TWYH, *Ming shih-lu min-hai kuan-hsi shih-liao*, TW no. 296, (1971), 125.

²¹ Shên Yen, *Chih-chih chai-chi*, vol.55, 20. recited from Chên Tsung-jên, *Chi-lung-shan yü Tan-shui-yang: tung-ya hai-yü yü t'ai-wan tsao-ch'i-shih yen-chiu (1400-1700)* [Chi-lung Cape and Tan-shui Bay: a study of the early history of Taiwan in the East Asian oceanic region], (Taipei: Lien-ching, 2005), 172.

CHAPTER TWO

but they could find no other solution to combat the rampant piracy. As Shên Yen also commented,

*‘Too many people carried their goods to Pei-kang [Taiwan] after they had been handed Japanese capital. It is proper neither to arrest nor to recruit them. If we push them too hard, they might escape to Japan in the same way as [the pirates did] sixty years ago.’*²²

On the other hand, without the support of the maritime mercenaries, the risk of collecting goods procured with the money already dispensed by traders in Japan became too high. In 1618, just after Chao Ping-chien’s death, the three junks belonging to Li Tan which returned to Japan from Taiwan carried only deerskins and sappanwood, but no Chinese silk,²³ even though he had already handed his capital over to the smugglers who had taken the monetary advance and fled away to China:

*‘The Chinese themselves rob each other at sea, thinking to lay all the blame on the Dutch and English. However, some of them have been intercepted in some provinces in Japan and have paid dearly for it. Other Chinese traders dispatched from Nagasaki by their own countrymen to trade for silk in Taiwan have been absconding to China with all the money, and have left their countrymen in Japan in the lurch.’*²⁴

Without the guarantee of a stable trading channel, after 1621 the

²² Shên Yen, *Chih-chih chai-chi*, vol.56, 32-3. recited from Ibid., 173. note 86.

²³ *Diary of Richard Cocks*, II, 53. 12 July 1618.

²⁴ Ibid., 321. A letter from Richard Cocks to the E. I. Company in London, 13 Dec. 1620. Here I revised the original text to fit the current English style. The original text is: ‘The Cheenas themselves robb one another at sea, thinking to lay all the fault on the Dutch and English; but some have byn intersepted in some provinces of Japan and paid dearly for it. And other China shipping, being sett out of Nangasaque by their owne cuntremen to goe for Isla Fermosa (called by them Tacca Sanga) to trade for silke, are run away for China with all the money and left their cuntremen in japan in the lurch.’

NICOLAES IQUAN BEFORE 1627

transit trade in Taiwan grew more risky than ever. By chance Li Tan's brother, (Li) Whaw, died in 1619,²⁵ and Lin Chin-wu passed away in 1621. Hence, by the spring of 1622, Li Tan was not only recognized by most Chinese merchants in Japan as their leader,²⁶ he was also faced with the task of organizing a reliable smuggling channel via Taiwan on his own, without being able to fall back on the assistance of Lin Chin-wu. The necessity to do something about the situation became urgent because, under the pressure of the Anglo-Dutch fleet blockading Manila and Cochin-China waters, the transit trade in Taiwan augered well under the protection of the vermilion passes or *Goshuin* issued by the Shogun. This assumption was confirmed when the Anglo-Dutch fleet captured four Chinese junks and one Portuguese ship loaded with silks outside the Manila Bay in 1622. The booty was sold in Japan for no less than 262,912:12:5 guilders. The success of the Anglo-Dutch fleet represented a tremendous loss to the Japanese and Chinese investors.²⁷ Possibly Li Tan avoided this loss by fitting out three junks to sail to Taiwan in 1621.²⁸ At this moment, he must have sensed the unique importance of his Taiwan corridor because he urged his Japanese protector, the lord of Hirado, Matsuura Takanobu, to secure a *Goshuin* pass from the *bakufu* in the summer of 1622, so that he would be able to monopolize the Taiwan trade the following season.²⁹

The Dutch presence and the revival of the maritime mercenaries in 1624

Although the Anglo-Dutch fleet terrorized the Chinese and Japanese junk traders and the blockade of Manila cut off supplies to its citizens, the Iberians

²⁵ Ibid., 309. 10 Mar. 1619

²⁶ Ibidem. 10 Mar. 1619

²⁷ Sloos, *De Nederlanders in de Philippijnsche wateren*, 72-3.

²⁸ Seiichi Iwao, 'Li Tan: Chief of the Chinese Residents at Hirado, Japan in the Last Days of the Ming Dynasty, *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko*, 17(1958), 27-83 at 44.

²⁹ Iwao, 'Li Tan: Chief of the Chinese Resident at Hirado', 41-4.

CHAPTER TWO

still maintained a far richer trade in the pan-Asian region than any the Anglo-Dutch alliance could have managed at that moment. Governor-General Jan Pieterszoon Coen said that the Iberians circulated about 50 million rials in it at a time in which all the VOC could make was a paltry 5 to 600,000 rials, only 1 per cent of what its hated rivals were hauling in.³⁰ Even if the VOC continued to blockade the Iberian harbours and seize booty, it was realized that it would not be able to strengthen its position until it gained access to the sources of income of its Iberian enemy. Since the bulk of the Iberian trade in Manila and Macao relied on the Chinese silk exports, one effective strategy it could adopt to achieve this aim was to force the Chinese to change trading partners. If the Dutch could push the Portuguese out of Macao and take over the export of Chinese goods in their place, the Chinese would probably not object, but should they fail to occupy Macao, they would have to force the Chinese into co-operation. In the summer of 1622, Governor-General Coen put his plan into action. He appointed Commander Cornelis Reyersen head a fleet to seize Macao. If this attempt should fail, Reyersen would have to change tactics and have to put pressure on the Chinese to gain a share of the trade. He chose P'eng-hu (the Pescadores) as the foothold from which to initiate his parleys with the Chinese authorities while he continued to blockade the Chinese junk traffic to Manila and the sailings of Portuguese ships to Japan.

When Reyersen arrived on P'eng-hu, on 10 August 1622 he sent an official letter addressed to the watch officer at the entrance of the bay of Amoy, the Defender of Wu-Yü Island, Wang Mêng-hsiung. In this letter he requested the Grand Co-ordinator of Fu-chien, Shang Chou-tso, to grant the Dutch Company a trading port where it could trade in silk and silk goods with the Chinese. He also asked the Co-ordinator to forbid his subjects to trade with the Iberians because they were the enemies of the VOC.³¹ After

³⁰ Sloos, *De Nederlanders in de Philippijnsche wateren*, 77.

³¹ VOC 1077, Translaet van hetgene wegen de commandeur Cornelis Reijersz. aen de

NICOLAES IQUAN BEFORE 1627

his demands were officially refused by Shang Chou-tso on 29 September, Reyersen took up arms against China. In the following month he dispatched eight ships, under Cornelis van Nieuwenroode, to attack Chinese junks in the bay of Amoy. After they had run into heavy weather, only five ships still managed to stick together. With their number reduced, they decided not to sail to Amoy but raided the roadsteads of Liu-ao and T'ung-shan instead. Not until 26 November did they really begin to carry out their mission to seize Chinese trading junks and paralyse the coastal commerce.³² When the Dutch fleet equipped with more advanced artillery arrived in the roadstead, the garrison of Amoy was not able to return fire. Chinese records say that the Chinese troops ' had to borrow some firearms from the junk traders living in Amoy before they were able to fight back'.³³ On 30 November, with only a few casualties, the Dutch invaders retreated to their ships laden with booty.³⁴ The term of office of the Regional Commander of Fu-chien, Hsü I-min, had already expired before the Dutch raid began. Nevertheless, he did his duty and led his troops on land, but probably left Fu-chien after the Dutch had retreated with their spoils.³⁵ The Regional Deputy-Commander of Fu-chien, Chang Chia-ts'ê, then assumed charge while the arrival of the new Regional Commander was awaited. He busied himself preparing a large number of fire junks to repel any further encounters. In the initial Dutch raids,

regenten van Chianchieu, in Chinees geschreven is, in het tweede jaer van de regieringe van de coninck Tchiencke, de vierde dach van de sevenste maendt[Translation of the Letter written from Cornelis Reijerszoon to the Regents of Chanchou written in Chinese in the second year of the reign of the T'ien-ch'i Emperor, the fourth day of the seventh month(10 Aug. 1622)], Pescadores, 7 Aug. 1622, fo. 227^r.

³² Groeneveldt, *De Nederlanders in China*, 127-8.

³³ Ch'ên Mêng-lei (Comp.), *Ku-chin t'u-shu chi-ch'êng* [Complete Collection of Illustrations and Writings from the Earliest Days to the Present], 10,000vols, (Taipei: Han-chên t'u-shu ching-hsiao, 1726), vol. 1110, 5-7.

³⁴ Ibidem.

