



Wybrand van Warwijck's Visit to China, 1604

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Admiral Wybrand van Warwijck was the one to command the first fleet sent by the East Indies Company to the Orient in 1602. After reaching Sumatra

and having founded in Bantam (Java) the VOC's first settlement in Asia, van Warwijck navigated to Johore. During the Malaysian stay he fine tuned the plan to establish trade relations with the Middle Empire under the good favour of the Siamese Kingdom, which was acknowledged by China as a tributary state. Also during that stay he found that Cornelis van Veen's flotilla had captured the "Black Ship" off Macao harbour in July 1603. After taking provisions in Patane, and hiring several Chinese, van Warwijck cruised the waters of Macao in July 25, 1604. Anchoring on the coast of Fujian, he attempted over the course of five months to obtain the agreement of the Chinese authorities to trade. A show of strength by a Chinese armada of 50 junks which sailed out to meet him made him give up his intentions. The following text reflects the pressure the Macao Portuguese placed on the Canton authorities to undermine Dutch plans. On the return trip from China, van Warwijck would end up capturing the ship *Santo António* near Patane. The vessel returned to Macao from Malacca with a full cargo (this action was accomplished with the blessings of the local queen in March 1605). The Dutch admiral returned to Holland in June 1607. The text herein belongs to Cornelis van Veen and Sebaldt de Weert's travel accounts of the East Indies, and it was published for the first time in volume VIII of *Petits Voyages* by Johann Theodor and Johann Israel de Bry (German edition, Frankfurt, 1607) and republished in volume I of the collection *Begin ende Voortgang* of Isaac Commelin (Amsterdam, 1645).

Source: René-Auguste Constantin de Reneville, "Voiage de Quinze Vaisseaux Hollandois Commandez par l'Amiral Wybrandt van Waarwyk pour la Compagnie d'Octroi des Indes Orientales formée dans les Provinces Unies" [1607], in *Recueil des Voyages qui ont servi à l'établissement & aux progrès de la Compagnie des Indes Orientales* [Tome II, Part II, Amsterdam: Frederic Bernard, 1725, pp. 661-673]. The text was translated from the French to English by Maria Manuela da Costa Silva.

Coube ao almirante Wybrand van Warwijck comandar a primeira frota enviada pela Companhia das Índias Orientais ao Oriente em 1602. Depois de ter

atingido Samatra e de ter fundado em Bantam (Java) o primeiro estabelecimento da VOC na Ásia, Van Warwijck navegou até Johore. Nesta escala malaia apura o plano de estabelecer relações comerciais com o Império do Meio através dos bons ofícios do reino siamês, que era reconhecido por parte de China como estado tributário. Também aí recolhe a notícia de que a flotilha de Cornelis van Veen capturara a Nau do Trato diante da barra de Macau em Julho de 1603. Depois de se reabastecer em Patane e de tomar para o seu serviço vários chineses, Van Warwijck passa pelas águas de Macau a 25 de Julho de 1604. Ancorando no litoral do Fujian, tenta ao longo de cerca de cinco meses a concordância das autoridades chinesas para fazer comércio. A demonstração de força de uma armada chinesa de 50 juncos, que entretanto viera ao seu encontro, leva-o a desistir dos seus intentos. No texto que se segue, é notória a pressão que os portugueses de Macau exerceram em Cantão no sentido de inviabilizarem estes projectos holandeses. Na torna-viagem da China, Van Warwijck acabaria por capturar em Patane a nau Santo António, que regressava de Macau a Malaca carregada por completo (acto praticado com a conivência da rainha local, em Março de 1605). O almirante holandês regressou à Holanda em Junho de 1607. O trecho aqui recolhido pertence ao relato das viagens de Cornelis van Veen e de Sebaldt de Weert às Índias Orientais, tendo sido publicado pela primeira vez no volume VIII das *Petits Voyages* dos editores Johann Theodor e Johann Israel de Bry (edição alemã, Frankfurt, 1607) e reeditado no volume I da colectânea *Begin ende Voortgang* de Isaac Commelin (Amsterdão, 1645).

