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Dutch attacks against Portuguese shipping in Asia (1600–1625)

Historians have often mentioned the privateering activity of the Dutch East India Company (voc) against Portuguese navigation in Asia. However, there have been almost no attempts to measure the phenomenon quantitatively. This article will present a listing as comprehensive as possible of Portuguese ships lost in Asia and on the Cape of Good Hope route as a result of Dutch attacks during the first quarter of the 17th century. Based on Dutch and Portuguese sources, this extensive sample of losses shall allow for a better knowledge of the numbers, the chronological evolution and the geographical distribution of Dutch attacks on Portuguese shipping in the period. It will be seen that the chronological and regional impact of the attacks varied, mirroring the evolution of the broader Dutch-Portuguese conflict in Asia. There was a peak in the number of Portuguese ships lost to the Dutch in the first decade of the 17th century. This was followed by a drop in the number of ships taken during a relatively quiet phase of the conflict. The short-lived alliance between the Dutch and English East India Companies brought about a new time of escalation and contributed to another period of high losses in 1620–1625. Nevertheless, it will be argued that a change in the nature of voc privateering that took place around the same time in the Straits of Melaka was actually more important. Dutch attacks against Portuguese navigation turned then for the first time into a regular activity, taking place seasonally in accordance to a fixed routine. The data presented shall make clear the centrality of this region for voc privateering by showing that more than one third of Portuguese losses to the Dutch identified in the period under study took place there.

The Dutch-Portuguese conflict in Asia is a classic subject that has not recently attracted the interest of many historians. The most recent general views on the subject are works by Sanjay Subrahmanyam and Ernst van Veen that date from 1993 and 2000, respectively.¹ Both authors downplayed the damage inflicted by the Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (voc) on Portuguese

possessions in Asia – the so-called Estado da Índia – in the first three decades of the 17th century, claiming that the situation only became truly serious in the 1630s.² Additionally, it can also be noted that Subrahmanyam and Van Veen at least shared an inclination to qualify the impact of the Company on the destinies of the Portuguese in Asia, even after 1630. This was a reaction against the traditional view of the VOC as the main factor responsible for the 17th century decline of the Estado, which neglected the importance of Asian actors and local contexts. However, by placing the beginning of the most serious stage of the conflict in the 1630s while at the same time relativizing the extent of its importance even after that, they largely failed to discuss a phenomenon defined as a major cause of decline by Portuguese sources as early as the first decade of the century: the loss of Portuguese ships to the VOC whether in strictly military actions or, more often, by captures of merchant vessels in privateering operations.

Subrahmanyam and Van Veen saw the 1630s as a period of decisive change in the conflict because of the escalation in conventional warfare, with the first VOC conquests in Ceylon in 1638 and the beginning of the siege of Melaka, which culminated in the taking of the city in 1641. However, there had been sustained privateering campaigns by the VOC for many years before that.³ The decrease in the fiscal revenues of the Estado da Índia since at least the 1610s has traditionally been linked to this phenomenon.⁴ Thus, it seems necessary

1 Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Portuguese Empire in Asia, 1500–1700: A Political and Economic History* (London 1993) 144–80. Ernst van Veen, *Decay or Defeat? An Inquiry into the Portuguese Decline in Asia, 1580–1645* (Leiden 2000). There has been however a series of important studies that touch on partial aspects of the conflict. See Ernst van Veen and Leonard Blussé ed., *Rivalry and Conflict: European Traders and Asian Trading Networks in the 16th and 17th Centuries* (Leiden 2005); Martine Julia van Ittersum, *Profit and Principle. Hugo Grotius, Natural Rights Theories and the Rise of Dutch Power in the East Indies, 1595–1615* (Leiden 2006); Peter Borschberg, *The Singapore and Melaka Straits: Violence, Security and Diplomacy in the 17th Century* (Leiden 2010); Peter Borschberg, *Hugo Grotius, The Portuguese, and 'Free Trade' in the East Indies* (Singapore 2011); Jur van Goor, *Jan Pieterszoon Coen 1587–1629: koopman-koning in Azië* (Amsterdam 2015). See also Gerrit Knaap, Henk den Heijer, and Michiel de Jong, *Oorlogen overzee: militair optreden door compagnie en staat buiten Europa, 1595–1814* (Amsterdam 2015).

2 This had been previously defended by

M.A.P. Meilink-Roelofs and George Winus and Leonard Blussé. See M.A.P. Meilink-Roelofs, *Asian Trade and European Influence in the Indonesian Archipelago between 1500 and about 1630* (The Hague 1962) 173–91; George D. Winus and Leonard Blussé, 'The Origin and Rhythm of Dutch Aggression against the Estado Da India, 1601–1661' in: George Winus, *Studies on Portuguese Asia, 1495–1689* (Aldershot 2001), article IV.

3 Ernst van Veen, while stressing the importance of privateering as a source of revenues for the Company in its first two decades of existence, thought that until 1625 it would have affected Chinese shipping to the Philippines far more. He also argued that the decline of the Carreira da Índia started before it began to be affected by the regular threat of VOC squadrons, with the start of the seasonal blockades of Goa in 1636. Van Veen, *Decay or Defeat?*, 55–83, 187–94, 204–07.

4 The best work on the economic history of the Estado da Índia in the period is still João Manuel de Almeida Teles e Cunha, 'Economia de um império. Economia política do Estado da Índia em torno do Mar Árabe e Golfo Pérsico: elementos conjunturais,

to look more closely at the history of the Company's attacks on Portuguese navigation, a subject often mentioned in general but little known in detail. This article presents a quantitative survey of all known Portuguese ships lost in Asia or on the Cape of Good Hope route as a result of Dutch attacks in the first quarter of the 17th century. It is hoped that the data provided will help better establish the intensity, chronological evolution and geographical distribution of Dutch attacks against Portuguese navigation in the period.