³⁵ Ibidem. It is irrefutably proven that Shu had been the commander in the battles, but when he left Fu-chien was not clearly recorded.

CHAPTER TWO

Nieuwenrode's squadron had destroyed fifty junks loaded with rice and salt and thirty small fishing *wankans*. One of the coastal defence officers, National Squadron Leader, Fang Yü, (*Hongsintson*[Dutch, hereafter D.], *Fang Ch'ien-tsung*), alleged that the five Dutch ships had not been issued orders by Commander Cornelis Reyersen in the P'eng-hu Islands, but had acted on their own rash judgement. He pleaded with the Grand Co-ordinator to inform Reyersen about the mutinous behaviour of his subordinates and to promise him to dispatch Chinese trading junks to other VOC settlements, if he would leave P'eng-hu immediately.³⁶ The Grand Co-ordinator, Shang Chou-tso, did indeed write a letter and ordered the Coastal Defence Circuit, Ch'êng Tsai-i, to deliver it.³⁷ When the four Dutch ships at anchor near Amoy received the intelligence in December³⁸ that a Chinese mandarin who was intending to open new negotiations about to come, Merchant Hans van Meldert was sent to Amoy, where he was received by the Regional Deputy-Commander of Fu-chien, Chang Chia-ts'ê. Chang sought to reach a truce which would be valid pending the return of two Chinese envoys who were to be sent to Batavia with two trading junks to obtain Governor-General Jan Pieterzoon Coen's orders for the retreat from P'eng-hu.³⁹ Meanwhile, Commander Chang promised he would provide sufficient commodities if the Dutch were to demolish their fort on the P'eng-hu and retreat to some other place.⁴⁰ He also handed over the Grand Co-ordinator's letter to Van Meldert,

³⁶ Groeneveldt, *De Nederlanders in China*, 137.

³⁷ Ch'ên Mêng-lei, *Ku-chin t'u-shu chi-ch'êng*, 5-7. When the Dutch arrived, the *Hai-tao* was Kao Ing-long who seems to have left this position when the truce began. Therefore, I infer that Ch'êng Tsai-i, who later was accused of taking a Dutch bribe, is the correct incumbent in this position.

³⁸ Groeneveldt, *De Nederlanders in China*, 134.

³⁹ Leonard Blussé, 'De Chinese nachtmerrie: Een terugtocht en twee nederlagen', in: Gerrit Knaap and Ger Teitler (eds), *De verenigde oost-indische compagnie tussen oorlog en diplomatie*, (Leiden: KITLV Uitgeverij, 2002), 208-37 at 216-7.

⁴⁰ Groeneveldt, *De Nederlanders in China*, 379.

NICOLAES IQUAN BEFORE 1627

for delivery to Reyersen on the P'eng-hu.⁴¹ Upon receipt of it, Reyersen decided to meet Grand Co-ordinator, Shang Chou-tso, personally in Fu-chou. Four days before Reyersen met Shang Chou-tso, the Deputy- Commander, Chang Chia-ts'ê, and a certain Squadron Leader, Fang Yü, came to see Reyersen and begged him to tell to the Grand Co-ordinator that he had already begun to demolish the fort. In exchange they promised to smuggle as much silk as they possibly could to Taiwan for the VOC.⁴² In his meeting with the Grand Co-ordinator on 11 February 1622, Reyersen held his peace about the original VOC requests to establish a port from which it could conduct monopolistic trade with China and also about the matter of demolishing the fort.⁴³

All the previous battles in October and November 1622 are recorded in Chinese sources, including the names of the four Dutch delegates who visited the Grand Co-ordinator in February 1623. A Chinese official named Fang Yü is mentioned. He can be identified in the Dutch sources as 'Hongshintson'.⁴⁴ When the Japanese merchants kidnapped a coastal defence officer, Tung Po-ch'i, in 1616 and took him to Japan, this same Fang Yü had proposed to undertake a mission to Japan to bring Tung back.⁴⁵ In 1617 when Tung Po-ch'i was brought back to Fu-chien by Japanese merchants, Fang Yü served as one of the pilots who guided the Japanese junks to their anchorage.⁴⁶ At the time the maritime mercenary Chao Ping-chien was

⁴¹ Ibid., 135, 378

⁴² Ibid., 156.

⁴³ Ibid., 157-158.

⁴⁴ Ch'ên Mêng-lei, *Ku-chin t'u-shu chi-ch'êng*, 5-7. Dutch 'Hong' refers to his family name, 'Fang'; and the Dutch 'shintson' refers to his official title, Ch'in-tsung or National Squadron Leader.

⁴⁵ Tung Ying-chu, *Ch'ung-hsiang-chi hsüan-lu* [Selections of the Works of Tung Ying-chu], TW, no. 237, 1967, 16.

⁴⁶ Huang Ch'êng-hsüan, 'Appendix: a report to the emperor about the Japanese junks' in: TWYH (ed.), *Ming Ching-shih wên-pien hsüan-lu*, TW no 289, 1971, 251-60 at

CHAPTER TWO

accused treason in 1618, he held the position of Squadron Leader at P'eng-hu and was also arrested.⁴⁷ Since he was still active and had been promoted by 1622, he must have been able to absolve himself and was pardoned, probably because he was not a mercenary hired by the Grand Co-ordinator but a National Squadron Leader who had acquired his position either by formal examination or because it was an inherited rank and therefore an imperial appointment.⁴⁸

During the truce, on 2 April 1623 a junk commanded by Li Tan sailed from Japan to the Taiwanese port of Wan-kang carrying 140,000 rials of silver to trade with the Chinese smugglers.⁴⁹ On 11 April, four smuggling junks arrived in Taiwan. When they sailed to the P'eng-hu Islands, two of them were arrested by Squadron Leader Fang Yü.⁵⁰ This incident scared away the other smugglers,⁵¹ but Li Tan had to ask Dutch protection to dispatch small vessels to the Chinese coast in June.⁵² The VOC force on the P'eng-hu was unsuccessful in its bid to acquire any silk goods. Although Fang Yü had successfully opposed Li Tan's smuggling trade, he was not able to organize an alternative smuggling channel fast enough to provide the Dutch with goods. On 2 June, Grand Co-ordinator Shang Chou-tso found out

255.

⁴⁷ Ch'ên Hsiao-ch'ung, 'Chang-hsieh "Fei-yün-chu hsü-chi shê-t'ai shih-liao kou-ch'ên', 77.

⁴⁸ The Squadron Leader who was hired personally by the Grand Co-ordinator was called 'Ming-sê Pa-tsung' or 'Sê-tsung' abbreviated version. The rank of Squadron Leader was acquired either by passing formal exams or was the inherited status 'Ch'in-i Pa-tsung', abbreviated to 'Ch'in-tsung'. Cf. Chou K'ai, *Sha-mên Chih* [The Gazette of Amoy], TW, no. 95 (1961), 80.

⁴⁹ Groeneveldt, *De Nederlanders in China*, 171-2; Iwao, 'Li Tan: Chief of the Chinese Resident', 52.

⁵⁰ Groeneveldt, *De Nederlanders in China*, 172; Iwao, 'Li Tan: Chief of the Chinese Resident', 52.

⁵¹ Groeneveldt, *De Nederlanders in China*, 392.

⁵² Ibidem, 176; Iwao, 'Li Tan: Chief of the Chinese Resident', 52.

NICOLAES IQUAN BEFORE 1627

that the Dutch had not demolished their fort on P'eng-hu. Meanwhile, as he waited about there, Reyersen was losing hope of receiving any formal orders from Governor-General Coen to retreat from the archipelago.⁵³ That summer the new Grand Co-ordinator, Nan Chü-i, arrived in Fu-chien.⁵⁴ He announced that both parties had been cheated by Squadron Leader Fang Yü and threw him in jail.⁵⁵ On 23 September 1623, Chang Chia-ts'ê was also dismissed for arranging the truce with the Dutch.⁵⁶ After this happened, another Dutch merchant, Christiaan Franckx, was sent to Wu-yü with four ships to open a new round of negotiations. When they had been lured to a sham reception, this envoy and some of his comrades were ambushed and arrested by the Chinese officials.⁵⁷ On 8 February 1624, the new Regional Deputy-Commander of Fu-chien, Yü Tzu-kao, began to transport troops to P'eng-hu from the mainland.⁵⁸ The first camp the Chinese troops built was at Ma-kung, facing the Dutch fort across the bay. While they were stationed there, the Chinese gradually built up their forces on land and on water.⁵⁹ Faced with their vastly superior strength and plagued by the knowledge that

⁵³ Groeneveldt, *De Nederlanders in China*, 401-2. Bijlage V, Journaal van Reijersen [Journal of Reijersen], 26 July 1623. They arrived in Batavia in the spring of 1624, cf. *Daghregister gehouden int Casteel Batavia vant passerende daer ter plaetse als over geheel Nederlands India* [Diary kept in Castle Batavia concerning circumstances occurring all over the East Indian Area, hereafter *Daghregister Batavia*], 31 vols., ed. J.A. van der Chijs, H. T. Colenbrander, J. de Hullu, F. de Haan and W. Fruin-Mees (Batavia and The Hague: Ministerie van Koloniën, 1888-1931), Vol. I, 1-2, 6-8. The two junks which had been dispatched to Batavia, had not arrived there because they had failed to catch the monsoon.

