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Author: Cheng, Weichung

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THE RISK OF POLITICS

AND THE POLITICS OF RISK 1636-40

The mercenaries become involved in politics

After the Kuang-tung pirate Liu Hsiang had been swept from the seas by Iquan's armada, through his own intervention Iquan and a group of officers were incorporated into the coastal defence troops. Unfortunately all the official positions Iquan occupied from 1635 to 1640 have proved impossible to trace fully in the extant Chinese sources. The fate of these official records is uncertain. They could have been destroyed when the Manchus invaded Peking in 1644 or have been lost at any time since then in times of upheaval. It is known with certainty that Iquan was first raised to the rank of Commissioner-in-Chief (*Tou-tu*[C.]) in the year 1636. Following the general principle of the military institutions of the Ming Empire, commanders and troops belonged to different sections of the army. The commander only held his position for the duration of a particular mission. No matter whether a mission had been successfully accomplished or failed, the commander would be later dispatched on other missions, but the soldiers returned to their own garrisons.¹ All the commanders with the rank of general were members of the Institute of the Chief Military Commission (*Tou-tu-fu*[C.]).² The soldiers were a professional group stationed apart from civilian subjects in special camps called *wei* and *so*.³ The offspring of soldiers inherited their professional and social status and hence remained soldiers. This principle was

¹ Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 79-80.

² *Ibidem*, 72.

³ Chang T'ing-yü, *Hsin-chiao-pên ming-shih*, 1856-7; 1873; Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 79.

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devised to avoid the menace of any growing military power which might pose a threat to the Emperor's authority. After a prolonged period of peace, the system gradually became corrupted and after inflation had eroded their livelihoods, most of the soldiers deserted their posts.

The number of coastal defence troops declined faster than that of their counterparts in land-based camps because they were forced to stand by and watch their vessels and weapons virtually rot away before their eyes in the salty sea air. The maintenance of the equipments became a heavy burden and hence resulted in more desertions. The rapid disappearance of the troops is the reason local officials had to set about organizing a civil militia when the pirate raids began to rampage the coast in the late sixteenth century. At the height of the Liu Hsiang's raids on Fu-chou, one official at the Emperor's court suggested the militia be reorganized and integrated into a new system of coastal defence troops.⁴ In other words, the barrier between civilians and the hereditary soldier class was not immutable and could break down under exceptional circumstances. This situation explains why able-bodied soldiers in the fishermen's and the civil militia could be recruited so easily into the coastal defence under Iquan's command. After Liu Hsiang was defeated, many of the soldiers and naval officers affiliated to Iquan had formal official

⁴ Wan, 'Appendix I: Ch'ung-chên ch'ang-pien hsüan-lu', 166-7. ' In the long period of peace which now commenced, the number of standing soldiers and their junks have declined. The military officials have shown little enthusiasm to fight outside their city walls. The sea patrols have been halted. Nowadays to ensure security, we recruit civil militia, mercenaries and organize local self-defence corps, and fishermen's militias. The army now consists of five categories of soldiers. In the past only one type of soldier proved an effective force, nowadays even five types are not sufficient to maintain a standing force. The pirates are on the rampage and the officials are frustrated. My recommendation is that the standing number of the army must be restored. The patrols must be carried out. The civil militia and mercenaries should be selected [properly] and integrated. The local defence corp should be freed from inessential duties.'

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titles bestowed on them and embarked on a military career.⁵

Iquan's superior military skills were confirmed by his remarkable victories. He was assigned to the Chief Military Commission in Nanking, the vice-capital of the Empire.⁶ It was a major turning point in his career. In this capacity he was no longer subordinate to the grand co-ordinators but served directly under the Emperor himself. Although he would still listen to advice and obey certain orders from the Grand Co-ordinator, the latter could not dismiss him unless this decision was approved by the Imperial Council or the Emperor personally. The Dutch in Taiwan heard the following news from the Chinese merchant they called Hambuan:

*'Via the Chinese merchants, the Chinese merchant Hambuan informed us how Iquan had become the Commissioner-in-Chief (Tou-tu[C], Toutock[D]) of Fu-chien. He is entitled to a palanquin with eight bearers. But for the Grand Co-ordinator and the said Iquan nobody is allowed such honor. When he excused himself from an audience with the Emperor at the Imperial Court and sent instead one of his captains to represent him on the journey [to Peking]this disobedient behavior was condoned [by the Emperor]. Consequently the said Iquan has now become a great master.'*⁷

The Grand Co-ordinator could no longer threaten Iquan's position and the latter was secure in the knowledge that the Emperor recognized his

⁵ For example, Ch'en P'eng and Hu Mei, two quite able commanders among Chang's troops were both recruited from the fishermen.

⁶ Cheng P'êng-ch'êng (comp.), ' Appendix: Shih-ching pên-tsung tsu-p'u[Records of the Cheng Clan Pedigree in Shih-ching]', in TWYH(ed.), *Chêng-shih kuan-hsi wên-shu* [Documents concerning the Cheng Family], TW no. 69, 36. 'In a certain year between 1628 and 1644, Iquan was given the title of Supreme Chief Military Commissioner (*Ch'ien-chiün Tou-tu*) on account of his outstanding military achievements.'

⁷ VOC 1120, Missive van Jan der Burch naer Batavia aen den gouverneur generael Antonio van Diemen en raeden van India, Taiwan, 14 Nov. 1636, fo. 362.

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substantial influence in Fu-chien. When it was all said and done, all the newly recruited coastal defence troops were his people and he even financed these troops personally. His position was so strong he could distance himself from the Wei-so system which was designed to minimize the affiliation between the troops and their leader. Furthermore, with the title of Regional Deputy-Commander of Nan-ao Island, which gave him control of the coastal waters stretching all the way from Chang-chou to Kuang-chou, he transferred his residence to this island. He retained this rank for sometime and was later raised to the rank of Regional Commander of Fu-chien and Kuang-tung at different occasions and retained this position until the Manchu invasion of Peking in 1644.⁸

An outstanding figure as a maritime mercenary under the flag of the Dutch East India Company and later in his service to the Fu-chien Grand Co-ordinators in their campaign to pacify the pirates, over and again Iquan showed exceptional bravery and sharp ingenuity in dealing with the systematic failure of the institutions of the moribund Ming Empire and for this he was accorded exceptional treatment. Nevertheless, Iquan neither introduced any innovations in the coastal defence system or maritime trade system of the Empire nor did he devote his talents and indubitable ingenuity to creating any new or different institutions. He simply brought about that the

⁸ Wan Yen, *Ch'ung-chên ch'ang-pien*[Chronicle of the Ch'ung-chên], TW no. 270, 11. 'On 14 December 1643, the Regional Commander of Fu-chien, Cheng Chih-lung, requested an honourable discharge on the grounds of ill-health. The Emperor replied: 'Cheng Chih-lung has held the position of Ch'ao-Chang Regional Commander for a long time and has performed excellent service. If he would be pleased to remain with the garrison and not resign.' In 1642 he was appointed Regional Commander of Kuang-tung, cf. The Ministry of War, Kuang-tung Tsung-ping Chêng-chih-lung Tai-tsui T'u-kung Ch'ing-ên-chun K'ai-fu, 4 May 1642 [The Regional Commander of Kuang-tung, Cheng Chih-lung requests to restore his position in order to excuse his fault]', Ch'ên Yün-lin, *Ming-ch'ing Kung-ts'ang t'ai-wan tang-an hui-pien*, vol. 3, 343-54 at 345.