HISTORIOGRAPHY

Sanjay Subrahmanyam paid little attention to VOC privateering against Portuguese navigation in his well-known book on the Portuguese empire in Asia. He had, however, previously dealt with the phenomenon in more detail in his important monograph on South India.⁵ Subrahmanyam argued that in the Bay of Bengal the privateering affected the Estado da Índia and groups of Portuguese merchants differently: the former was more heavily hit, while some of the latter managed to survive better.⁶ He concluded that in this period the VOC was not able to provoke a general decline in competition in the Bay of Bengal region by force but only the reorientation of existing routes.

Beyond the Bay of Bengal, Subrahmanyam dealt with the allegedly ruinous effects of Dutch privateering on the trade of Cochin, the most important Portuguese position on the west coast of India.⁷ He raised the important question of the reliability of the many complaints on the subject that fill Portuguese sources. He recognized, however, that there is a limit to this critical approach to the sources; that from about 1630 the reality of the impoverishment of the city seems undeniable: and that it was due to the many losses to the Dutch and the English in its most important trade – that which was conducted with Melaka and areas further East.

This first book by Sanjay Subrahmanyam influenced James Boyajian's work on Portuguese trade in Asia during 1580–1640.⁸ Regarding the specific point of the effects of Dutch privateering, Boyajian claimed that the effects had been overrated, especially for the first two decades of the 17th century and especial-

1595–1635' (MA dissertation, New University of Lisbon 1995). See pp. 315–65 for the evolution of public revenues. On the Estado's fiscal system see also Susana Miranda... 'A Administração da fazenda real no Estado da Índia (1517–1640)' (PhD dissertation, New University of Lisbon 2007); Susana Miranda, 'Fiscal System and Private Interests in Portuguese Asia under the Habsburgs, 1580–1640', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 60:3 (2017) 202–32.

5 Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Political Eco-*

nomny of Commerce: Southern India, 1500–1650 (Cambridge 1990). See also the articles collected in *Improvising Empire. Portuguese Trade and Settlement in the Bay of Bengal 1500–1700* (Delhi 1990).

6 Subrahmanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce*, 108–14, 144–66, 190–213.

7 Ibidem, 218–31.

8 James C. Boyajian, *Portuguese Trade in Asia under the Habsburgs, 1580–1640* (Baltimore 1993).



Dutch and English ships on the roadstead of Lisbon. Anonymous painting, 1600–1650. MARITIME MUSEUM ROTTERDAM.

ly for the private trade on the fringes of the Estado da Índia.⁹ He went back to the distinction made by Subrahmanyam between the trade granted through the official trade concessions of the Estado da Índia, often on an exclusivist basis, and the remaining Portuguese intra-Asian trade. Like Subrahmanyam, Boyajian argued that one should not take the part for the whole and that the decline in trade concessions did not imply a decline in the totality of Portuguese commerce.

It is interesting to note how a reversal of viewpoints can be surprising. The Dutch historian Victor Enthoven addressed the issue from the other point of view, attempting to measure the importance of *voc* privateering not for the Estado da Índia but for the Company itself (thus also taking into account non-Portuguese prizes).¹⁰ He concluded that the privateering's proportion of the revenues of the Company in the first twenty years of its existence (1602–1622) was considerable, after which it declined. This decline was indicative of the transformation that the *voc* had to go through in the 1620s, ceasing to be the authentic 'privateering company' (*kaapvaartcompagnie*) that it had become.

At this point, attention should be drawn to the scarcity of solid quantitative information on *voc* privateering against Portuguese intra-Asian navigation.¹¹ The only author to provide truly exhaustive statistical information on Por-

9 Ibidem, 150–64, 220–40.

10 Victor Enthoven, *Zeeland en de opkomst van de Republiek: handel en strijd in de Schel-*

dedelta, c. 1550–1621 (Leiden 1996), 207–11.

11 Unlike the case of the navigation between Portugal and Asia, known as *Carreira da*

tuguese ship losses in intra-Asian navigation to VOC squadrons in the past was George Bryan Souza, which is why he is treated last in this bibliographic summary.¹²

Bryan Souza's *The Survival of Empire* was published in 1986 and influenced both James Boyajian and Sanjay Subrahmanyam; it also contributed significantly to supporting Boyajian's re-evaluation of the importance of Portuguese private trade in Asia beyond 1600.¹³ However, it should be noted that with regard to the privateering issue, in his book, Bryan Souza did not go as far as Subrahmanyam and Boyajian in questioning the importance of VOC attacks. Only in an article written a few years later, however, did he address the subject in detail.¹⁴ He then reversed the terms of the problem by stating that the continued high level of ship losses by the Portuguese points to the existence of a trade that was nevertheless highly profitable, as evidenced by its ability to withstand large capital losses for a long time.¹⁵ He thus reinforced his case for the persistence of the vitality of Portuguese trade in the South China Sea on the basis of a given fact – the high number of ship losses – at first sight adverse to his argument.

Regardless of this conclusion, it should be noted that the article was based on an extensive table listing all known losses of Portuguese navigation in Asia in 1600–1684, among which the losses to the Dutch make up an overwhelming majority. It is important to stress, first of all, what an advance the article in which this table appeared was in relation to the other works on the subject of VOC privateering against the Portuguese. Second, it should be noted that the table could only be drawn up thanks to the combined use of Portuguese and Dutch sources. Finally, despite all of the above, the limitations of the table should also be mentioned, especially what appears to be a poorer coverage of areas further west (a likely result of the author's expertise on the South China Sea). It must be said that Bryan Souza himself was the first to admit to such limitations, insisting on the still preliminary nature of the table that would need to be supplemented by further research.¹⁶

On balance, the works discussed above have much in common, and they all offer an ambivalent view of the anti-Portuguese privateering activities of the

Índia. See André Murteira, *A Carreira da Índia e o curso neerlandês, 1595–1625* (Lisbon 2012).

¹² Francisco Bethencourt used an important Portuguese inventory of ship losses, but it was restricted to the years 1629–1635, which fall outside the period of this study. Francisco Bethencourt, 'Configurações do império' in: Francisco Bethencourt and Kirti N. Chaudhuri ed., *História da expansão portuguesa II* (Lisbon 1998) 276–386.

¹³ George Bryan Souza, *The Survival of Empire: Portuguese Trade and Society in China and the South China Sea 1630–1754* (Cambridge

1986).