⁵⁴ TWYH, *Ming shih-lu min-hai kuan-hsi shih-liao*, 133.

⁵⁵ Groeneveldt, *De Nederlanders in China*, 200.

⁵⁶ TWYH, *Ming shih-lu min-hai kuan-hsi shih-liao*, 133.

⁵⁷ Groeneveldt, *De Nederlanders in China*, 226-30.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 278; Blussé, 'De Chinese nachtmerrie: Een terugtocht en twee nederlagen', 218-9.

⁵⁹ Iwao, 'Li Tan: Chief of the Chinese Resident', 55.

CHAPTER TWO

three of his ships would soon have to leave for Japan, Reyersen's successor, Martinus Sonck, decided to retreat.⁶⁰ Reviewing what hopes there were for the Chinese trade, he could only hope that, through the mediation of Li Tan, he could obtain certain promises from Yü Tzu-kao.⁶¹ This attempt failed and Sonck eventually had to demolish the fort unconditionally and retreat to Taiwan on 18 August 1624.⁶²

Li Tan, who was seriously in debt because he could not collect from the Chinese smugglers, now had a heaven-sent opportunity to visit Amoy to act as mediator between the Dutch and Chinese. Meanwhile, a rural officer in Chao-an District, Shên T'ieh, discovered that Li Tan was indeed organizing a smuggling ring under the following pretext:

*'Li Tan, the blackguard, is one of the gang of Hsü Hsin-su, an agent of Holland. Since his earliest days, Li has been in communication with Japan, but has lately been making overtures to the Western barbarians. At present he is in Amoy under the pretext of settling his private debts and performing religious rites in honour of his ancestors. But the real aim of his visit is nothing to do with this at all. I believe his purpose is to purchase prohibited raw silk and silk goods to sell them to the Dutch, and to put out feelers about the situation for the benefit of the Dutch.'*⁶³

The most important key person whom Li Tan absorbed into this network was the Regional Deputy-Commander Yü Tzu-kao. The latter stated that he had tried to employ Li Tan as a spy in an attempt to monitor the actions of the Dutch in Taiwan:

'Li Tan, a man from Ch'üan-chou, has lived in Japan a long time,

⁶⁰ Groeneveldt, *De Nederlanders in China*, 279.

⁶¹ Iwao, 'Li Tan: Chief of the Chinese Resident', 58.

⁶² Groeneveldt, *De Nederlanders in China*, 282.

⁶³ Iwao, 'Li Tan: Chief of the Chinese Residents', 62. Note. 140. (Iwao's translation slightly revised).

NICOLAES IQUAN BEFORE 1627

[and is constantly] cooking up some scheme or other. Hsü Hsin-su, with whom Li was on intimate terms, is now in jail. Therefore, we might take Hsü's child hostage, and dispatch Hsü to Li to try to persuade him to return his allegiance[to us]'.⁶⁴

Just at this time, the local gentry of Fu-chien were endeavouring to revive the policy of employing semi-self-financing maritime mercenaries. On 23 September 1623, an official You Fêng-hsiang, who had been born in Fu-chien, proposed that the mercenary posts which guarded the Fu-chiense coastal waters should be re-opened in response to the growing threats from the sea.⁶⁵ A proposal written by the Grand Co-ordinator, Nan Chü-i, on 17 May 1625, mentions that, after Regional Deputy-Commander Yü Tzu-kao had returned to Amoy, only two Squadron Leaders, Wang Mêng-hsiung and Yeh Ta-ching, should maintain a continuous presence in the army camp on the P'eng-hu. If they were to achieve the goal of securing the Pescadores, they should contemplate remaining there for another three years. Since they had all originally been either mercenaries or Provincial Squadron Leaders (*Ming-sê Pa-tsung*), the condition that National Squadron Leaders (*Ch'in-i Pa-tsung*) be posted there should be lifted.⁶⁶ Meanwhile, the Hsü Hsin-su who was mentioned above had been recruited by Regional Deputy-Commander Yü Tzu-kao as a (Provincial) Squadron Leader,⁶⁷ whose task was to act as the contact person for the silk-smuggling trade with

⁶⁴ Iwao, 'Li Tan: Chief of the Chinese Residents', 63. Note. 142. (Iwao's translation slightly revised)..

⁶⁵ TWYH, *Ming shih-lu min-hai kuan-hsi shih-liao*, 127.

⁶⁶ The Ministry of War, 'T'iao-ch'ên P'êng-hu shan-hou shih-i ts'an-kao (2) [A Proposal for Dealing with the Later Stationing of Troops in the Pescadores (2), incomplete]' in: TWYH (ed.), *Ming-chi Hê-lan-jên ch'in-chü P'êng-hu ts'an-tang*, [Remaining archives about the Dutch invasion of the Pescadores in Ming dynasty], TW no. 154, (1962), 24. 16 May 1625.

⁶⁷ Ts'ao Lu-tai, *Ching-hai Chi-lüeh* [An Account of the Pacification of Coastal Waters], TW, no. 33, (1959), 5.

CHAPTER TWO

Taiwan.⁶⁸ Hence, at more or less about the same time, the smuggling route which linked Amoy-P'eng-hu-Taiwan and Japan was revived in the same way as it had been to counter the challenge mounted by the Japanese merchants in 1616. Now there was one essential difference. In 1616, the Japanese merchants were willing to bypass Formosa (Taiwan) if the commodities for the transit trade could be obtained in Cochinchina and Manila, but now the VOC was determined to cut off all Chinese traffic with Manila and the Macao trade with Japan. If it achieved this goal, it could monopolize all the Sino-Japanese trade in Taiwan. This tricky situation meant that the new maritime mercenaries had to deal not only with the Chinese tributary system and the new tributary system which Japan was in the process of creating, they were also required to bridge the gap between the Chinese tributary system and the European newcomers.

Captain and reluctant mercenaries

In April 1623, the States-General and Princes Maurice of Nassau dispatched a fleet of eleven ships with orders to sail to Manila Bay via South America. The strategy was to intercept Spanish galleons *en route* from Acapulco to the Philippines.⁶⁹ In the same period, the governor of Formosa, Martinus Sonck, was ordered to send an auxiliary fleet from Taiwan to join forces with it in Manila Bay. On 12 December 1624, the Council of Taiwan decided to equip a squadron to patrol the Bashi Strait in between Luzon and Formosa.⁷⁰ On the

⁶⁸ VOC 1093, Resolutie genomen bij den E heer gouv. Martinus Sonck za:[ende zijn raedt]op piscadores ofte pehou ende op Tajjauwan op 't Eijland Formosa [Resolution issued by the Governor of Taiwan, Martinus Sonck, and his Council on the Pescadores or P'eng-hu and at Taiwan Bay near the island of Formosa], Taiwan, 14 July 1625, fo. 354^f.

⁶⁹ Sloos, *De Nederlanders in de Philippijnsche wateren*, 91.

⁷⁰ VOC 1093, Resolutie genomen bij Martinus Sonck, Taiwan/Pescadores, 12 Dec. 1624, fo. 341^v.

NICOLAES IQUAN BEFORE 1627

same day, Governor Sonck wrote a letter to Governor-General Pieter de Carpentier in which he made an interesting suggestion:

*‘Here are some junks belonging to the Captain China (Li Tan) and the Pedro China (Yen Ssu-ch’i), whom we would gladly recruit for the Company and have them accompany our fleet. The above-mentioned Captain China and Pedro China seem to be well disposed to this idea, so we shall keep working on it, expecting good results.’*⁷¹

Obviously Sonck was hoping for assistance from those junks which were anchored in the bay of Taiwan, but not all the members of the Taiwan Council agreed with his suggestion. Probably not even Li Tan and Yen Ssu-ch’i were sincere in their support. When the scheduled day of departure, 20 January, arrived the Council had not yet approved his proposal, but Sonck must have finally been able to persuade his Council, because on the 25th, it agreed to employ the Chinese smugglers:

‘Previously in various meetings we have decided that it would be both advisable and useful to send some junks crewed by Chinese to Manila with our fleet, on the condition that they agree to serve the East India Company. Many Chinese are desirous of joining us now. Two junks have been fitted out by the Captain China (Li Tan)and one junk by the Pedro China (Yen Ssu-ch’i). It has been decided to dispatch these three junks from here in the service of the Company. The sailors will enjoy the same treatment as