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people around him knew that he and only he could help them resolve the problems which beset them on all sides.

When he is compared to his contemporaries in the area of the China Sea, his was not even a very special case. Other mercenaries also succeeded in gaining a certain autonomous economic status in the region under other sovereigns. Japanese mercenaries already enjoyed such a privileged position in Siam. In the latter half of the sixteenth century, Japanese junks had begun to venture to Southeast Asian countries, including Siam. The magnet which drew them was the deerskin-for-silver trade between Siam and Japan. This exchange proved so lucrative some Japanese merchants decided to settle down in Siam to throw themselves wholeheartedly into this trade. Because of their superior military skills as musketeers and doughty sword fighters, Japanese soldiers were appointed bodyguards to the Siamese King. Consequently some 500 Japanese were living in the capital of Siam, Ayutthaya by the beginning of the seventeenth century. Some of these men enjoyed the position of privileged merchants in the Siam-Japanese trade, known as the Vermillion Junk Trade (*Goshuisen boeki*), under the joint protection of the Siamese King and the Japanese Shogun. As long as the central authority in Japan remained vulnerable, this trade blossomed as a by-product of the competition raging between the *daimyo* or feudal lords. This situation changed after the Battle of Sekigahara in 1600, when all of Japan was unified under Tokugawa rule. One upshot of this increased integration was that the diverse foreign traders were more strictly regulated.

Returning to Siam, a Japanese samurai named Yamada Nagamasa was elected head of the Japanese community in Siam in the year 1621. In that same year he set about the task of regulating the tributary-trade between the two countries.⁹ As the mediator between two sovereigns, he enjoyed certain

⁹ Chris Baker, Dhiravat na Pombejra, Alfons van der Kraan and David Wyatt (eds.), *Van Vliet's Siam*, (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2005), 329-30. Appendix IV: Yamada Nagamasa.

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political favours granted him by King Song Tham of Siam. This proved a poisoned apple as the King's favour unavoidably dragged him into Siamese court politics after the death of the sovereign in 1628 and the struggle for succession to the throne began.¹⁰

The risk of politics:

Confronted by the Siamese King's Kuang-chou trade

Under the tributary system, the legitimacy of the trade was inexorably linked to the legitimacy of the throne and the intrusion of this institutionalizing feature compelled the Japanese mercenaries to take the side of the legitimate successor to the throne. Their dream collapsed when a usurper finally gained the upper hand and ascended the throne as King Prasat Thong in September 1629. Yamada was appointed to the position of Governor of Ligure under the new ruler,¹¹ but he was poisoned in the summer of the following year. After his death, the new King issued secret orders to set fire to the Japanese quarter in Ayutthaya. This act of wanton destruction forced the Japanese inhabitants either to take refuge in Cambodia or to return to Japan in September of 1630.¹² The usurper king soon realized that, although he had removed the menace of the Japanese mercenaries, he had cut off his nose to spite his face because by this deed he had lost the lucrative trade with Japan as well. When the news that a usurper had become king was made known to Siamese vassals in the Malay Peninsula chaos broke out. Neighbouring countries like Patani, Pegu and Cambodia also challenged the authority of this illegitimate king and all declared that they would wage war against him.¹³ As expenses

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ George Vinal Smith, *The Dutch in Seventeenth century Thailand*, (Detroit: The Cellar Bookshop, 1977), 22.

¹² Iwao Seiichi, 'Reopening of the diplomatic and commercial relations between Japan and Siam during the Tokugawa Period', in *Acta Asiatica: Bulletin of the Institute of Eastern Culture*, 4 (1963), 2-3.

¹³ Smith, *The Dutch in Seventeenth century Thailand*, 22-23.

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rose exponentially in efforts to fill the war coffers, the revenue from the foreign trade assumed even greater proportions and this situation forced the usurper king hurriedly to pass care new measures which were hoped would breathe fresh life into the trade with China and Japan. Consequently, a Siamese tributary junk arrived in the Pearl River estuary in 1631, but was promptly seized by the Macau authorities in retaliation for the confiscation of a Portuguese ship by the Siamese king the year before.¹⁴ Despite this hiccup, the Siamese envoys were eventually allowed to pay their tribute to the Chinese Emperor in 1634.¹⁵

Meanwhile, owing to the waves of piracy which were quelling the coastal areas of China, the Chinese junks from Chang-chou ceased to make their customary voyages to Siam in the period 1628-1630. However, when the maritime ban was lifted in Fu-chien for a short time in 1631, two junks were fitted out to sail to Siam, but only one seems to have reached her destination.¹⁶ Two years later, in 1633, two Chinese junks sailed on to Siam from Quinam¹⁷ and the Siamese king simultaneously prepared to fit out a royal tributary junk for the voyage to Kuang-chou.¹⁸ The tributary embassies must have returned to Siam between 1634 and 1635 since the Chinese Court records mention that they had audiences in Peking in both years.¹⁹ After the accomplishment of the tributary mission to China had re-affirmed King Prasat Thong's legitimacy in spite of his usurpation, he devoted himself assiduously to foreign trade.

In 1634, while the Kuang-tung officials were trying to persuade Liu

¹⁴ VOC 1109, Dagregister Siam, 18 Sept. 1633, fo. 48^f.

¹⁵ Chang, *Hsin-chiao-pên ming-shih*, XXIII, 317.

¹⁶ VOC 1113, Missive [door Joost Schouten van Siam] naer Japan, Siam, 8 July 1633, fo. 347^f.

¹⁷ VOC 1109, Dagregister Siam, 29 May 1633, 43^v.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Chang, *Hsin-chiao-pên ming-shih*, XXIII, 317; 319.

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Hsiang to surrender and accept an official petition following the precedent set for Iquan, a brief truce was signed between Iquan and Liu Hsiang, and two Chinese junks were able to visit Siam where they were able to obtain satisfactory cargoes.²⁰ The peace was short-lived because in 1635 Iquan again concentrated his attention on fighting Liu Hsiang. Since the coastal seas of Fu-chien and Kuang-tung were all potential battle grounds, no more junks could run the risk of sailing to Siam until the sea route had been secured again. In its efforts to bring Liu Hsiang to heel, his action accorded with the maritime ban issued by the Ming Court. Indeed Dutch intelligence in Taiwan, reported that no more junks had set sail for Siam.²¹ Finally, in the spring of 1636, after the majority of Liu Hsiang's force had collapsed, two junks from Chang-chou, one of which was affiliated to Iquan's merchant group, arrived in Siam.