¹⁴ George Bryan Souza, 'Commerce and Capital: Portuguese Maritime Losses in the South China Sea, 1600–1754' in: Artur T. de Matos and Luís Filipe F.R. Thomaz ed., *As relações entre a Índia Portuguesa, a Ásia do Sueste e o Extremo Oriente: actas do VI Seminário Internacional de História Indo-Portuguesa* (Macau, 22 a 26 de Outubro de 1991) (Lisbon-Macao 1993) 321–48.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, 332–39.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, 333.

voc rather than a radically “revisionist” one. Neither Bryan Souza nor Subrahmanyam or Boyajian deny the importance of such activities and their eventual contribution to an actual decline in at least a part of the Portuguese trade in Asia. However, we can clearly infer from their work the need for a more nuanced view of the phenomenon, one that takes into account the diversity of its effects according to the periods in which it took place and the specific trade routes that it affected. This more cautious type of approach has not had much acceptance in Portuguese historiography, in which a more “pessimistic” view of the impact of Dutch privateering tends to prevail. It is thus generally accepted that the decline in Estado da Índia’s revenues in the first decades of the 17th century was a consequence of a parallel decline in practically all Portuguese private trade in Asia, following to the letter what the Portuguese primary sources say.

The impact of piracy and privateering is a subject that lends itself to differences of opinion that recall the classic dilemma of whether a glass half filled with water is half full or half empty. A pessimist can see a large number of ship captures as an indication of serious losses in trade, whereas an optimist may see them as a sign of vitality (i.e., if there were many losses, this was because there were many ships trading). In addition, however, these specific differences of opinion on the importance of voc privateering against the Portuguese may have something to do with the scarcity of data on the subject. George Bryan Souza’s little-known inventory was a great advance in this aspect. However, we have seen that the author himself pointed out its limitations, stressing its preliminary nature and the need for further research.

The above constitutes the main purpose of this article, which contains an appendix with a table of Portuguese ships taken or destroyed by the Dutch in Asia and on the Cape route in the first quarter of the 17th century that expands Souza’s findings considerably.¹⁷ It shall allow us to form a clearer idea of the chronological and geographical distribution of Dutch anti-Portuguese privateering in Asia during this period. A flaw in some of the historiography of the Estado da Índia when dealing with the subject is an inclination to view the voc as an omnipotent and omnipresent threat. This error of perspective stems mainly from an apparent ignorance of the Company’s history. The voc had distinct regional priorities, especially during its financially difficult first three decades of existence. Its ships could not therefore attack the Portuguese everywhere. An inventory that is as complete as possible in terms of all the times and places in which the Company did so shall help us better understand the chronological oscillations and changing geography of the attacks.

A word about the sources used. As Souza, I used both Portuguese and Dutch primary sources, with a clear predominance of printed sources, which are

17 For reasons of space, the table in the appendix is a shortened version of a much more extensive table, which can be found in André Murteira, ‘A navegação portuguesa na

Ásia e na Rota do Cabo e o curso neerlandês, 1595–1625’ (PhD dissertation, New University of Lisbon 2016) 353–62.

abundant for the period. It must be said that, on this subject, Dutch sources are on the whole richer than the Portuguese. A considerable part of the remaining available documentation on the Estado da Índia was written either in the Estado's capital, Goa, in Western India, or in Lisbon or in the Spanish capitals of the Spanish Monarchy (Madrid and Valladolid). The available documents, by contrast, are on the whole geographically more varied, due to the existence of important sections of correspondence from the Company's settlements throughout Asia. As such, they provide more information on a phenomenon that took place mainly east of Goa. A common trait of these sets of Portuguese and Dutch sources, however, is their mostly official nature. Apart from a few travel accounts and some Jesuit letters, they are comprised mostly of official documentation of the Estado da Índia or the *voc*.

THE CONTEXT

To make sense of the data presented, it is necessary to place it in the context of the Portuguese-Dutch conflict in Asia up to 1625, which is briefly summarized below.¹⁸ The 1595–1601 expeditions of the so-called *voorcompagnieën*, the predecessors of the *voc*, were still largely confined to the Malay-Indonesian archipelago. Their main destinations were Banten in Java and Aceh in Sumatra – the two larger emporiums of spices in the region – and the small spice-producing archipelagos of the Moluccas (Maluku, Ambon and Banda) in the eastern part of Indonesia. In the Moluccas, they were well received from the beginning by the Sultanate of Ternate, which had been at war with the Portuguese for decades. Banten and Aceh, on the other hand, were then on good terms with the Estado da Índia, and this probably contributed to their initial misgivings about the newly arrived Dutch. However, two failed Portuguese punitive expeditions to the archipelago scared the two kingdoms, leading them to settle their relations with the North Europeans.

Even when the Dutch were welcomed in Banten, Aceh and the Moluccas, the local markets were often not able to satisfy the increased demand for spices that they created. This inevitably pushed the Dutch to try their luck in other places, both inside and outside the archipelago, increasing their chances of coming up against Portuguese competitors. Most of these early expeditions were formally prohibited from attacking anyone without prior provocation. However, what was seen as the hostile behaviour of the Portuguese – in some cases with good reason – led to some attacks, which were also clearly favoured by the need to compensate for long and unfruitful searches for cargo around Asia.

The founding of the *voc* in 1602 accelerated these two previous trends: the geographical expansion of Dutch presence in Asia on the one hand and the

18 André Murteira, 'A navegação portuguesa na Ásia'.



- A. Hollantsche Vloete ghecomen inde strate van Sunda.
 B. Een Chineesche Pirau die de voorz. Vloete adverteert vande Poortugeefche Armade.
 C. Die Hollanders comende by hare Vvanden.
 D. Armade vande Poortugeesen, soo die Hol-

landers die eerst ingheseylt, ende gheabbordeert hebben.
 E. Die voorz. Poortugeefche Armade, loefwaert legghen te vande Hollantsche vloete, met brand-schepen die selde te destrueren.

Battle between Dutch and Portuguese ships near Bantam, Java, December 1601.