⁷¹ VOC 1083, Missive van gouverneur Martinus Sonck naar Batavia aan de gouverneur-general Pieter de Carpentier [Letter from Governor Martinus Sonck to Governor-General Pieter de Capentier in Batavia], Taiwan, 12 Dec.1624, fo. 52^r; cf. Chiang Shu-sheng (ed.), *De Missiven van de VOC-gouverneur in Taiwan aan de Gouverneur-generaal te Batavia*[Letters from the Governor of Taiwan sent to the Governor-General in Batavia], (Taipei: Nant’ien Publisher, 2007), I 1622-1626, 153.(Hereafter cited as ‘De Missiven’)

CHAPTER TWO

*Company employees according to their rank.*⁷²

Nothing was mentioned about what reward would be given to Li Tan and Yen Ssu-ch'i after their junks had accomplished this mission. All that was required of them was to agree to hire out their junks and give the crews permission to serve the Company. Frankly speaking, it was a brilliant piece of calculation to keep the heads of the Chinese smugglers in the bay of Taiwan, while most of their manpower was being sent away. With these precious junks in their fleet without their owners, the Dutch did not have to be worried that Li Tan and Yen Ssu-ch'i might betray them. However, without their supervision, who would be suitable to be appointed the temporary leader of this mercenary squadron? One qualified person just happened to be at their disposal: Cheng Chih-lung alias Nicolas Iquan.

Cheng Chih-lung was one of the agents who had been employed by Li Tan to assist him in distributing capital from Japan to the Chinese coast. When Li Tan was liaising between the Chinese army and the VOC, he felt obliged to call upon an interpreter because he could not speak Portuguese fluently.⁷³ As it so happened, Cheng Chih-lung had been recommended by Li Tan to serve the VOC under Cornelis Reyersen as interpreter since the spring of 1624.⁷⁴ Not a great deal is known about Cheng Chih-lung's early career. What is sure is that he had been engaged as a commercial agent in the shipping corridor between Macao and Japan and that he had been baptized 'Nicolas Iquan' and had learned Portuguese well.⁷⁵ Not long before 1621, he

⁷² VOC 1093, Resolutie genomen bij Martinus Sonck, Taiwan/Pescadores, 25 Jan. 1625, fos. 347^v-348^r.

⁷³ Leonard Blussé, 'Minnan-jen or Cosmopolitan? The rise of Cheng Chih-lung alias Nicolas Iquan', in EduardB. Vermeer (ed.), *Development and decline of Fukien province in the 17th and 18th centuries*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990), 245-64 at 254.

⁷⁴ Iwao, 'Li Tan: Chief of the Chinese Residents', 78.

⁷⁵ Charles Ralph Boxer, 'The Rise and Fall of Nicholas Iquan (Cheng Chilung)', *T'ien Hsia Monthly*, Apr.-May (1941), 1-39 at 11-5.

NICOLAES IQUAN BEFORE 1627

was living in Hirado in Japan, where he befriended the chief of the Dutch factory, Jaques Specx. It is about this time that he might have been recruited as an agent by Li Tan.⁷⁶ When he was dispatched to Taiwan, according to some Chinese sources he was also serving Yen Ssu-ch'i. There is good reason to believe that Yen Ssu-ch'i is identical to the Pedro China in the Dutch sources.⁷⁷

There must have been a tacit bargain between the parties. Li Tan and the Pedro China made Iquan feign that he was loyal the Dutch governor, but the governor neatly turned the tables and used Iquan to erode their influence. This drama reached its climax just two days after the fleet had departed, 27 January 1625. According to the journal kept by the captain of the yacht the *Victorie*, Iquan only managed to man his junks by the skin of his teeth.

‘Acting on the orders of the Honourable Commander Pieter Muijser, we hoisted the sails on the yacht in the roadstead of Taijouan, in order to sail out of the harbour towards the [South]Tamsuy River to join the four junks to our fleet. Just as we turned towards the south, the Chinese interpreter, Iquan, came aboard. He told us the junks would not be able to sail out of the river until the highest point of the flood tide at one o’clock in the morning. We had intended to inform the Honourable Commander but, because there was no wind, we could do nothing in the river. We anchored there and immediately sent a small junk with a short note, to help them come out, ...

...The above-mentioned Iquan came on board again, and said that the junks had been found, but he had seen nobody. I asked them why the junks had not come out at night. He answered that the tide had not risen high enough. Then he asked us if we could wait 2 or 3 hours. Iquan was planning to depart with us in the direction of Manila on the smallest junk of the four, which had already sailed out. The other three junks would follow as soon as

⁷⁶ Iwao, ‘Li Tan: Chief of the Chinese Resident’, 72-5.

⁷⁷ De Missiven, 118-9. note 47.

CHAPTER TWO

possible...

*...When the appointed moment arrived, we saw no junk, so we abided by our decision to move on.*⁷⁸

Because the Council had been so late in giving its approval to this proposal, it had not been possible to shift the junks from the sandbank at the mouth of the river at the high tide. A check of the calendar shows that the best opportunities would have been at full moon on the 23rd. The junks finally managed to sail out of the river on 8 February, precisely the highest tide of the month.⁷⁹ The delays seem to be a sure sign that these Chinese volunteer mercenaries were not overenthusiastic about the task before them. Neither Li Tan nor the Pedro China supported the mission wholeheartedly. This assumption seems to be thoroughly confirmed by the fact Iquan reported that not a single member of the crew had actually reported for duty on these junks. Their absence seems to imply that he did not even have the support of his own mercenary soldiers. The fact that Iquan first failed to report personally with his small junk is just as mysterious.

About one month later, the yacht the *Victorie*, which was originally assigned to lead the junks to the fleet caught up with the other ships on 26 February near Cape Bolinao.⁸⁰ The next day, two junks led by Iquan also

⁷⁸ VOC 1087, Cort verhael van de voijagie gedaen met 't jacht Victoria naer de cust van Manilha int affweesen van de vloot van 27 Januarij tot 26 Februarij 1625 [The Short Log of the Voyage of the Yacht the *Victoria* to the coast near Manila after she was separated from the Main Fleet, 27 Jan.-26 Feb. 1625], fo. 354^{r-v}. (hereafter cited as 'The Report of the yacht the *Victoria*')

⁷⁹ VOC 1085, Missive van Martinus Sonck aan de gouverneur-generaal Pieter de Carpentier, Taiwan, 19 Feb. 1625, fo. 232^r; cf. Chiang (ed.), *De Missiven*, 174.

⁸⁰ VOC 1087, Journael van den tocht gedaen van Taijouan naer de baeij van Manilha ende custe van Luconia mette scheepen 't *Wapen van Zeelandt*, *Noorthollant* ende *Orange*, mitsgaders de jachten den *Haen*, *Fortuijn* en *Victoria* onder 't commandement van Pieter Jansen Muijsen van 27 Januarij tot 22 Meij 1625, [Journal

NICOLAES IQUAN BEFORE 1627

joined the fleet. The commander of the fleet, Pieter Muijser, who was then on the warship the *Wapen van Zeeland*, reported this reunion with double-edged, wry humor:

*‘On the 27th of the same month, we spied two sails. Two of the junks destined to support us had appeared. The commander, Iquan, came on board straightaway accompanied by six or eight warriors, carrying long and short swords and halberds, and reported that he had sailed with his three junks only six days after the yacht the Victorie had departed. But the crew of the third junk had not been willing to sail...’*⁸¹

*...I promised them that, if they need such ammunition as bullets, fuses and gunpowder, I would supply them. He had no shortage of food or anything else... I ordered him to sail close to our ships, and to remain in the vicinity of the fleet, so that we would not become separated. He had no objection to this request, but asked whether we could come to anchor close to the shore at the night. The reason being that in their judgement, the sea would become too rough to hold a position.’*⁸²

After the 27th, the two Chinese junks under Iquan’s command did their very to deep up with the fleet,⁸³ but at night they still anchored their junks separately, somewhere close to the shore. Iquan complained to the Dutch

of the Ships the *Wapen van Zeeland*, the *Noortholland* and the *Orange* and the yachts the *Haen*, the *Fortuijn*, and the *Victoria* on their voyage from Taiwan to Manila Bay and the coast of Luzon under the command of Pieter Jansen Muijser, 27 Jan.-22 May. 1635], 22 May. 1625, fo. 377^r. (Hereafter, ‘Journal of Ship Wapen van Zeeland...’); cf. ‘Bijlage III: Journael van den tocht gedaen van Taijouan naer Manila anno 1625’, in Dirk Abraham Sloos, *De Nederlanders in de Philippijnsche wateren voor 1626*[The Dutch in Philippine Waters before 1626], (Amsterdam, J.H. de Wit: 1898), 130.

⁸¹ VOC 1087, ‘Journal of the Ship the *Wapen van Zeeland*’, 22 May. 1625, fo. 377^r; Sloos, *De Nederlanders in de Philippijnsche wateren*, 130.