The first junk from Chang-chou, under nachoda *Bouwija*, was a very leaky vessel which finally did make it to Bangkok on 25 March. Bouwija had applied to the Dutch for a pass to secure his voyage onwards to Batavia in the year 1635. The application was made through the Chinese Captain, Bencon (Su Ming-kang), in Batavia, and the pass was duly issued by the Governor-General. Since the maritime ban was strictly enforced during the year 1635, Bouwija had to postpone his plan to visit the Indies but it did not deter him from using his old pass to sail as far as Siam, although the Dutch factory in Siam suspected that he had only made use of this pass as a device to intrude the Siamese trade. He behaved in a strangely hurried manner and sold all his goods (mostly coarse wares) at such a cheap price that no Siamese vendor would bother to come and purchase the same wares from the Dutch.²²

²⁰ VOC 1113, Missive [door den heer Joost Schouten] aen den gouverneur generael [Hendrik Brouwer], 26 July 1634, Fo. 518^v.

²¹ VOC 1116, Missive van Hans Putmans Naer Batavia aen gouverneur generael Hendrick Brouwer, Taiwan, 9 Mar. 1635, fo. 329^v.

²² VOC 1119, Missive aen [gouverneur van Taijouan] d' E. Hans Putmans, Siam, 20

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After his arrival he spread the news that a forthcoming junk would be carrying a very luxurious cargo composed of fine porcelain and silk textiles.²³ Bouwija played some nasty tricks on Iquan's junk which arrived after his. It is hard to tell whether he meant to ruin Iquan's trade in Siam or had merely been loose-lipped and suffered from verbal diarrhoea. Whatever was going through his mind at that distant time, since the Siamese King was also busy preparing his next Kuang-tung trade expedition, this news really threw the royal factory into a nervous panic. Five days later, when the junk commanded by nachoda *Gbouneeuw* finally arrived, the factors of the Royal Factory immediately dispatched the royal guards to take the junk into custody and declared that the captain would not be allowed to sell his goods other than at the royal factory.²⁴ The Dutch recorded the incident as follows:

'... the junk was kept under strict watch by the King's staff when it appeared at Bangkok and the nachoda was ordered not to dare to open any package or sell anything, no matter how small, to anyone other than at the royal factory. However this nachoda, who had been a pirate and one of Iquan's captains, was not willing to kowtow to such an unusual reception and subsequently weighed anchor and sailed away from the roadstead, declaring that he would gladly toss everything he had brought overboard, and he swore to take revenge on Siamese property, if they wanted to rule in this way.

The Siamese staff were so terrified by such threats the Governor of Bangkok sailed to the junk followed by a retinue of all his vessels, accompanied personally by the Chinese interpreter, in an effort to persuade the nachoda to return. He promised him every assistance and favour and the liberty to sell his cargo[as he wished].

May 1636, fo. 1396.

²³ VOC 1125, Missive van Jeremias van Vliet aen Johan van der Burch raet van India ende gouverneur in Taijouan, Siam, 9 May 1637, fo. 564^f.

²⁴ VOC 1119, Missive aen [gouverneur van Taijouan] d' E. Hans Putmans, Siam, 20 May 1636, fo. 1396.

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Accepting such a perfidious promise, the nachoda returned and sailed upstream. However, once this junk had arrived in the roadstead of Ayutthaya, it was again taken into custody by the royal guards. The Chinese were again ordered to sell their commodities to no one but the royal factory.

The nachoda lost patience, but kept his mouth tightly shut, swearing that there were no silk textiles, raw silk or another silk wares in the junk. He had been set-up in such a way by these duplicitous factors the imprudent King gave orders to put the nachoda behind bars and dispatch some prosecutors to the junk to carry out his orders.

The nachoda and his crew were lucky, because a Chinese (Olong Tziat, who resided here, and as a mandarin at the court had some influence with the King) was present on board the junk and by handing over gifts persuaded the prosecutors (to stay away.) They remained on board the junk during the evening but did not examine anything. Later they went directly to the court and reported what had happened. The King ordered members of his court to form an unbiased committee and enquire into the matter. After examining all the information in detail, it was found that the nachoda was innocent and that the King's accusation had been unfounded.

Nevertheless, the junk remained under watch as before and the supervision was so strict the Chinese were not able to sell their coarse porcelain wares. But the nachoda gave the guards some pennies so they could buy some Chinese beer and have a drink from time to time. In this fashion he secretly sold his fine wares to the Muslim merchants at a very high price.

The duplicitous factors found out when they were frustrated by their lower than expected revenues. They sought every possible opportunity to denigrate the nachoda in the presence of the King and to take revenge on him. They found that one of the Chinese who had arrived here as one of the nachoda's sailors had gambled with another Chinese, (a Court silversmith). The sailor lost his stake and beat the silversmith up. While they were wrestling with each other, a silver statue (which had been made for the King)

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was knocked over. The silversmith (urged on by these factors) thereupon notified His Majesty that the newly arrived Chinese had committed a crime against His Majesty's statues and slaves.

*By the King's order, the nachoda was summoned to appear before the chief justice. He (without knowing anything about it) appeared in his usual clothes accompanied by the Shabandar and an interpreter. He was immediately flung into gaol with his followers. The chief justice wanted to summon all his crew, so that he might (so he claimed) examine them properly. Which request, the nachoda politely refused, declaring that only he, and no member of his crew, knew about the quarrel and he would not subject them to such improper coercion. Meanwhile the silversmith and his followers slandered the nachoda so badly for his alleged crime of disobedience that in a burst of fury His Majesty sentenced the nachoda and all his crew to death, and confiscated the junk, bringing everything into having everything brought to his royal factory.'*²⁵

²⁵ VOC 1125, Missive van Jeremias van Vliet aen Johan van der Burch, raet van India ende gouverneur in Taijouan, Siam, 9 May 1637, fo. 564^f. According to earlier records, in 1636 the royal guardians were called 'bras pintados', men with tattooed arms. Cf. VOC 1119, Dagregister gehouden bij den E. Jeremias van Vliet van 10 Maert tot 14 November 1636 [Hereafter cited as 'Dagregister Siam 1636']. Siam, 17 Apr. 1636, fo. 1345; Baker, Chris., *ibid.*, 51. note 20. The chief justice was called Balleije van Ija Innaerath. The interpreter in the 1637 was Opra Thonhuj and in 1636 this position was held by Oprou Thonghu, Cf. VOC 1119, Dagregister Siam 1636, Siam, 16 May 1636, fo. 1370. The Chinese merchant who rescued the *nachoda* twice from imprisonment was 'Oloangh Tziat/Oloangh Tsiar'. Cf. VOC 1109, Dagregister Siam 1636, fo. 1345. 17 Apr. 1636; fo. 1370. 16 May 1636. Another influential local merchant who offered assistance called 'Oloangh Sarpartiban' is also recorded in above diaries. The 'Tziat', might be the 'Chiat' which, according to George Smith's explanation, was the *shabander* (harbour master) of the Muslim community in Siam. The 'sabartiban' should be 'Sombatthiban', the Minister in Charge of the Royal Treasury. Cf. Smith, *The Dutch in Seventeenth century Thailand*,