F. Die Hollandsche Armade, liwzert vande
Poortugeesche gheleghen, en wert vande
brant-schepen niet beschadicht.
G. Die Poortugeesen verlatende Bantam ende
het eylandt Java, nemen met haere over-
gebleven Galeyen ende Schepen die vlucht

naer die Molucken:
H. Die welke vande Hollanders een tijdt lang
naer gheseylt ende met groff gheschut ver-
volcht zijn.

Print illustration in Jan Jansz. Orlers and Henrick van Haestens, *Den Nassauschen Lauren-crans* (Leiden 1610). MARITIME MUSEUM ROTTERDAM.

escalation of Dutch-Portuguese conflicts on the other. The new company soon decided to arm itself and go on the offensive against the Estado da Índia. Thus, in its first decade of existence, it took the two Portuguese fortresses in the Moluccas, Ambon and Tidore (1605), and it unsuccessfully laid a siege to Melaka (1606) and twice to Mozambique Island (1607 and 1608). The Mozambique sieges were carried out with no apparent intention of conquest. They were the result of three large-scale expeditions to the Western Indian Ocean that passed through the Mozambique Channel, Goa and Malabar with the intent to capture or destroy Portuguese Indiamen.

It must be noted that the Estado da Índia had just as bellicose a policy, which pre-dated that of the *voc* and contributed as much to this escalation of hostilities. Between 1597 and 1606, three great Portuguese expeditions were dispatched from India to Southeast Asia with the intent to inflict all possible damage on the newly arrived Dutch. None of the three succeeded in this goal, and the last and largest of them all met with a humiliating end, with nine of its capital ships destroyed by a *voc* fleet in Melaka. In addition, in 1605–1608, a partly unsuccessful attempt was made to reinforce Portuguese naval forces in Asia with relief fleets of galleons sent from Europe via the Cape of Good Hope route. The Portuguese losses to *voc* privateering in the first decade of the 17th century reflect this quick escalation of the Dutch-Portuguese conflict and are the highest in the period under study.

The Spanish-Dutch truce of 1609–1621 promised to bring a pause to the situation of war in Asia. Eventually, however, the truce agreement could not be implemented in the East. Nevertheless, this did not bring about the resumption of large-scale hostilities between the two sides. Although the war continued, the second decade of the 17th century was marked by a visible decrease in the intensity of conflicts between the Portuguese and the Dutch in the East. The spectacular 1604–1608 *voc* incursions into the Western Indian Ocean and its attacks on important Portuguese positions such as Mozambique and Melaka, on the one hand, and the large 1597–1606 Portuguese expeditions to Southeast Asia, on the other, were not repeated. The known Portuguese losses to *voc* privateering also decreased considerably during this period. Portuguese naval reinforcements through the Cape route were suspended until the end of the decade, and it was decided to promote the building of galleons in India instead. The attempt had limited success, contributing to the swift end of the galleon escort system that was set up to protect the navigation of merchant carracks on the India-Japan route. The escorts of galleons had operated for a few years with good results, and their end led to the disappearance of Portuguese merchant carracks, which were replaced by lighter, safer vessels.

A new period of escalation began to take shape in 1619. On the one hand, the *voc* and the English East India Company signed a peace agreement, bringing an end to the conflict that pitted them against each other in the preceding years. The agreement led to the formation of two Anglo-Dutch fleets specifically intended to carry out sustained privateering campaigns against

Portuguese and Spanish interests in Asia. The first one operated in 1620–1622 between the Philippines, China and Japan. The second one was active in the Western Indian Ocean between Mozambique and Goa in 1621–1623. On the other hand, the Portuguese went back to their previous policy of supplying the Estado da Índia's naval forces with galleons from Europe, dispatching a new series of relief fleets by the Cape route in the years 1619–1624. These two events combined resulted in a new phase of escalation. However, like the previous one, it proved to be short lived. On the one hand, the Anglo-Dutch alliance and the Anglo-Dutch privateering fleets did not last long (additionally, the one that operated in the Far East had little effect on Portuguese navigation in the region, although it managed to inflict great damage on Chinese navigation to the Philippines). On the other hand, the 1619–1624 relief fleets were plagued by shipwrecks and aborted voyages, just as it had happened in 1605–1608. The naval force assembled in India by 1624 not only was smaller than planned but also had a short-lived existence (the same had already happened with the galleon force formed with the ships sent from Europe in 1605–1608). Once more, the attempt to supply the Estado da Índia with a war fleet from Europe that it could not muster itself in Asia was largely a failure.¹⁹

The most consequential events of this period turned out to be a group of less spectacular expeditions that have been scarcely noticed by historians: a series of privateering journeys to the Straits of Melaka and its surroundings that for the first time took on a regular and standardized form, something that had not yet happened in the twenty or so years of Dutch presence in Asia. Unlike the great expeditions of the first decade and of the Anglo-Dutch fleets, the journeys to the Straits of Melaka were made in light vessels. These were similar to the Portuguese ships that they were now pursuing, which very distinct from the large merchant carracks that had been abandoned in the 1610s. The new rise of Portuguese losses to the Dutch in this period – after the low of the previous decade – was mainly due to this group of expeditions rather than the more spectacular Anglo-Dutch raids into the South China Sea and the Western Indian Ocean.

19 This failure should be contrasted with the parallel success of the VOC, which presents us with an example of an effective massive transfer of naval means from Europe to Asia by the Cape route. The success of this effort to mobilize and transfer naval means to the East is attested by the regular inventories of the state of the Company's naval forces. They show a sustained growth of Dutch naval power in Asia, based on the regular dispatching of great full-rigged ships from the

United Provinces. The two series of Portuguese relief fleets from 1605–1608 and 1619–1624 can actually be seen as unsuccessful attempts to replicate the highly successful Dutch effort to raise naval resources in Europe and dispatch them East. Van Veen, *Decay or Defeat?*, 187, 265; Robert Parthesius, *Dutch Ships in Tropical Waters: The Development of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) Shipping Network in Asia, 1595–1660* (Amsterdam 2010).