⁸² Ibidem, fo. 377^{r-v}.

⁸³ Sloos, *De Nederlanders in de Philippijnsche wateren*, 130.

CHAPTER TWO

commander on the evening of the 27th, but the Dutchman only laughed, saying 'Iquan earlier suggested dropping anchor close to the shore tonight, the judgement of a naive sailor'.⁸⁴

On the night of the 28th, the Chinese junks still insisted on anchoring within sight of the coast. The following day, they were again loath to sail away from the shore with the Dutch fleet. On the 2 March, the two junks were still keeping their own course along the coastline separate from the Dutch fleet. Commander Pieter Muijser decided to take measures to discipline this disobedience. He sent Junior Merchant Abraham le Poivre to the two Chinese junks, with 50 pounds of gunpowder, 20 pounds of bullets, seven muskets and three bundles fuses, so that he could explain to them once again what their obligations were.⁸⁵

*'I also told him that to steer clear of danger he should bring his junks nearer our fleet (they would be the Company employees approaching the enemy coast) and that we would not constantly hug the coast, therefore they should try to join us on the high seas. On the other hand, if were some accident to befall them, they should not blame us but acknowledge it was because of their own negligence.'*⁸⁶

The co-operation did not run smoothly. Iquan and his men still refused to sail too far from the shore, repeating once and again '*Haz mucho grande mar*'.⁸⁷

For five days, notwithstanding their contradictory navigational preferences, both parties had been making compromises. The Dutch Commander, Pieter Muijser, was never really aware of what Iquan was trying

⁸⁴ Ibid., 130.

⁸⁵ VOC 1087, 'Journal of Ship Wapen van Seeland', 22 May. 1625, fo. 377^v; Sloos, *De Nederlanders in de Philippijnsche wateren*, 131.

⁸⁶ VOC 1087, 'Journal of Ship Wapen van Seeland', 22 May. 1625, fo. 377^v; Sloos, *De Nederlanders in de Philippijnsche wateren*, 131.

⁸⁷ Sloos, *De Nederlander in de Philippijnsche wateren*, 131-2.

NICOLAES IQUAN BEFORE 1627

to say: ‘*Haz mucho grande mar*’ could mean ‘the sea is very rough’ but also ‘the sea is very wide’. Iquan knew very well that the Chinese junks customarily sailed close to the shore rather than tempting fate on the off-shore routes. Hence, if he followed the Dutch fleet on the off-shore routes, this might reduce the chances of catching the Chinese junks. However, the reefs in the shallow waters near the shore posed a fatal threat to the larger Dutch ships. The goal of this fleet was to harass the Spanish naval force assembled in the vicinity of the bay of Manila and to welcome the fleet dispatched by the States-General which had sailed in from the Pacific Ocean. Neither of these two aims were of much use to Iquan’s team. Li Tan and the *Pedro China* would certainly expect rewards from Iquan for furnishing the junks, fitting them out and provisioning them. This sense of obligation was almost certainly the reason Iquan was so eager to lay his hands on booty, with or without the assistance of the Dutch fleet.

To remedy this situation, a semi-independent maritime mercenary team under Iquan’s command supplied with Dutch military apparatus and flags was established. It was a temporary arrangement devised to acquire enough booty to satisfy every participant in this business. And this is exactly what happened. Two Chinese junks carried an ample horde of booty when they returned on 19 March 1625.

‘The two Chinese junks brought 2,400 rials in silver and 3 piculs 40 catties of raw silk, which were plundered from various Chinese and Portuguese vessels in waters near Pangasilan, according to the commanders of above-mentioned junks. These junks and their crews were hired to serve the Company and should have been supplied with the same victuals and beverages as the Company’ employees were. These junks have now (according to them) left the fleet with the consent of the Commander Muijser, because they were afraid that, once the Spanish galleons sailed out, their mission would be over... As for their voyage home, they had received no provisions at all, including their wages and other expenses incurred by the junks, weaponry and ammunition, in view of their performance we decided to

CHAPTER TWO

*grant them 1,500 rials instantly, without waiting for ratification by Commander Muijser and to permit them to distribute it among their officers and seamen. If we pay the salaries and the fitting out and some other costs incurred by the commanders of above-mentioned junks, they will not be able to make any further claim (on booty).*⁸⁸

This privateering construction, although initially it was only a temporary arrangement between the Chinese smugglers and the Dutch governor in Taiwan Bay, gradually evolved into a steady co-operation, since the elimination of the Sino-Manila trade benefited both parties. Under this construction, Iquan did not serve the Company on an individual basis, but as a leader of a team. His role as contact person on both sides was a precious opportunity for him to gain status without offending his bosses.⁸⁹ At the end of this year, coincidentally Li Tan and the Pedro China died at almost the same time, which left Iquan in the role of the potential leader of all their followers residing in the area of the bay of Taiwan. From that moment, the Taiwan governor began to single him out quite markedly, which might be construed as a mark of respect.

‘Iquan, who once served as interpreter for Commander Reyersen is

⁸⁸ VOC 1093, Resolutie genomen bij Martinus Sonck, Taiwan/Pescadores, 20 Mar, 1625, fo. 349^{r-v}.

⁸⁹ This ties in neatly with the hypothesis put forward by Leonard Blussé that Iquan is the ‘third person’ who achieved a position of his own, beyond the control of both of the parties who had originally intended to manipulate him.’ Cf. Blussé, Leonard, ‘The VOC as Sorcerer’s Apprentice: Stereotypes and Social Engineering on the China Coast’, in Wilt Lukas Idema (ed.), *Leyden Studies in Sinology: Papers Presented at the Conference held in Celebration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Sinological Institute of Leyden University, December 8-12, 1980*, (Lieden: E.J. Brill, 1981), 87-105 at 104-5. However, I believe that Chinese smugglers would not have been called upon to support Cheng Chih-lung at the beginning of his operations. If this is so, the Chinese smugglers should be included in ‘parties’ who were equally anxious to get rid of him.

NICOLAES IQUAN BEFORE 1627

*expected to arrive here soon with some twenty to thirty junks. These junks have raided those Chinese in the north who refused to pay a contribution and those Chinese who are the enemies of the people from Satsuma (Satzuma [J.]). As soon as they arrive, we should call a halt to their robbery, because they sailed in the name of the Company under the Prince's flag and pennants.'*⁹⁰

Although this letter reveals that the next governor of Formosa, Gerrit Frederikzoon de Wit, intended to cease this co-operation before it spun out of control, he went ahead and asked Iquan to suppress the Chinese pirates, but Iquan was not given enough power to be able to accomplish this mission. He arrived somewhat later on a big junk which had sprung a leak and divided his booty under the terms of the contract concluded with the Company.⁹¹ Whatever the real truth of the matter, Iquan was the only person among the pirates and mercenaries on whom the Company could rely.

Crossing the Rubicon

In June of 1626, Iquan appeared before the Taiwan Council from which he requested letters which would allow him attempts to coax his 'associate pirates' or 'piratical associates' to live under Dutch rule in the bay of Taiwan,⁹² because the reason behind this move was that the authorities in Zeelandia Castle wrongly believed that the agreement with the Fu-chien authorities had been sealed and expected that it would not be long before the Chinese junks would arrive to sell their promised commodities. In preparation for this consummation, the roadstead should be kept safe at all

⁹⁰ VOC 1087, Missive van Gerrit Fredericksen de Witt aan de gouverneur-generaal Pieter de Carpentier, Taiwan, 29 Oct.1625, fo. 394^v; cf. Chiang (ed.), *De Missiven*, 216.

⁹¹ VOC 1090, Missive from Gerard Frederiksz de With to Batavia, 4 Mar. 1626, fo. 179^r; Chiang (ed.), *De Missiven*, 234.

⁹² VOC1093, Resolutie genomen bij de gouverneur Martinus Sonck, Taiwan/Pescadores, 9 Jun.1626, fo. 370^r.

CHAPTER TWO

costs. To be able to distinguish friendly from hostile Chinese junks, they needed the services of Iquan to inveigle any outlaws residing in the vicinity to reveal their true colours. The late governor of Taiwan, Martinus Sonck, had conceived a utopian dream: he wanted to create a free harbour, where Dutch, Chinese, Japanese, and Aborigines could live and trade together peacefully. He invited all Chinese residents to move to a new settlement in the island of Formosa, but his plans were thrown into disarray when the new town was devastated by a plague epidemic which spared no one.⁹³ After its depredations, this whole settlement had to be abandoned.⁹⁴

In the following spring, the Dutch Council in Taiwan again dispatched its Chinese maritime mercenaries to intercept Chinese junks sailing to and from Manila.⁹⁵ This time, the leader was not Iquan but one of his followers named Suntien. On 24 June, Suntien returned to Taiwan with captured cargoes of porcelain and a letter from Iquan, who was then residing on Nan-ao Island with a 'large group of followers'. Iquan asked the Dutch governor to grant him a pass so that he might bring his force to the Bay of Taiwan. He also asked Suntien be sent back to join him and his force, because the best moment to intercept Chinese junks returning from Manila was approaching.⁹⁶

During the monsoon season of 1627, forty-three junks made legitimate voyages to the Philippines, the Cochin-China Peninsula, the Malay Peninsula and other destinations in the South China Sea. By the end of the season, only

⁹³ VOC 1093, Resolutie genomen bij de commandeur Gerit Fredericksz de Wit ende den raet, Taiwan/Pescadores, 22, Sept.1625, fo. 359^v.