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This impetuous sentence was not carried out and the *nachoda* and his crew were released a few days later. This is how Iquan's junk finally managed to escape the extortion of the Siamese Court. A local mandarin's support had turned the tables in this case and it is just one instance which shows that the rise and decline of Chinese influence at court was also related to these influential grandees. The Dutch factories in Taiwan and Siam recorded the prices of local commodities that same year. This list shows that if a junk sailed to Siam, it could expect a better price in Siam than in Quinam.

Table 7-1. The expected profits of the Siamese Commodities in 1636

	Price in Siam Tael/ picul	Expected profits in China
Cambodia nuts	1.2-1.4	500-600%
Shellac	13.5-14	200-500%
Jammana	20-22 (per 100 pieces)	200-300 % (in Cochin China)
Betel nut	12-16 maas/ picul	170%-230% (in Cochin China, Chang-chou, Kuang-chou)
Buffalo horn (Patany)	4-6	100%
Rattan (Patany)	14 (100 pieces)	100%
Lead	3.33 tael / picul	100-130% (in Cochin China)
Bird's nests (Patani)	2-2.5 (cattij)	<80-90%
Elephant tusks	50 (2 piece) 48 (3 pieces) 44 (4 pieces)	50-60%
Camphor (from Patany)	7-14	50-60%
Bird's plumes	4,	40-60 %
Bird's nests	4 1/2 5 (3-4,000 pieces)	

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Source: VOC 1119, Missive van den coopman Jeremias van Vliet in Siam aen den gouverneur generael Van Diemen in Batavia, Siam, 13 Nov.1636, fos. 1278-80.

As mentioned earlier, the most valuable commodities sold in the An-hai market were pepper and elephants tusks, but these goods were not as easy to obtain as the Chinese had originally thought. The junks which arrived in 1636 had not been able to acquire these commodities in any great quantity. Instead of the expected copious cargoes of pepper and elephant tusks, they loaded other highly prized commodities like shellac. As a result, a quantity of shellac remained unsold in the Taiwan lodge, ' because a great amount of it had been brought onto the [Kuang-tung] market by the Chinese junks from Siam, Cambodia and some other places.'²⁶

Shellac purchased in Siam at 24 rials per picul could be sold in Kuang-chou for slightly less than triple this price at 60 rials.²⁷ Lead purchased at 6 rials per picul, was sold for more than double this sum at 15 rials in Kuang-chou.²⁸ These trading figures show how the Siamese market interconnected with the Kuang-tung market.

In the summer of 1636 the Siamese tributary embassy arrived in Peking. The Siamese King and his brother had dispatched three big junks carrying cargoes of 13,000 picul of sapanwood and other fine goods for Kuang-chou.²⁹ Unfortunately there was a mutiny on one of the three junks and the *nachoda* was murdered by the crew in Cambodia waters, where the junk was also

²⁶ VOC 1120, Missive van gouverneur Hans Putmans Naer Batavia aen den gouverneur generael Anthonio van Diemen, Taiwan, 7 Oct. 1636, fo. 279^r.

²⁷ VOC 1125, Missive van Jeremias van Vliet opperhoofd des comptoirs Siam aen gouverneur Van der Burch raet van India ende gouverneur in Taijouan, Siam, 6 July 1637, fo. 580^v.

²⁸ Ibidem; VOC 1120, Missive van gouverneur Hans Putmans Naer Batavia aen den gouverneur generael Anthonio van Diemen, Taiwan, 7 Oct. 1636, fo. 279^r.

²⁹ Chang, *Hsin-chiao-pên ming-shih*, XXIII, 320.

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confiscated.³⁰ The Siamese embassy departed from Siam in 1635 and finally returned home in 1639 with a letter from the Chinese Emperor (known as a Golden Letter). It was also accompanied by some Chinese delegates and bore some reciprocal presents. Although the letter intimated that the new Siamese King had been officially acknowledged by the Chinese court, the reciprocal gifts from the Chinese Emperor were not very generous and the Chinese delegates even had the temerity to tell the Siamese King to curb his desire to engage in lucrative trade.³¹ In 1642, the Siamese King and his brother once again dispatched two richly laden junks to Kuang-chou³² and the Chinese record confirms that a Siamese embassy had an audience in Peking in 1643.³³ Since the Siamese King had successfully carved out a fixed niche for himself in the Kuang-tung trade, the Fu-chien merchants, whether from Chang-chou or from An-hai, were no longer able to squeeze themselves into the profitable trade in Siam.

Table 7-2 The Sino-Siamese junk trade

	Junks from Chang-chou	Siamese King's junk to Kuang-chou
1634	2 ³⁴	0
1635	-	-
1636	2 ³⁵	3 ³⁶

³⁰ VOC 1119, Missive van den coopman Jeremias van Vliet aen den gouverneur generael [Antonio] Van Diemen, Siam, 13 Nov. 1636, Fo. 1286.

³¹ VOC 1131, Missive van Van Vliet aen den gouverneur generael [Antonio van Diemen], Siam, 10 Oct. 1639, Fo. 1042.

³² VOC 1144, Missive van Reijnier van Tzum aen den gouverneur generael [Antonio van Diemen], Siam, 13 Oct 1642, fo. 619^r.

³³ Chang, *Hsin-chiao-pên ming-shih*, XXIII, 334.

³⁴ VOC 1113, Missive [door den heer Joost Schouten] aen den gouverneur generael [Hendrik Brouwer], Siam, 26 July 1634. fo.518^r.

³⁵ VOC 1119, Missive van d' E. Jeremias van Vliet aen den gouverneur generael Henrick Brouwer, Siam, 28 July 1636, fo. 1253.

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1637	3 ³⁷	0
1638	1 ³⁸	0
1639	1 ³⁹	0
1640	-	-
1641	1 ⁴⁰	0
1642	0	3 ⁴¹

The Chang-chou merchants avoided any confrontation with the Siamese King's trade to Kuang-chou, because they were perfectly aware that the commodities they intended to purchase could only be obtained via the King's factory and discretion was the better part of valour. In 1637, when another three Chang-chou junks appeared in Siam from China, the King's factory restricted their purchases to sapanwood. The Dutch recorded that:

'The nachoda was not able to lay his hands on any lead, elephant tusks, shellac, pepper or rhinoceros horns, because a few days ago the King had

³⁶ Ibidem;VOC 1119, Missive[van Jeremias van Vliet] aen d' E. Hans Putmans [gouverneur van Taijouan], Siam, 20 May 1636, fo. 1396.