CONCLUSIONS

The factual history briefly summarized above is useful for making sense of the data presented in the table in the appendix. This certainly dispels the idea that the VOC was an ever-present and omnipresent threat because the intensity of its attacks on Portuguese navigation varied both chronologically and geographically. Chronologically, there was a peak in the number of attacks in the 1600s, followed by a clear drop that corresponded to a calmer period of the Portuguese-Dutch conflict. A new high followed in 1620–1625 but with fewer ships of great tonnage among the prizes because the great Portuguese carracks fell into disuse on most intra-Asian routes. Geographically, the most striking fact seems to be the proportion of losses in the small Straits of Melaka region, which account for more than one-third of the total. The appendix data are summarized in the two tables below.²⁰

Table 1. Portuguese ships taken or destroyed by the Dutch in Asia and on the Cape of Good Hope route, 1601–1625.

	<i>Carracks and galleons</i>	<i>Other ships</i>	<i>Total</i>
1601–1609	36 (45%)	44 (55%)	80 (100%)
1610–1619	3 (9.68%)	28 (90.32%)	31 (100%)
1620–1625	5 (9.62%)	47 (90.38%)	52 (100%)
Total (1601–1625)	44 (26.99%)	119 (73.01%)	163 (100%)

Source: see table in appendix.

Table 2. Regions of attacks, 1601–1625. (The number between parentheses is the percentage.)

	<i>Atlantic Ocean–Cape of Good Hope</i>	<i>Western Indian Ocean</i>	<i>Ceylon</i>	<i>Bay of Bengal</i>	<i>Straits of Melaka and surroundings</i>	<i>Malay-Indonesian Archipelago</i>	<i>China Sea</i>	<i>Unknown</i>	<i>Total of ships taken or destroyed</i>
1601–09	1 (1.25)	19 (23.75)	14 (17.5)	6 (7.5)	30 (37.5)	7 (8.75)	3 (3.75)		80 (100)
1610–19		1 (3.23)	6 (19.3)	1 (3.23)	8 (25.81)	14 (45.16)	1 (3.23)		31 (100)
1620–25	2 (3.85)	8 (15.38)	3 (5.77)	8 (15.38)	23 (44.23)	3 (5.77)	4 (7.69)	1 (1.92)	52 (100)
Total	3 (1.84)	28 (17.18)	23 (14.11)	15 (9.2)	61 (37.42)	24 (14.72)	8 (4.91)	1 (0.61)	163 (100)

Source: see table in appendix.

As already stated, the new period of high losses of 1620–1625 should not be compared to that of the first decade of the century. Although the annual averages of ships lost in the two periods were similar – about nine ships per year – the lower proportion of carracks or galleons taken or destroyed in 1620–1625 made the level of losses smaller when measured in number of tons. This was mainly because carracks and galleons had disappeared from the intra-Asian routes, although they kept operating on the Cape of Good Hope route (the five big full-rigged ships taken or destroyed in the period were all sailing on that route).

It can be concluded, therefore, that the threat of Dutch privateering affected a number of intra-Asian routes in a way that it did not affect the Cape route. The impact of the privateering threat was not limited to changes in the type of vessels employed. In the 1610s, Viceroy D. Jerónimo de Azevedo carried out a major sale of offices that included the sale of a set of trade voyage concessions. The value of these sales can be compared to the value of some of these voyages in the 1580s – a period for which a detailed survey of the concession system exists. The comparison shows that there was a decline in the value of some of the voyages along with the disappearance of others, clearly attributable to the risks of attack to which they had become subject.²¹ Nothing so drastic as this extinction or conversion of routes took place on the Cape route, where the disruptive effects of Dutch privateering were comparatively less important.

The main exception to this crisis in concession voyages, however, was not what one might think. The route that resisted better was that which linked Goa and Cochin to Macao and Japan via Melaka, one of the routes most exposed to Dutch privateering. Although the large carracks that traditionally sailed it had to be abandoned, the convoys of lighter vessels adopted in their place kept the route in existence. The sale of the concession to this voyage continued to reach high levels, which attests to the continued profitability of the route in spite of the great risk of an attack that it was exposed to (especially in the Straits of Melaka region).²² Both the profitability and the risk of attack remained high in the period after 1625, and only the definitive expulsion of the Portuguese from Japan in 1639 managed to put an end to a trade that was as lucrative as it was dangerous.²³ The combination of high losses and high

20 Portuguese ships victims of Dutch privateering were either captured or destroyed in the attack or while in flight. It was very rare that their captors allowed them to continue their voyage seizing only the cargo. That procedure was only followed in the case of neutral ships found to be carrying Portuguese goods.

21 Subrahmanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce*, 190–91, 200–02; Subrahmanyam, *The Portuguese Empire in Asia*, 137–42.

22 C.R. Boxer, *Fidalgos in the Far East, 1550–1770* (The Hague 1948) 109; Souza, *The Survival of Empire*, 48–63; Subrahmanyam, *The Portuguese Empire in Asia*, 169–72; Boyajian, *Portuguese Trade in Asia*, 232–35.

23 On the resilience of this trade in the period after 1625, see *ibidem*, 232–33; Mihoko Oka, 'The Investment of Japanese Silver in XVII Century Macao-Japan Trade' in: João Paulo Oliveira e Costa and Vítor Luís Gaspar Rodrigues ed., *O Estado Da Índia e Os Desafios*

profits that mitigated the damages of the former recalls the situation of the Portugal-Asia trade as described by James Boyajian.²⁴ It was not by accident that the three most valuable Dutch captures of Portuguese ships took place on these two routes: the *Santa Catarina*, a ship returning from Macao to India taken in 1603 in the Straits of Melaka (almost three million and a half guilders); another ship on the same route in Macao or Patane in 1603 or 1605 (just over one million and a half guilders); and the galleon *Santiago*, captured in 1602 in St. Helena when returning from India to Portugal (a million and a half guilders).²⁵