⁹⁴ VOC 1093, Resolutie genomen bij de commandeur Gerit Fredericksz de Wit ende den raet, Taiwan/Pescadores, 24, June 1626, fos. 340^v-341^r.

⁹⁵ VOC 1093, Resolutie genomen bij de commandeur Gerit Fredericksz de Wit ende den raet, Taiwan/Pescadores, 15 Jun.1627, fo. 385^f, '...who led three junks and departed from there with our pass in order to intercept those junks sailing to Manila.'

⁹⁶ VOC 1093, Resolutie genomen bij de commandeur Gerit Fredericksz de Wit, Taiwan/Pescadores, 15 Jun.1627, fo. 385^r.

NICOLAES IQUAN BEFORE 1627

twenty-three junks returned. The losses, including cash and commodities, were estimated at several million taels.⁹⁷ The junks which did not return had definitely fallen victim to Dutch-sponsored privateers. Although it is not clearly expounded in the Dutch archival papers, Iquan's plan was strikingly similar to the Dutch project put forward in 1625. On 22 May 1625, after the operations around Luzon had been completed, the Dutch fleet dispatched part of its force to the waters around Nan-ao Island off the southeastern coast of China. Their mission was to intercept any vessel trading with Iberian settlements:

*'If you encounter any Chinese junk from Manila or Macao in the vicinity of Nan-ao Island, you should arrest it and confiscate its goods.'*⁹⁸

If any Chinese junk is intending to sail to Siam, Cambodia, Patani or other friendly places, you should allow it to pass without harassment.

*On the other hand, you should confiscate those coming from Macao or intending to sail to Malacca or any other hostile place.'*⁹⁹

Furthermore, a rumour was spreading about a Chinese privateer who

⁹⁷ Chu Ch'in-hsiang, 'Ping-pu t'i-hsing ping-k'ê ch'ao-ch'u fu-chien hsün-fu chu t'i-kaio[The Report by the Grand Co-ordinator Chu Ch'ing-hsiang Extracted from the Ministry of Defence] undated', in: TWYH (ed.), *Chêng-shih shih-liao ch'u-pien*[The First Compilation of Historical Documents referring to the Cheng Family], TW no. 157, 5.

⁹⁸ VOC 1093, Instructie voor de Commandeur Pieter Jans Muijser ende Raet vande schepen 'T wapen van Zeelant, Noorthollandt, Orangie, mitsgaders de jachten *de Haen, de Fortuijn* ende *Victorie* gaende in vloote naer de custe van Manilha, Taiwan, 30 Dec.1624, fo. 345^v.

⁹⁹ VOC 1087, Memorie voor de overhooffden van 't schip *Noorthollandt* gaende van hier langs de cust van China naer de baijen van Chincheu, Commorijn ofte Pandorang ende soo voorts naer Batavia[Memorandum for the Officers of the Ship the *Noortholland* Which is Bound for Batavia from Here via the Coast of China, Changchou bay, Cam-ranh or Phan-rang bay], Taiwan, 22 May. 1625, fo. 313^r.

CHAPTER TWO

was conspiring to attack Macao:

‘Lately we have received some news from Chinese junks, reporting that the Portuguese in Macao had been told that the Chinese freebooters (vrijbuijters) on the coast of China have made a contract with Chinese who live in or around Macao to take it over with their and Dutch assistance. Therefore, the Portuguese have expelled all Chinese from there, which has offended the Chinese officials in Kungtung province, so they no longer allow any food to be brought to Macao. This has resulted in a serious shortage of all things.’

100

Quite probably one of these ‘Chinese freebooters’ was Iquan, because at that moment he was the only person who really maintained very friendly ties with the Dutch authorities in Taiwan while he waited off Nan-ao Island where he was gathering vessels. Among the twenty-three junks which returned safely were ten vessels which did not sail on Fu-chien’s harbours but frequented ports on the Kuang-tung coast. Fu-chienese trading junks which sailed into Kuang-tung harbours committed a serious violation of the regulations of the Chinese Empire. As it was possible that these junks had returned from pro-Dutch destinations (Siam, Patani, Cambodia), Iquan left them unharmed according to his instructions, but he did everything in his power to keep them away from the Fu-chien coast.

When Iquan sent a delegation of his followers on Nan-ao Island to the governor of Taiwan, Gerrit Frederikz de Wit, mentioned above, he was looking for a new home where his people would be welcome. He needed a home-base so that he could set about accumulating his capital, in other words, a place to store his money and his booty. His people needed a place to live through the winter, and this matter had to be settled before the north monsoon began in autumn. He was probably pondering his next step. At this juncture,

¹⁰⁰ VOC 1092, Missive van Cornelis van Nijenroode aen den gouverneur generaal Pieter de Carpentier, Firando, 1 Oct. 1627, fo. 358^v.

NICOLAES IQUAN BEFORE 1627

he was involved in a new situation. According to a letter sent by the T'ung-an District Magistrate, Ts'ao Lu-tai, a famine was about to engulf Fu-chien Province:

*'On account of the droughts, the harvest reaped in the spring of 1626 consisted of only half the normal amount of grain (in the fields of T'ung-an District). The following summer and autumn, the drought intensified in severity and the paddy fields were totally empty. Not until the spring of this year, 1627, did a drop of rain fall. In the countryside, people have consumed all the roots and skins of any plants.'*¹⁰¹

The failure of a rice harvest was never an unusual event for the Fu-chienese people who lived around Chang-chou and Ch'üan-chou prefectures (the Min-nan area). Whenever this disaster struck, they had used to purchase rice from neighbouring Ch'ao-chou prefecture in Kuang-tung province.¹⁰² Therefore, when the first symptoms of a famine appeared in the spring of 1626, the Amoy Regional Commander, Yü Tze-kao, dispatched some junks to Kuang-tung province to purchase rice.¹⁰³ Apparently, this

¹⁰¹ Ts'ao Lu-tai, *Ching-hai Chi-lüeh*, TW no. 33, 3.

¹⁰² Wang Shih-mao, 'Min pu shu' [A Description of the Min Area], in: Ch'ê Chi-hsin (ed.), *Chung-hua yeh-shih* [Unofficial Histories of China], 16 vols, (Chi-nan: T'ai-shan publisher, 2000), II, 1911. 'There are no wells on the hills around Chang-chou and Ch'üan-chou. The streams are short and contain little water. Owing to these reasons, the inhabitants welcome rain and worry about the onset of drought. ...Once the drought begins, people are anxious that riots will break out because of the poor harvest. On the other hand, the people frequently import rice from Ch'ao-chou.' For general situation pertaining to the rice production in Fu-chien, cf. Chang, 'Chinese Maritime Trade', 155-60.

¹⁰³ VOC 1090, Missive van Gerrit Fredericksen de Wit uijt het jacht Erasmus aen den gouverneur generael, Chiu-lung River, 4 Mar. 1626, fo. 176^v; also in: Chiang (ed.), *De Missiven*, 230. 'Three days later (12 Feb. 1626), Hsü Hsin-su came here, saying that he has just returned from a mission, on which he escorted several junks returning from Kuang-tung to Chang-chou after purchasing rice.' Cf. The Minister of War, Yen

CHAPTER TWO

imported rice was not sufficient to relieve the needs of the Ch'üan-chou people, especially those living in the non-urban areas: the T'ung-an District. In fact, when the famine devastated the countryside as the summer of 1626 drew to its end, a retired high-ranking official, Ts'ai Hsien-ch'ên, who had served at the Nanking court for about thirteen years, sent a petition to the District Magistrate of Chieh-yang in Ch'ao-chou prefecture, asking him to supply the T'ung-an people with rice. In this letter he implied that the new Superme Commander of Kuang-tung and Kuang-hsi, Shang Chou-tso, had given the T'ung-an people a special dispensation to purchase rice, despite the current prohibition put on its sale by the Kuang-tung authorities.¹⁰⁴ Since Shang Chou-tso left his post in Kuang-tung soon afterwards, this petition must not have had any effect. Another high-ranking official who had served at the Peking court and was taking a rest in Fu-chou accused the Fu-chien Grand Co-ordinator, Chu Ch'in-hsiang, of having issued a rice-ban in the summer of 1627, a policy which punished not the pirates but the people in T'ung-an.¹⁰⁵ When the Chu's successor, Chu I-fêng, consulted him on the

Ming T'ai, 'Wei min-chiang pu-k'ê pu-ch'ü, min-fu pu-k'ê pu-liu têng shih on 13 Mar. 1628[Suggest to remove the Military Commanders of Fu-chien while keep the grand coordinator of Fu-chien at station]', in: Ch'ên Yün-lin, *Chung-kuo ti-i li-shih tang-an kuan* [The First Archives of China], Hai-hsia liang-an ch'u-pan chiao-liu chung-hsin[The Center of Cross Strait Interchange in Publication] (comp.), *Ming-ch'ing Kung-ts'ang t'ai-wan tang-an hui-pien* [Compilation of archives in Ming and Ch'ing Court relating to Taiwan], 230 vols, (Peking: Chiu Chou, 2009), Vol. 3, 81-115 at 92.