³⁷ VOC 1125, VOC 1125, Missive van Jeremias van Vliet aen Johan van der Burch raet van India ende gouverneur in Taijouan, Siam, 14 May 1637, fo. 568^f.

³⁸ VOC 1127, Missive [van Hendirk Nachtegael] aen den oppercoopman Abraham Ducker in Quinam [Letter written by Hendrik Nachtegael in Siam to Senior Merchant Abraham Bucker in Quinam], Siam, 3 May 1638, fo. 372^v.

³⁹ VOC 1131, Missive van Van Vliet aen den gouverneur generael [Antonio van Diemen ende raaden in Batavia], Siam, 14 July 1639, fo. 1008.

⁴⁰ VOC 1139, Rapport van den commissaris Jeremias van Vliet aengaende sijn bevindinge in Siam ende bocht van Pattany [van Johan van Twist uijt Malacca aen gouverneur generaal Antonio van Diemen en raden in Batavia][Report written by Commissioner Jeremias van Vliet about His Experiences in Siam and the Bay of Patani, forwarded from Malacca to Governor-General Antonio van Diemen and Council in Batavia by Johan van Twist], Siam, 28 May 1642, fo. 802^v.

⁴¹ VOC 1144, Missive van Reijnier van Tzum aen den gouverneur generael [Antonio van Diemen], Siam, 13 Oct. 1642. fo.619^f.

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*forbidden anyone except the King's factors to sell these goods (especially to the Chinese newcomers). The nachoda was also ordered to purchase these commodities from nobody but the King's factors. For this reason, but especially owing to a lack of capital, these junks could obtain nothing but sappanwood.*⁴²

More than 12,000 picul of sappanwood, a cargo which ran totally counter to the original expectations of the Chang-chou merchants, was eventually exported to Chang-chou. What they desired above all else was pepper, but this was not obtainable because the plantations there had been destroyed during the war (1631-1636) between the Siamese King and his rebellious vassal in Ligore.⁴³ In the year 1639, the Chang-chou junks could not even export elephant tusks, because the King had added four taels tax to every picul of this commodity. Hence it proved nigh on impossible to break into the Siamese King's Kuang-chou trade since he needed to earn capital to replenish his own treasury. In a nutshell, politics in Siam ultimately conditioned Fu-chienese trade with that kingdom.

The politics of risk: co-operation with the Dutch in the Japan trade

In reply to Governor Hans Putmans' letter to then ten Chinese officials in charge of the Ch'üan-chou and Chang-chou coastal defence forces, the Fu-chien authorities agreed to issue the An-hai merchants passes to enable them to deliver fine and delicate commodities to Taiwan. Undoubtedly, the richest exchange between Fu-chien and Taiwan was the silk-for-silver trade. The silk was not produced in Fu-chien, but came from Chê-chiang and Chiang-su (which were referred to by the Dutch at the time collectively as

⁴² VOC 1125, Missive van Jeremias van Vliet aen Johan van der Burch raet van India ende gouverneur in Taijouan, Siam, 14 May 1637, fo. 568^r.

⁴³ VOC 1119, Missive van den coopman Jeremias van Vliet aen den gouverneur generael [Antonio] van Diemen, Siam, 13 Nov. 1636, fo. 1278.

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'Nanking' province). Every year the farmers had to begin to feed the silkworms in March or April. It took two months for the larvae to develop into a moth. The harvest season was heralded when the worms spun their cocoons in May or June. The farmers boiled the cocoons to loosen the glue which held the the precious filaments together and spun the silk threads they extracted from them. This procedure required purified water which was provided by the rainy season at its height during that month. The new silk would be put on the market in June.⁴⁴ Well-versed in this time-table, in spring, the merchants of Fu-chien and Kuang-tung usually shipped sugar from the south to Chê-chiang so that they could begin to purchase raw silks after their sugar business had been concluded. Before the onset of autumn, they had to return to Fu-chien or Kuang-tung where they could either re-sell the product directly as raw silk or as woven silk textiles to the Dutch in Taiwan or the Portuguese in Macao. In this manner merchants could receive payment in Japanese silver, which enabled them in turn to locally purchase sugar in order to enlarge their capital or to purchase more silk for shipments to Japan in the following trading season.

Since Iquan had cleared the sea route from Chê-chiang all the way to Kuang-tung in 1635 and was even then serving as officer-in-charge of supervising the traffic between the Fu-chien and Kuang-tung coasts, the sea routes of the Fu-chienese merchants were secured. Each year the four to six junks which put into Taiwan provided 60-90 per cent of the raw silk supplied to the Dutch. The rest was brought in on other junks which also carried rough wares such as sugar, earthenware and the like.

⁴⁴ Chang Hai-ying, *Ming-ch'ing chiang-nan shang-p'in liu-t'ung yü shih-ch'ang t'i-his*[The Market System and the Circulation of Commodities around the Chiang-nan Region during the Ming and Ch'ing Dynasties], (Shang-hai: East China Normal University Publisher, 2001, 105-7.

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Table 7- 3: The structure of the Chinese raw silk imports in Taiwan

Season	Raw silk imported from China in piculs*	The proportion provided by the richest junks.*	Chinese raw silk sold by the Dutch in piculs**
1634-10/1635-10	1222	4(51%) 6(70%)	1309.49
1635-10/1636-10	1590	3(63%) 5(96%)	1665.44
1636-10/1637-10	1510.5	4(58%) 6(76%)	1496.69
1637-10/1638-11	1305.5	4(52%) 6(62%)	1931.9 ⁴⁵
1638-11/1639-11	1167	4(66%) 5(77%)	1462.89
1639-11/1640-10	-	-	1522.31

Source: * revised from: Lin Wei-sh'êng, *Hê-chü shih-ch'i tung-yin-tu kung-ssu tsai t'ai-wan tê mao-i (1622-1662)* [The VOC Trade in Taiwan during the Period of Dutch Rule], (PhD diss., National Taiwan University, 1998), 111-3. Table: 3-20, the raw silk carried by Chinese junks to Taiwan. This table is based on 'the *Dagregister Zeelandia*' and 'the *Dagregister Batavia*'.

** Nagazumi Yoko, Liu Hsü-fêng (trans.), 'You Hê-lan shih-liao k'an shih-ch'i shih-chi tê t'ai-wan mao-i [Taiwan Trade in the Seventeenth Century Based on Dutch Sources]', in Tang His-yung(ed.), 2 vols, *Chung-kuo hai-yang fa-chan-shih lun-wên chi(VII)*, vol.1. 37-57 at 42. Table 1. The raw silk exports to Japan were carried on VOC ships. This table is based on the *Negotie journaal* 1633-1660.