A word on the importance of anti-Portuguese privateering to the *voc*. The Portuguese were not the only victims of the Company's ships and, in this initial period, they were not even the main ones.²⁶ Until about 1625, they remained behind the Chinese who sailed to the Philippines, which was ranked as the main target area of Dutch privateering in Asia during this period. By 1625, however, the privateering activity of the Company in the Straits of Melaka and environs had also reached considerable levels. Most of all, since the end of the previous decade it had taken a regular and standardized form, which it had lacked before. It was the first region where this happened, which shows the importance of the area to the Company. Significantly, the same only started to happen in the Western Indian Ocean in the second half of the 1630s, with a series of annual blockades of Goa. Three *voc* fleets had visited the capital of the Estado da Índia in 1604–1608, and a joint *voc*-East India Company fleet in 1622–1623. Impressive as they were as shows of force, these incursions had no short-term continuity, due to the secondary place the region – the core of Portuguese power in Asia – still had then in the Company's priorities. This only really changed in the 1630s, also as a result of the *voc*'s entry in Portuguese-dominated Ceylon in 1638. Until then, the focus of the *voc*'s anti-Portuguese activities was clearly located East, most of all in the Straits of Melaka. Among these activities, privateering was certainly the dominant one until the beginning of the war in Ceylon and Victor Enthoven has underlined its financial importance to the *voc* in the first difficult twenty years of the Company's existence.

The conclusions summarized above do not answer all the questions put forward in the first section of this article. The list of losses presented, while more complete than any compiled before, still suffers from two obvious limitations: first, it is limited to the period up to 1625; second, given the lack of an exhaustive list drafted by the Company itself, it cannot aspire to present a full picture of all the losses in the period but only a sample that is as extensive as possible. We probably also need to know more about private Portuguese trade

Europeus. Actas Do XII Seminário Internacional de História Indo-Portuguesa (Lisbon 2010) 119–38; Peter Borschberg, *The Singapore and Melaka Straits: Violence, Security and Diploma-*

cy in the 17th Century (Leiden 2010) 157–88.

²⁴ Boyajian, *Portuguese Trade in Asia*, 86–145.

²⁵ See the appendix to this article below.

²⁶ Van Veen, *Decay or Defeat?*, 187–94.

in the period to attempt to answer the central question of whether and to what degree Dutch privateering caused it to decline. A study similar to Leonor Freire Costa's on Atlantic navigation would be welcome, but it is not clear that existing sources would allow it.²⁷ We saw that the effects varied according to the routes and that, paradoxically, one of the most important and more attacked routes – that between Goa and Macao and Japan – managed to survive with surprising success. There seems to be less uncertainty with regard to the effects of Dutch attacks on the revenues of the Estado da Índia: profits from customs came down and public finances worsened considerably. It was traditionally assumed that this drop in the revenues of the Estado reflected a general decline of all Portuguese trade in Asia. The works by Sanjay Subrahmanyan, James Boyajian and George Bryan Souza summed up at the beginning of this article gave us a more nuanced view of the phenomenon, questioning this picture of unmitigated decay. They are already decades old and their approach has not had many followers lately. It is to be hoped that studies such as the one presented here can contribute to a renewed interest on the subject and a better knowledge of it.

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27 Leonor Freire Costa, *O transporte no Atlântico e a Companhia Geral do Comércio do Brasil, 1580–1663* (Lisbon 2002).

**APPENDIX: PORTUGUESE SHIPS TAKEN (✓) OR DESTROYED (X) BY THE DUTCH IN ASIA
AND ON THE CAPE OF GOOD HOPE ROUTE, 1601–1625**

<i>Date</i>	<i>Type of Ship</i>	<i>Place of Attack</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Source</i>
1601		Aceh	✓	BV I: VI, 14–15; ORZ, 95–96
1601	Galliot	Banten	✓	DM II, 558–60; EB, 475–76
1601	Galliot	Banten	✓	DM II, 558–60; EB, 475–76
1602	<i>Bantim</i>	Borneo	✓	ORZ, 146
1602	Galleon	Saint Helena	✓	CICN, 79–92; HTM II, 737–809; ORZ, 138–44; VFC, 267–84
1602	Galliot	Ceylon	✓	RJS, 51–52
1602	<i>Champana (sampan)</i>	Ceylon	✓	RJS, 52
1602	<i>Champana (sampan)</i>	Ceylon	✓	RJS, 52–53
1602	Carrack	Straits of Melaka	✓	APO I-2, 112–13; RJS, 68–71; VJL, 105–8, 134–35, 146
1602	Frigate	Gresik	✓	ONG II, 515–16
1602		Pulau Tioman	✓	CLPB, 534–35
1603	Carrack	Straits of Melaka	✓	BOC III, 477; CLPB, 537–38, 540–41; SSCR
1603		Ceylon	✓	BV I: XI, 19–20
1603		Ceylon	✓	BV I: XI, 20
1603		Ceylon	✓	BV I: XI, 20–21
1603		Ceylon	✓	BV I: XI, 20
1603		Straits of Melaka	✓	BV I: XI, 32–33
1603	Junk	Straits of Melaka	✓	BV I: XI, 34
1603	Carrack	Macao	✓	BOC, I-2, 499; BV I: XI, 72; CACM, 120–21; EB, 512–14
1604	Carrack	Mozambique	✓	APO I-2, 131; BV II: I, 3; CI, 420; OCZA I, 40–41
1604		Mozambique	✓	BV II: I, 3; OCZA I, 41
1604	<i>Pangaio</i>	Mozambique	✓	BV II: I, 3
1604	<i>Pangaio</i>	Mozambique	✓	BV II: I, 3
1604	<i>Pangaio</i>	Mozambique	✓	BV II: I, 3
1604	<i>Pangaio</i>	Mozambique	✓	BV II: I, 3
1604	<i>Pangaio</i>	Mozambique	✓	BV II: I, 3
1604	Frigate	Western Indian Ocean	✓	BV II: I, 8; ONG III, 168
1604	<i>Pangaio</i>	Ceylon	✓	ONG III, 177
1604	<i>Pangaio</i>	Ceylon	✓	ONG III, 177
1604	Carrack	Chaul	✓	APO I-2, 133–34, 135–39; CI, 422; HIPO II, 121–22
1604	Carrack	Western Indian Ocean	✓	APO I-2, 135–39