¹⁰⁴ Ts'ai Hsien-ch'ên, *Ch'ing-pai t'ang gao*[The Compilation of Works in the Ch'ing-pai Mansion], (Chin-mên: county government of Chin-mên, 1999), 859-860; Wu T'ing-hsieh, *Ming tu-fu nien-piao*[A Table of All the Terms of Office of the Grand Co-ordinators and the Governors under Ming Dynasty], (Taipei: Chunghua bookstore, 1982), 668.

¹⁰⁵ Tung Ying-chu, *Ch'ung-hsiang-chi hsüan-lu*[Selections of Tung Ying-chu's Works], TW, no. 237, (1959), 69 'The previous Grand Co-ordinator did not understand the way the pirates behaved. He ordered all junks be prohibited from purchasing rice, as a solution to weed out pirates'; 'Before he declared the rice ban,

NICOLAES IQUAN BEFORE 1627

best way to eradicate the pirates, he replied, 'Hearing that in Chang-chou and Ch'üan-chou, people can now sell their daughter for only several *tou* of rice, I realize that people will be forced to commit robbery. The only solution is to lift the rice ban. If you do not do it now, later there will be a heavy price to pay for this damaging policy.'¹⁰⁶

In these two years, it was very strange that only Ch'üan-chou prefecture, in T'ung-an District in particular, was afflicted by this famine. Why was there was no help forthcoming from Chang-chou or any special expedition to provide the starving people with rice? What is the explanation of the fact that that even when the local gentry of Ch'üan-chou tried to use their influence with their relatives and old friends at the emperor's court, the Fu-chien authorities still adhered so stubbornly to this ill-informed policy? The explanation is very simple: Regional Commander Yü Tze-kao was exploiting this situation to make money from the rice trade, because he and he alone possessed the right to dispatch his junks to purchase rice under the pretext of collecting food supplies for his soldiers. In a letter of censure written by one high-ranking minister of the emperor enumerating the mistakes that Yü Tze-kao had made, the former raised accusations about this trade.

'How desperate the people in Min-nan were! The junk trade with Kuang-tung

only about 100 vessels had been under Chêng Chih-lung (Iquan)'s command. After the rice ban was issued, the vessels under his authority increased to 1000.' In the other essay he mentions: 'When Cheng Chilung began his career, he had only a few dozen vessels. In 1626, the number had increased to 120 vessels. In 1627, it reached to 700 vessels.' Tung, *Ch'ung-hsiang-chi hsüan-lu*, 43. This record also proves that the rice ban must have been proclaimed by Grand Co-ordinator Chu Ch'in-hsiang in the summer of 1627.

¹⁰⁶ Tung, *Ch'ung-hsiang-chi hsüan-lu*, 38. A *tou* is a unit of dry measure. Each *tou* is equal to one-tenth of a *tan*. One *tan* equals about 107.4 litre, hence one *tou* equals 10.74 litres. Cf. Ray Huang, *Taxation in sixteenth-century Ming China*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1974), p. xiv.

CHAPTER TWO

*had been disrupted. Moreover, when the harvest is poor the rice price jumps. The common people were starving, the situation was life-threatening. Yü Tze-kao dispatched some official junks to purchase grain, officially to collect supplies for the soldiers, but the actual upshot was that the grain was lost into the pirates' hands.'*¹⁰⁷

In short, while Iquan was intercepting the Chinese junks around Nan-ao Island in fulfillment of his contract with the Dutch, growing numbers of people were being forced to flee from their home town (which was also Iquan's native place) in order to survive. However, the famine did not hold sway in T'ung-an District because Iquan was intercepting the rice junks at the behest of the Dutch, it was the rice-ban itself which lay at the root of the famine. Iquan could offer the refugees temporary shelter on Nan-ao Island, just as Dutch had housed him and his men in Taiwan, but the real solution was to lift this 'rice ban' before it was too late. This was the decision Iquan finally made after July of 1627.

¹⁰⁷ Chiang Jih-shêng, *T'ai-wan wai-chi* [An Unofficial History of Taiwan], (Taipei: Shih-chieh shu-chü, 1704/1985), 32. 'Kung-k'ê kei shih chung Yen Chi-tsu ts'an yü-tzu-kao shu [Charge Laid by the Palace Steward at the Office of the Scrutiny of Work, Yen Chi-tsu, against Commander Yü Tzu-kao].' Although the document quoted is missing, it is mentioned in other official document and hence is reliable. Cf. Li Lu-shêng, 'Wei min-k'ou ch'ang-chüeh min-shêng tung-yao têng-shih 29 Mar. 1628[Suggestions in Response to the Rampant Piracy in Fu-chien and the Unstable Local Government]', in *T'ai-wan shih-liao pien-chi wei-yüen-hui* [Editorial Committee of Taiwan Historical Material] (here after cited as TWSL)(ed.), *Ming-ch'ing t'ai-wan tang-an hui-pien*[Compilation of Historical Documents of the Ming and Ch'ing Dynasties], 110 vols, (Taipei, Yüen-liu Publisher: 2004), I 1621-1644, 304. The same quoted paragraph is also identical to another letter written by the Ministry of War. Cf. Yen Ming-t'ai, 'Wei pei-ch'ên min-shêng kuan-yüen ch'ü-liu ping hai-shang ch'ing-hsing shih, 17 Mar. 1628 [Opinions about Whether or Not the Present Authorities in Fu-chien Should Step Down]', in TWSL (ed.), *Ming-ch'ing t'ai-wan tang-an hui-pien*, I 1621-1644, 295.

NICOLAES IQUAN BEFORE 1627

On the first day of July 1627, Iquan defeated the Fu-chien naval force by surprising some ninety war-junks in the port of T'ung-shan (an Island nearby Nan-ao). It was the first time he used aggression on purpose against the naval force of Chinese empire.¹⁰⁸ Flushed with his success, he attacked Amoy and destroyed the remaining thirty war-junks, spreading proclamations everywhere to announce that his only quarrel was with Commander Yü Tzu-kao and his followers. Since he did not kill any civilians during this raid, it would seem that his goal was indeed to eliminate the naval force so that 'the rice ban' could be lifted. In the aftermath of this raid, it was easier for his adherents in his home town to sail to Kuang-tung to purchase rice.¹⁰⁹ However, since he had not brought all his followers to seek shelter in Taiwan Bay and had had the temerity to attack the imperial navy, he had crossed the Rubicon: he had passed the point of no return. What had forced him into this predicament? The long and short of it is that the Dutch turned out not to be such reliable friends the moment the Chinese officials offered them free trading rights to lure them into a conspiracy against Iquan.

Farewell, Dutch Brother

After Iquan had eliminated the war-junks, it was only natural that the starving

¹⁰⁸ The Minister of War, Wang, 'T'i wei-hai-k'ou P'i-Ch'ang Kuan-ping Nao-pai Chin-chü-shih ch'ih-pao ch'a-ts'an shih-shih kuan-yüen-shih [Because the pirates are still rampant and the official troops are defeated, we should certainly report the officials who failed to keep their duty and punish them, 13 Aug. 1627], *Ming-ch'ing Kung-ts'ang t'ai-wan tang-an hui-pien*, Vol. 3, 10-41 at 11-5. Iquan had once attacked the T'ung-shan fort and skirmished with Coastal defense fleet around Amoy bay from 7 April to 2 May 1627. With these actions Iquan claimed that he desired only to seek revenge on some of his rival pirates and that he was not seeking to pick up a fight with the official troops.

¹⁰⁹ Ts'ao, *Ching-hai Chi-lüeh*, 3; Chou Ch'ang-chin, 'Ping-pu t'i-hsing ping-k'ê ch'ao- ch'u chiang-his-tao Chien-Ch'a yü-shih chou-ch'ang-chin t'i-kao 10 May 1628 [Report of Province Chiang-his' Investigating Censor Extracted from Scrutiny of Work]', in TWYH (ed.), *Ch'eng-shih shih-liao ch'u-pien*, 8-9.