This situation meant that the An-hai merchants who traded with the Dutch in Taiwan were clearly divided into two different groups. One group consisted of the rich merchants who handled the luxury commodities, the other was composed of the petty vendors who dealt in coarse wares and small number of luxury commodities. The big merchants were expected to pay 400 taels to for their licences, but their lesser counterparts were only required to pay 80

⁴⁵ Generale Missive, 22 Dec.1638, in Cheng, *De VOC en Formosa*, 176. It records that 1421.94 picul of Chinese white raw silk had been shipped to Japan. The number differs slightly from Nagazumi's figures derived from the diary kept on Deshima.

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taels.⁴⁶ Because the former fell under the regulations covering the category of overseas trade as the junks sailing to Manila and Batavia, they had to pay a national tax. The latter fell into the category of coastal traders like those involved in the rice and sugar trades between Kuang-tung and Fu-chien and therefore paid only a provincial tax.⁴⁷ Strictly speaking, it was illegal for the latter to export the silk goods to the Dutch in Taiwan. However, since the Pescadores Islands formed the boundary of China and were under Dutch protection as the letter written to the Chinese Coastal Defence Circuits suggests, the authorities turned a blind eye to the trade. In fact, as the table above shows that the big merchants still supplied most of the fine goods and indeed their trade was actually expanding. An-hai merchants collected the Chê-chiang raw silk in May and shipped it immediately to Taiwan so that the Dutch could trade it for silver in Japan in September and early October. The silver would have been shipped south during the previous spring and stored in the Taiwan lodge until the current summer, when it was used to purchase the new silks. If the Dutch merchants spent too much Japanese silver elsewhere before August, there would not be enough silver in Taiwan to pay the incoming silk junks, and such squandering on their part inevitably resulted in financial problems for the Chinese merchants.

Table 7-4: The revenue generated by selling Chinese silk products in Japan and the benefits to the Factory in Taiwan.

⁴⁶ *Dagregister Zeelandia*, I 1629-1641, 210. 7 Mar. 1635. It records the sum of 50 taels for a coastal pass; VOC 1116, Missive van Hans Putmans Naer Batavia aen gouverneur generael Hendrick Brouwer, Taiwan, 9 Mar. 1635, fo. 329^v.

⁴⁷ The Minister of War, Hsiung Ming-yü, Ch'ou-i Fu-chien K'ai-hai Li-hai [Considerations on the pros and cons of opening the Overseas Trade in Fu-chien] September 1631', in: Ch'ên Yün-lin, *Ming-ch'ing Kung-ts'ang t'ai-wan tang-an hui-pien*, vol. 3, 150-97 at 173. There were two kinds of licence:

- a) The 'Yin' for overseas shipping that should be applied for annually, and
- b) The 'Chao' for the coastal trade that should be applied for every few months.

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	The revenue of Chinese silk products sold in Japan (florin.)*	Benefits of the Dutch Factory in Taiwan (florin.)**
1635	759,971	-93,492
1636	1,135,187	91,207
1637	1,926,997	-49,505
1638	1,959,992	-84,325
1639	2,712,273	-170,247
1640	4,862,139	13,589

Source:* revised from: Nagazumi Yoko, Liu Hsü-fêng (trans.), 'You Hê-lan shih-liao k'an shih-ch'i shih-chi tê t'ai-wan mao-i', 37-57 at 42-43. Table 1 the raw silk exports to Japan on VOC ships; Table 2: the silk product exports to Japan on VOC ships.

** revised from: Tonio Andrade, *How Taiwan Became Chinese: Dutch, Spanish, and Han Colonization in the Seventeenth Century*[online], Appendix C: Income and Outlays in Dutch Taiwan, 1631-1661.

Although the silk trade grew exponentially, the fixed investment required for the Formosan colony itself rose just as rapidly. As the table above shows, in most years in this period the VOC in Taiwan not only could not even scratch a profit, it even ran at a loss. As the revenue earned from the sale of the raw silk usually amounted to 50 per cent of its income, it should have been quite enough to pay for the next purchases the following summer,⁴⁸ but part of the silver was either sent to Batavia or used to pay for the construction costs of Zeelandia Castle - slaking lime, making bricks and wages of the Chinese building-workers. If there was not enough cash to pay the Chinese merchants, they were not allowed to take back their silk goods to An-hai, for the reason that the Dutch were still at war with the Spaniards in Manila and Portuguese in Macao during this period and did not want the precious commodity to fall

⁴⁸ VOC 1123, Missive van Jan van der Burch naer Batavia aen gouverneur generael Antonio van Diemen ende raden van India, Taiwan, 12 Dec. 1637, Fo. 920^f.

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into enemy hands.⁴⁹ The only solution was to take the goods on loan from the Chinese merchants and to pay them interest before the Japanese silver arrived in the depths of winter. In the August of 1637, Governor Johan van der Burg in Taiwan resorted to this method for the first time. His first step was to ask the Chinese merchant Hambuan what interest rate should be paid to the Chinese merchants and he then signed a formal contract as receipt for a loan.⁵⁰ Later, when the news spread to An-hai and Amoy, the merchants all complained about this arrangement, because they had collected the raw silk on Hambuan's promise that they would be paid in silver immediately.⁵¹ In total the capital borrowed from the An-hai merchants amounted to 585,000 guilders (about 177,272 taels), which was paid at a monthly interest of 3 per cent interest when the Japanese silver arrived in Taijouan on a Company ship on 12 December.⁵² It was said that two junks which were on the point of leaving Amoy abandoned their plan to set sail to Taiwan as a direct consequence of the shortage of money at Zeelandia Castle.⁵³ In the years which followed, if all the silver had been used up by the middle of July, the Dutch governor had to resort to borrowing the silk goods from the Chinese merchants again.⁵⁴ By this time, the Dutch had decided to pay no more than

⁴⁹ VOC 1123, Resolutie genomen bij den gouverneur Johan van der Burch ende raedt van Taijouan, Taiwan, 8 Sept. 1637, Fos. 831^v-832^f.

⁵⁰ VOC 1123, Resolutie genomen bij den gouverneur Johan van der Burch ende raedt van Taijouan, Taiwan, Taiwan, 21 Aug. 1637, Fo. 825^{f-v}; *Dagregister Zeelandia*, I 1629-1641, 366.

⁵¹ *Dagregister Zeelandia*, I 1629-1641, 368; VOC 1123, Resolutie genomen bij den gouverneur Johan van der Burch ende raedt van Taijouan, Taiwan, 8 Sept. 1637, Fos. 831^v-832^f.

⁵² Generale Missive, 9 Dec. 1637, in Cheng, *De VOC en Formosa*, 166; VOC 1123, Missive van Jan van der Burch naer Batavia aen gouverneur generael Anthonio van Diemen ende raden van India, Taiwan, 12 Dec. 1637, Fo. 920^f.