<i>Date</i>	<i>Type of Ship</i>	<i>Place of Attack</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Source</i>
1604	Carrack	Cochin	✓	APO I-2, 135-39; CI, 423; HIPO II, 121-22
1604-05	Carrack	Ceylon	✓	APO I-2, 143-46; CI, 429
1604-05	Carrack	Ceylon	✓	APO I-2, 143-46; CI, 429
1604-05	Carrack	Ceylon	✓	APO I-2, 143-46; CI, 429
1604-05	Carrack	Ceylon	✓	APO I-2, 143-46; CI, 429
1605	Carrack	Pedra Branca	✓	BV I: XI, 79-80, 82-83
1605	Carrack	Patani	✓	BOC, I-2, 499; BV I: XI, 81-82; SSAP
1605		Patani	✓	BV I: XI, 83
1605		Bima	✓	BV II: I, 35; ONG III, 184-85
1605	Carrack	Tidore	✓	BV II: I, 36-37; ONG III, 189-90
1605	Carrack	Tidore	✓	BV II: I, 36-37; ONG III, 189-90
1606	Carrack	Mylapore	X	BV II: I, 60
1606	Galleon	Mylapore	X	BV II: I, 60
1606		Mylapore	X	BV II: I, 60
1606	Galleon	Bay of Bengal?	✓	BV II: I, 71-74
1606		Melaka	✓	BV II: II, 6-7
1606		Melaka	✓	BV II: II, 6-7
1606		Melaka	✓	BV II: II, 6-7
1606		Melaka	✓	BV II: II, 6-7
1606	<i>Parau</i>	Melaka	✓	BV II: II, 9-10
1606		Melaka	✓	BV II: II, 22
1606		Melaka	✓	BV II: II, 22
1606	Galleon	Melaka	X	APO I-2, 193-94; BV II: II, 27-29; PM, 294-95; ONG III, 218-19
1606	Galleon	Melaka	X	APO I-2, 193-94; BV II: II, 27-29; PM, 294-95; ONG III, 218-19
1606	Galleon	Melaka	X	APO I-2, 194-95; BV II: II, 35-44; PM, 295-96
1606	Galleon	Melaka	X	APO I-2, 194-95; BV II: II, 35-44; PM, 295-96
1606	Galleon	Melaka	✓	APO I-2, 194-95; BV II: II, 35-44; PM, 295-96
1606	Galleon	Melaka	X	APO I-2, 194-95; BV II: II, 35-44; PM, 295-96
1606	Galleon	Melaka	X	APO I-2, 194-95; BV II: II, 35-44; PM, 295-96
1606	Galleon	Melaka	✓	APO I-2, 194-95; BV II: II, 35-44; PM, 295-96
1606	Galleon	Melaka	X	APO I-2, 194-95; BV II: II, 35-44; PM, 295-96
1606		Melaka	✓	BV II: II, 45, 47-48
1606		Kedah	✓	BV II: II, 47
1606	<i>Fusta-galliot</i>	Kedah	✓	BV II: II, 47
1606	<i>Fusta-galliot</i>	Kedah	✓	BV II: II, 47
1606-07	<i>Naveta</i>	Ceylon	✓	BV II: I, 85
1606-07		Coromandel	✓	BV II: I, 85
1607	Galleon	Mozambique	✓	DRI I, 102-3, 167, II, 127-28; HC, 493
1607	Galleon	Mozambique	✓	DRI I, 102-3, 167, II, 127-28; HC, 493
1607	<i>Galeoto</i>	Mozambique	✓	DRI I, 102-3, 167, II, 127-28; HC, 493

<i>Date</i>	<i>Type of Ship</i>	<i>Place of Attack</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Source</i>
1607	Carrack	Goa	✓	APO I-2, 197; CICN, 125–26; DRI I, 115, 182–83, II, 132–33
1608	Carrack	Mozambique	X	HC, 535–36; RV I, 215–16
1608	Galleon	Mozambique	X	HC, 535–36
1608	Galleon	Mozambique	✓	CICN, 136–38; DRI I, 391–92; HC, 544; RV I, 220–21
1608	Carrack	Goa	X	APO I-2, 219–20; RV I, 223
1608	Carrack	Melaka	✓	RV I, 242–43
1608		Melaka	X	RV I, 245–46
1608	<i>Naveta</i>	Melaka	✓	RV I, 253, II, 333
1608	<i>Naveta</i>	Melaka	✓	RV I, 253
1614–15	Junk	Gresik	✓	GM I, 47; JPC I, 145, II, 9, 12
1614–15	Junk	Gresik	✓	GM I, 47; JPC I, 145, II, 9, 12
1614–15	Junk	Gresik	✓	GM I, 47; JPC I, 145, II, 9, 12
1614–15	Junk	Gresik	✓	GM I, 47; JPC I, 145, II, 9, 12
1614–15	Junk	Gresik	✓	GM I, 47; JPC I, 145, II, 9, 12
1615		Ceylon	✓	PVDB I, 78
1615		Ceylon	X	PVDB I, 78
1615	Junk	Japan	✓	JPC I, 203; RC I, 35–36; PSW, 70–71
1615	Galleon	Melaka	X	BGN I, 119–21; PM, 301–2
1615	Galleon	Melaka	X	BGN I, 119–21; PM, 301–2
1615	Galleon	Melaka	X	BGN I, 119–21; PM, 301–2
1616	Frigate	Jambi	✓	JPC I, 178, 204
1616	Frigate	Jambi	✓	JPC VII-I, 128–30
1616	Frigate	Western Indian Ocean	✓	PVDB I, 113
1617	Galliot	Straits of Melaka-Melaka	✓	JPC VII-I, 233, 240
1617	Junk	Jambi?	✓	JPC II, 264–65
1617	Frigate	Maluku	✓	JPC VII-I, 254
1617–18		Nagapattinam	X	JPC VII-I, 355–56
1618	Frigate	Timor	✓	JPC I, 343–44
1618	Frigate	Timor	X	JPC I, 343–44
1618	Frigate	Timor	X	JPC I, 343–44
1618	Junk	Timor	✓	JPC I, 343–44
1618	Junk	Timor	X	JPC I, 343–44
1618–19	Galliot	Ceylon	✓	JPC I, 499, VII-I, 422
1618–19		Ceylon	✓	JPC I, 499, VII-I, 422
1618–19		Ceylon	✓	JPC I, 499, VII-I, 422
1618–19		Ceylon	X	JPC I, 499, VII-I, 422
1619	Frigate	Timor	✓	NA-VOC 1071, 308
1619	Frigate	Bima	✓	JPC III, 572
1619	Junk	Makassar	✓	JPC I, 458