CHAPTER TWO

people who had sailed their junks to Kuang-tung thronged to him. As more people from his home town came to join him, he eventually managed to gather a fleet of 400 vessels and several tens of thousands of refugees. Late in the autumn, this force plundered some coastal settlements in Kuang-tung in a quest for rice, after which they returned to southern Fu-chien province to seek a shelter from the worst of the winter weather. In the middle of October, the Commander of the Fu-chien Naval Force, Yü Tzu-kao informed Governor Gerrit Fredericksz de Wit of Formosa that, if he were prepared to help him to root out Iquan and his followers, such an action would greatly benefit the chance of the Dutch to be granted 'the legal trade'.¹¹⁰ Considering that the ultimate goal was to obtain the legal rights to trade with China, Governor De Wit agreed to join forces with the re-organized Fu-chien naval fleet in November but, buttering his bread on both sides, he also devised another proposal to put before Iquan. He offered the latter the opportunity to emigrate to Batavia with his followers.

*'For this purpose this very day we shall dispatch a junk with a pass and letters, (in accordance with his latest letter and his request we received yesterday) telling Iquan that he can sail to Batavia with all his people. If he, Iquan, and his people are not willing to go, we shall try to afflict as much damage as much as possible on them with our present force namely: the yachts De Vrede, the Erasmus, De Haen, the Slooten and the Cleen Heusden and another five junks which are under our direction.'*¹¹¹

Apparently Iquan did not accept this offer. It was likely that for him the

¹¹⁰ VOC 1093, Resolutie genomen bij de commandeur Gerit Fredericksz de Wit ende raed, Taiwan, 12 Oct. 1627, fos. 387^v-8^r.

¹¹¹ VOC 1093, Resolutie genomen bij de commandeur Gerit Fredericksz de Wit ende raed in't jacht Erasmus leggende ter rede voor Aijmoij inder revier in Chincheu [Resolution issued by Commander Gerit Fredericksz de Wit and Council on the yacht the *Erasmus* in the roadstead of Amoy in the Chiu-lung River], Chiu-lung River , 6 Nov. 1627, fos. 389^v-90^r.

NICOLAES IQUAN BEFORE 1627

time had come to consider if now was the right moment to seek shelter in his home town, since most of his own people supported him. If he could make a contract with the Dutch for a lasting co-operation, why could he not request the Ch'üan-chou gentry to find an easy solution for him? After all, were they not united in their hatred of Regional Commander Yü Tze-kao?

As a matter of fact, the Dutch sent only three yachts and three junks to attack Iquan in *Beeren Bay* on the night of 16 November.¹¹² The Dutch were actually rather loath to fight Iquan and his followers and still tried to use persuasion:

*'Regarding our negotiations with Iquan last night, that same night we terminated our brotherhood and friendship and made preparations for war, as we lay at anchor outside Beeren Bay where Iquan and his followers were anchored. He sent some fire-junks towards our yachts and junks, so we had to abandon our blockade and give them free passage. Thereupon the pirate sailed to the north with all his people (we thought they were heading for Chang-chou). They will cause huge damage there'.*¹¹³

It seems that neither De Wit nor Iquan was anxious to fight each other, but the local gentry were convinced that Iquan had defeated the Dutch in a sea battle.¹¹⁴ Certainly, Commander Yü Tze-kao's alliance with the erstwhile pirates had originally not been welcomed by the gentry and his dependence on the Dutch force made his reputation even worse. As a result, by the end of

¹¹² General missive, 6 Jan. 1628, in Cheng Shao-gang, 'De VOC en Formosa 1624-1662', II, (Diss., Leiden University, 1995), 69. *Beeren Bay* is Ta-hsing, see picture 1.

¹¹³ VOC 1093, Resolutie genomen bij de commandeur Gerit Fredericksz de Wit ende raed int jacht Erasmus leggende ter reede in Haerlemsbaij op de custe van China [Resolution Issued by Commander Gerit Fredericksz de Wit and Council on the yacht the *Erasmus* in the roadstead of P'ing-hai Bay on the Coast of China], P'ing-hai bay 18 Nov. 1627, fo. 390^r.

¹¹⁴ Ts'ao, *Ching-hai Chi-lüeh*, 22.

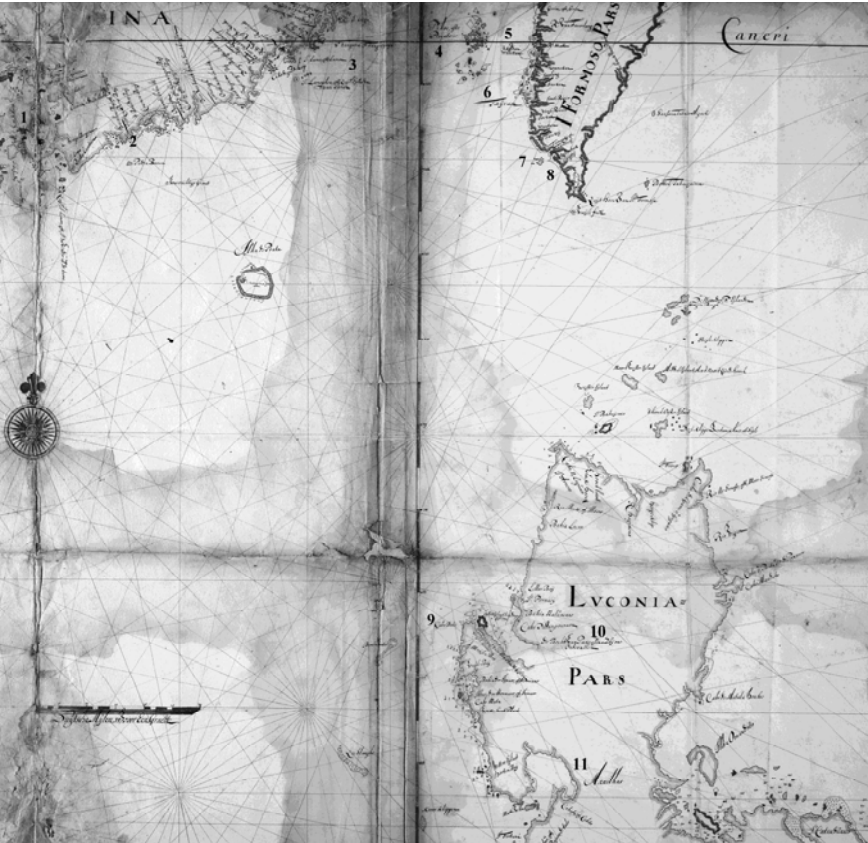
CHAPTER TWO

the year he had dug his own grave. In stark comparison with Commander Yü Tze-kao's cowardly behaviour, Iquan's conduct won him the affection of the people in his home town. He was now seen as the real protector of his people, far superior to the local officials who had not dared to remonstrate with Yü Tze-kao and criticize his ill-informed 'rice-ban' policy.

When the Dutch left Chang-chou Bay, Iquan slowly moved his fleet in a northerly direction with the plan to approach Yü Tze-kao's residence. In the first week of January, he finally sailed on Amoy, forcing Commander Yü Tze-kao to flee the city. Paradoxically, the mercenary Iquan returned home as the pirate who had protected his people from the machinations of corrupt officials. The gentry in Ch'üan-chou decided to send a petition to the emperor to ask that Iquan be pardoned and recruited into the naval force to defend their rice-junks. At the close of the summer of 1628, Iquan had basically obtained what he wanted and Commander Yü Tze-kao and his followers were given a prison sentence by the emperor.

NICOLAES IQUAN BEFORE 1627

Picture 1. Map of partial China, Vietnamese coast and southern Taiwan



Source: Nationaal Archief, VEL 291, Kaart van een gedeelte van de Chinese en Vietnamese kust en zuidelijk Formosa

No.	Place names in Dutch	Place names in English
1	D. Stadt Macao	The Macao City
2	Tiatz / Beerens baij	Ta-hsing or Bay of Bears*
3	I. Lamo ofte Lamon	Nan-ao Island
4	Pehoe ofte Piscadores	P'eng-hu or Piscadores
5	Wankan	Wan-kang
6	Taijvan	Taiwan
7	Tamsokij ofte Tamscoij	[Southern] Tamsuy

CHAPTER TWO

8	Pangsoij	Fang-so
9	Cabo Balie	Cape Bolinao
10	De Bocht van Pangasinao	The Bay of Pangasinan
11	Manilhas	Manila

The Chinese place names are mostly taken from ‘Yen-hai Ch’üan-t’u (The Complete Coastal Map of China)’ in: Ch’ên Lun-chiung, *Hai-kuo Wên-chien-lu* [My Knowledge about the Regions Abroad], T’aiwan Wên-hsien Shih-liao Ts’ung-k’an, No. 7, 36-69.