⁵³ VOC 1123, Resolutie genomen bij den gouverneur Johan van der Burch ende raedt van Taijouan, Taiwan, Taiwan, 8 Sept. 1637, fos. 831^v-832^f.

⁵⁴ Generale Missive, 22 Dec. 1638, in Cheng, *De VOC en Formosa*, 173. It records

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1.5 per cent interest per month on the loan. This decision caused enormous consternation among the Chinese merchants, because they had had to assemble the silk goods themselves by taking out individual private loans at an interest about 2.5 to 3 per cent.⁵⁵ Both sides negotiated back and forth several times, until the Dutch finally suggested they should pay part of the amount in pepper and the rest in silver at an interest in the region of 3 per cent. Both sides compromised. The Chinese merchants agreed to take 2,500 cattles of pepper at the price of 15.5 rials and the remainder in silver at an interest of 2.5 per cent.⁵⁶

Governor Johan van den Burg adopted a firm stance in the negotiations and insisted that the An-hai merchants should accept part of the payment in tropical commodities which the VOC had shipped to Taiwan. His high-handedness irritated the Fu-chien merchants. They threatened that they would no longer support the gentry in An-hai in their bribery of the local officials, unless the Dutch promised to pay their overdue bills in silver and silver alone.⁵⁷ It seems the Dutch authorities did not lose any sleep over the matter. They were very confident that Chinese would not be willing to risk their lives on the voyage to Japan. For them to have undertaken the voyage in the first place would have been illegal and, even if they did throw caution to the winds, they would run the risk that all their earnings from this trade might be confiscated by the mandarins. Above them loomed the spectre of the typhoons which were notorious during southern monsoon season in the East China Sea.

The final shot the Dutch had in their locker was that, if Chinese were to engage in the direct trade with Japan, they might have to face the immediate

that all the revenue earned from the Japan trade had been completely spent by the middle of August 1638.

⁵⁵ *Dagregister Zeelandia*, I 1629-1641, 427-8. 12 July; 15 July 1638.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 429-30. 20 July; 22 July 1638.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, I 1629-1641, 429. 20 July 1638.

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threat of a Dutch blockade of Manila in revenge. A new maritime ban issued by the imperial court which follow such a disturbance was actually the last thing the An-hai merchants wanted to risk. A letter sent to the Gentlemen XVII makes no bones about this:

*'We have to do our utmost to remove all obstacles and allow those Chinese junks sailing to Manila to pass through unharmed whenever they happen to encounter our ships, allowing them to continue their voyage. We should not do them any damage but help them and provide them with necessities, like water....because it is both obvious and without doubt that these junks have been fitted out by the richest merchants and provided with passes issued by the great and powerful prince, who would be bold enough to take revenge on any trespasses committed by vindictive patrols.'*⁵⁸

As mentioned before, the Dutch authorities in Taiwan were aware of how ineffective any attempts to patrol the sea route between Chang-chou and Manila would be. They accepted that the price they had to pay for the legalized An-hai-Taiwan trade was to allow free Chinese shipping to sailing on Manila. Since 1636 various other factors might also have contributed to reducing the pressure on the An-hai-Manila trade. Newly elected Governor-General Antonio van Diemen had made the strategic decision to reserve most of his resources and ships to launch attacks on the Portuguese enemy in India. Hence his most prominent targets were Goa, Ceylon and Malacca.⁵⁹ The customs records of Manila are another source which confirm that An-hai-Manila trade was prosperous between 1633 to 1639.

⁵⁸ VOC 1128, Missive van Jan van der Burch naer Amsterdam aen de Camer Amsterdam, Taiwan, 28 Nov. 1638, Fo. 368^{f-v}. Governor Johan van den Burch decided to allow all large Chinese junks sailing to Manila to pass unharmed, if they carried the legal passes issued by the Chinese Court.

⁵⁹ Ernst van Veen, *Decay or defeat? : an inquiry into the Portuguese decline in Asia, 1580-1645*, (Leiden : Research School of Asian, African, and Amerindian Studies, Universiteit Leiden, 2000), 200.

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Table 7-5: The numbers of Chinese junks visiting Manila (1633-1640)

Year	Junks from China
1633	30
1634	26
1635	40
1636	30
1637	50
1638	16
1639	30
1640	7

Source: Pierre Chaunu, *Les Philippines et le Pacifique des Ibériques(XVI^e,XVII^e,XVIII^e siècles)*[The Philippines and the Iberian Pacific Ocean], (Paris: S.E.V. P. E. N., 1968), 156-60. Série 13, Table 3.

Although the records do not give the precise figures for the individual years, it is none the less possible to estimate the total value of the Chinese commodities imported by scrutinizing the customs duties paid. Between 1631 and 1635, the total value of Chinese commodities was estimated to be 571,396 rials, or an average of 114,279 rials each year. In the following section, 1636-1640, the value had fallen a little and was 458,063 rials, or 91,612 rials on average each year.⁶⁰

Table 7-6: The price of raw silk shipped to Taiwan on Chinese junks

⁶⁰ Wu Yü-ying, *Hsi-pan-ya t'ung-chih shih-ch'i tê chung-fei-mao i*[The Sino-Philippine Trade under Spanish Rule], (PhD diss., The New Asia Institute of Advanced Chinese Studies, 1992), 125. Table 7. The table is based on: Pierre Chaunu, *Les Philippines et le Pacifique des Ibériques*, 204. Série 14, Table 3. The table records the import duty on Chinese goods from 1646 to 1665. When the figures are divided by the tax rate of 6%, the total value of the imported Chinese goods can be estimated.

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	Raw silk imported from China, in piculs.*	Raw silk purchase price in Taiwan, in rials per picul. **	Total estimated cost in rials
1636-10/1637-10	1510.5	191	288,505.5
1637-10/1638-11	1305.5	190	248,045
1638-11/1639-11	1167	200	233,400
Average			256,650

Source: *Lin Wei-sh'êng, *Hê-chü shih-c'i tung-yin-tu kung-ssu tsai t'ai-wan tê mao-i (1622-1662)*, 111-3. Table 3-20;

** revised from: Peter W. Klein, ' De Tonkinees-Japanse zijdehandel van de Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie en het inter-Asiatiscbe verkeer in de 17e Eeuw [The Tonkin-Japanese Silk Trade of the Dutch East India Company and the Inter-Asian Traffic in the Seventeenth Century]'. in Willem Frijhoff and Minke Hiemstra (eds), *Bewogen en bewegen: de historicus in het spanningsveld tussen economic en cultuur*, (Tilburg: Uitgeverij H. Gianotten B.V., 1906), 152-77 at 170. Table 2 De jaarlijks gemiddelde prijzen (gld.) per catty ruwe zijde in de factorij Deshima der VOC 1638-1668 [The Average Annual Price (Guilders) per Catty of Raw Silk in the Factory Deshima of the VOC 1638-1668].