<i>Date</i>	<i>Type of Ship</i>	<i>Place of Attack</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Source</i>
1619–20	Frigate	Straits of Palembang-Straits of Melaka	✓	JPC I, 510
1620		Golkonda	✓	DF-I, 161
1620	Frigate-junk	China	✓	JPC VII-I, 786; ADFD, 69–71
1620	Frigate	Straits of Melaka?	✓	JPC I 673
1620	Frigate-galliot	Melaka	✓	JPC I, 621, VII-I, 685–86; GM I, 103; DRI VII, 252–53, VIII 392–93; NA-VOC 1072, 373
1621	Frigate	Bay of Bengal	✓	DF-I, 161
1621	<i>Naveta</i>	Straits of Melaka-Pulau Sembilan	✓	JPC I, 688
1621	<i>Naveta</i>	Pulau Tioman	✓	JPC I, 683–84, 689
1621		Pulau Tioman	X	JPC I, 683–84, 689
1621	<i>Naveta</i>	Straits of Melaka	✓	JPC I, 683–84, 689, III, 803–04; NA-VOC 1075, 46
1621		Western Indian Ocean	X	JPC I, 696–97, 720–21, VII-I, 830–32, VII-II, 929–30
1621	<i>Naveta</i>	Pulau Cecir	✓	JPC I, 706; NA-VOC 1075, 240–41
1621	<i>Naveta</i>	Pulau Cecir	✓	JPC I, 706; NA-VOC 1075, 240–41
1621–22		Western Indian Ocean	✓	JPC I, 720–21, VII-II, 937; DFI-I, 218
1621–22		Western Indian Ocean	✓	JPC I, 720–21, VII-II, 937; DFI-I, 218
1621–22	Frigate	Ceylon	✓	JPC VII-II, 983
1621–22	Frigate	Ceylon	X	JPC VII-II, 983
1622	<i>Naveta</i>	Straits of Melaka-Pulau Sembilan	✓	JPC I, 737–38
1622	Frigate	Strait of Sabon	✓	JPC I, 737–38
1622	Frigate	Timor	✓	JPC I, 737–38
1622	Frigate	Timor	X	JPC I, 737–38
1622	Frigate	Macao	✓	JPC I, 762–63, 769–71; ADFD, 78
1622	<i>Naveta</i>	Straits of Melaka	✓	JPC I, 777–78, III, 917
1622		Golkonda	✓	DFI-I, 195–96; JPC VII-II, 984–85
1622	Carrack	Cape of Good Hope	X	CICN, 170–74; JPC I, 755–57; NCM II, 11–15
1622		Mozambique Channel	✓	JPC I, 758
1622	Carrack	Mozambique	✓	CICN, 181–89; DU II, 502–04; EFI-II, 1–7, 130–32; IJL, 184–204; JPC I, 758–60; VNC, 17–20
1622	Carrack	Mozambique	X	CICN, 181–89; DU II, 502–04; EFI-II, 1–7, 130–32; IJL, 184–204; JPC I, 758–60; VNC, 17–20

<i>Date</i>	<i>Type of Ship</i>	<i>Place of Attack</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Source</i>
1622	Carrack	Mozambique	X	CICN, 181–89; DU II, 502–04; EFI-II, 1–7, 130–32; IJL, 184–204; JPC I, 758–60; VNC, 17–20
1622–23	Galliot	Goa	X	DRI IX, 125–27; EFI-II, 173, 175
1622–23		Straits of Melaka	✓	DR, 6; JPC I, 777, VII-II, 1089
1622–23	Frigate		✓	JPC I, 777
1623		Mylapore	✓	DFI-I, 261
1623	<i>Naveta</i>	Straits of Melaka-Pedra Branca	✓	DR, 34; NA-VOC 1083, 37–38
1623–24		Golkonda	✓	DFI-II, 102–03, 199
1623–24	<i>Naveta</i>	Straits of Melaka-Pulau Tioman	✓	DR, 8; JPC VII-II, 1089
1623–24	<i>Naveta</i>	Straits of Melaka	✓	JPC VII-II, 1089
1623–24	<i>Naveta</i>	Straits of Melaka	✓	JPC VII-II, 1089
1623–24	Junk	Straits of Melaka	✓	JPC VII-II, 1089
1623–24	Junk	Straits of Melaka	✓	JPC VII-II, 1089
1623–24	Junk	Straits of Melaka	✓	JPC VII-II, 1089
1623–24	Junk	Straits of Melaka	✓	JPC VII-II, 1089
1623–24	Junk	Straits of Melaka	✓	JPC VII-II, 1089
1623–24	Junk	Straits of Melaka	✓	JPC VII-II, 1089
1623–25	<i>Fusta</i>	Bay of Bengal	✓	DFI-II, 213–14
1623–25		Bay of Bengal	✓	ANTT-LM 21, 33
1624	<i>Naveta</i>	Straits of Melaka	✓	DR, 117
1624		Golkonda	✓	GM I, 155–56
1624		Makassar	X	DR, 63
1624–25	<i>Naveta</i>	Straits of Melaka	✓	GM I, 159
1624–25	<i>Naveta</i>	Straits of Melaka-Pulau Lada	✓	DR, 149–50
1625		Straits of Melaka	X	DR, 149–50
1625	Carrack	Saint Helena	X	CICN, 200–02; PCBL, 186–87; WIB, 162–66, 184–88
1625		Ceylon	✓	DFI-II, 159

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