Given that all commodities sold in Manila were exchanged for silver, the amount of money spent there, compared with the capital that the Dutch reserved in Taiwan for purchasing raw silk, would have amounted only to about 35 per cent.⁶¹ Therefore the ratio of An-hai trade with Taiwan and Manila was 3:1. Since they were aware that the Taiwan trade already

⁶¹ Richard von Glahn, *Fountain of Fortune*, (California: University of California, 1996), 232. In Table 23, Von Glahn also gives a separate estimates of the silver flowing into China from Japan and via the Philippines in these two different intervals. In the proportions of silver imported from those two places, the portions from Manila were lower, at 21% and 11%. These differences might have arisen from his estimates of the silver imported from Japan, which was based on 80% of the values of the imports.

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absorbed the largest portion of Fu-chien exports, the Dutch felt no urgent need to ruin the An-hai-Manila trade at all costs.

After the last Dutch ship left Taiwan for Japan in September of 1638, the An-hai merchants delivered silk goods valued at 300,000 rials on board three junks two months later in November. They were prepared to wait for their payment for the silver which would be shipped from Japan in December. Seven Dutch vessels arrived in Taiwan from Japan before the end of December and the 2,280,000 guilders (800,000 Japanese taels) of Japanese silver was more than adequate to satisfy them immediately.⁶²

As the Japanese authorities suspected them of having had a hand in the Shimabara Rebellion of 1637-8, the Portuguese were subsequently banned from the Japan trade. Two Portuguese galliots which arrived during the summer of 1639 were kept under strict surveillance and ordered to set a return course once the north monsoon had set in.⁶³ Watching from the sidelines, the Dutch in Japan judged this would be the best opportunity for them to take over the Portuguese business in Japan, if they could offer silk goods of the same quality as the Portuguese had done. During the south monsoon season in 1639, the Dutch shipped 2,963,018 guilders' worth of Chinese goods to Japan, expecting a 60 per cent profit.⁶⁴ According to a

⁶² Generale Missive, 30 Dec. 1638, in Cheng, *De VOC en Formosa*, 179.

⁶³ Charles R. Boxer, *Fidalgos in the Far East*, (Hongkong: Oxford University press, 1968), 121.

⁶⁴ VOC 1133, Missive van Jan van den Burch naer Cambodja aen den oppercoopman Joannes van der Hagen, Taiwan, 31 Dec. 1639, Fo. 170^v. However, in 'the Report of Commissioner Nicolaes Couckebacker', the sum is recorded as 2,898,802:18:4 guilders. Cf. VOC 1131, Rapport [van Nicolaes Couckebacker] aen den gouverneur generael Anthonio van Diemen ende de raeden van India, nopende Couckebacker's besendinge naer Tonckin ende gedaene visite des Comptoirs ende verderen ommeslag uijt Taijouan, gelegen op het eijlandt Formosa [Report of Commissioner Nicolaes Couckebacker to Governor-General Anthonio van Diemen and the Council of the Indies, concerning His Mission to Tonkin and His Visit to the Taiwan Factory and

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report of the same year, the Dutch were originally prepared to purchase 4,000,000 guilders' worth of Chinese goods, but the An-hai merchants were not willing to lend the Dutch 1,000,000 guilders' worth of goods. They were only prepared to go as high as 224,959 guilders at an interest of 2 or 2.5 per cent for two months. Hence their financial caution prevented the Dutch from expanding their Japanese trade to the extent they desired.⁶⁵ Although it seemed obvious that the An-hai merchants could not keep up with the pace of the rapid expansion of the Dutch trade, President François Caron, in charge of the Hirado Factory in Japan, still submitted an ambitious order for Chinese goods amounting to 5,000,000 guilders.⁶⁶

The sum of 1,050,000 taels in silver (2,992,500 guilders) arrived in Taiwan from Japan on board six Dutch vessels in the December of 1639.⁶⁷ Up to the end of April of 1640, another 1,130,000 taels (3,220,500 guilders) of silver arrived in Taiwan on three other ships.⁶⁸ Although the supply of silver was greater than ever, the Dutch still purchased more than they actually paid for, so finally 5,164,371 guilders' worth of Chinese goods were shipped to Japan in the autumn.⁶⁹

Other Company Establishments in the Island of Formosa] (hereafter cited as 'Report of Commissioner Nicolaes Couckebacker'), [on the ship] *de Rijk*, 8 Dec. 1639, fo. 312.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, fo. 312.

⁶⁶ Generale Missive, 18 Dec. 1639, in Cheng, *De VOC en Formosa*, 188; VOC 1132, Missive van gouverneur Van der Burch aen Adam Westervolt president van 't comptoir Persien, Taiwan, 30 Nov 1639, Fol. 307.

⁶⁷ Generale Missive, 8 Jan. 1640, in Cheng, *De VOC en Formosa*, 190-191; VOC 1133, Missive van Jan van Der Burch naer Cambodja aen den oppercoopman Joannes van der hagen, Taiwan, 31 Dec. 1639, Fo. 170^v.

⁶⁸ *Dagregister Zeelandia*, I 1629-1641, 488. 26 Dec. 1639; 493. 13 Jan. 1640; 495. 23 Apr. 1640.

⁶⁹ *Dagregister Batavia*, 1640-1641, 111. 6 Dec. 1640. It was estimated from the sum total of the cargoes of six junks, with the exception of the first ship, *de Roch*, the bulk

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By indulging in these risky politics, the VOC factory in Taiwan succeeded in expanding its part in the Sino-Japan trade exponentially. When the Portuguese were expelled by the Japanese Shogun in 1639, the Dutch confidently expected to take over all of the rich trade the Portuguese had been forced to relinquish after their alleged support of the Shimabara Rebellion. Fate intervened and the political changes in Japan, China, and India affected the An-hai merchants in another way. The An-hai-Taiwan trade did not follow the path of Canton-Macao trade as the Dutch had hoped. The decisive difference between the Cantonese and Fu-chienese merchants was that the latter were granted passes which allowed them to sail to the South and East China Seas. In the other words, the adventurous Chinese merchants were granted the right to take a risk and they were quite willing to draw a bow at a venture as the next chapters will reveal.⁷⁰

of whose cargo was from Tonkin.

⁷⁰ Leonard Blussé, 'The VOC as Socerer's Appentice', 87-105 at 104. Blussé correctly points out that the VOC finally failed to force the Chinese Court to acquiesce in their role as just another element in the coastal order. Their failure to win imperial recognition created an essential position for a mediator like Iquan. The Fu-chienese merchants were not only able to play the mediator, they also had the right to sail and trade in other places in the South China Sea. Hence the contradictory structures cited above emerged in the wake of this confrontation.