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ENCONTROS E DESENCONTROS EUROPEUS NO MAR DO SUL DA CHINA II

The admiral received news from Patane, reporting that the *Erasmus* and the *Nassau*, vessels of his fleet, which had departed from Bantam on June 6 of the preceding year, i.e. 1603, to go to China, had taken the great ship, fully loaded, in the harbour of Macao, which was ready to set sail to Japan; that they had unloaded the cargo and burnt the ship; that it was loaded with 1,400 piculs of raw silk and a small parcel of gold; that both these vessels, some time ago, had lost, in front of Canton, a launch equipped with eighteen men, which had been taken by the Portuguese and whose crew had been totally killed¹; that the victory over the Portuguese, with the capture of the galleon, had brought a lot of honour to the Dutch; that the Chinese were saying that it was a just revenge and a punishment that the Portuguese deserved for having so inhumanly massacred the launch crew; that the Dutch had returned to Bantam without managing to do any trade in Macao or in Canton, as the Portuguese used all their means to prevent them from doing so and to make them suspicious to the inhabitants; that with this purpose they had instigated their slaves to shout 'amok', meaning that they wanted to die²; thus they killed all those that came in front of them in such a way that some of the inhabitants died in this encounter; that after this furious action, the Portuguese had gone to the mandarin's house and had assured him that this rage had been encouraged by the Dutch, who had come there to become masters of the country and endanger the inhabitants' life; that lastly, they had discovered that it was the Portuguese that had given the facilities to their slaves to cause this manslaughter and that the Dutch had been completely cleared of guilt; that public hate had fallen on their enemies and that it had generated great contempt against them.

All this news, and mainly this last point, brought hope to the admiral that he would be favourably received and that they would be willing to trade with him....

When they had organised themselves as to what they intended to do in Johore, the admiral departed on May 20 1604, and on the 30th he cast anchor in Patane, where he called just to contract some Chinese in order to get information and help during his trip to China. He learned there that at Queda [Kedah] there existed a goldsmith who came from this empire, and that he understood the court language and wrote well; besides, he wished to return to his country. The admiral sent people to Queda [Kedah] to speak to him, as without

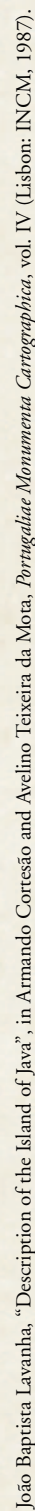
an interpreter he would not be able to obtain in China authorisation to come ashore, and he wanted to hurry and not to stay more than four or five days in Patane.

On the other hand, he had heard from some Siamese who were in a junk that their king had the habit of sending every year ambassadors to the great king of China to make him the *sombay*, and that with this purpose, in Siam, the arms of the great king were always present, which his people carried with them; that with this identification they could enter and navigate with oars in the domestic waters, something forbidden to all other foreign nations.

With this information, the admiral decided to send Jacques Specx to Siam with presents. He should beg the king to authorise him to go to China in his ambassador's suite in order to examine the situation and to try and obtain freedom of trade in that country. Thus, Specx and an admiral's nephew departed from Patane with a petty officer and a steward on the 9th June 1604, taking with them as gifts for the king two small artillery mortars, each weighing 1,200 to 1,300 pounds, which could be loaded with three and a half pounds of gun powder and nine pounds of iron. Moreover, they had valuables worth 4,000 pounds in money and in goods to use in case of need. Here is a copy of the letter the admiral sent to the king of Siam....

On June 11, we had not yet any news from the Chinese goldsmith in Queda [Kedah]. Besides, it had come to our knowledge that to conduct good business in China it was necessary to have at least six or seven Chinese at our service, and we were experiencing some difficulty to get even one. Thus, we came to an agreement with a sampan from China, who had been left in Patane by Jacques Roussel at the service of the Company of Zealand. The admiral contracted him under the condition that he would manage to obtain freedom to trade in China, for which he would be paid 2,000 pieces of eight. Through him we also found a pilot, a scribe and two other Chinese, whom we contracted, paying them in ready money for the four of them, on the spot, 600 reals of eight, with the promise of paying them an additional 300 or 400 if the Dutch obtained permission to trade.

These costs were high, but we were convinced that this was but the first voyage and that if we were successful, costs in the future would be much less and with the appropriate compensation. The admiral hoped that the people he had contracted would be very useful



ENCONTROS E DESENCONTROS EUROPEUS NO MAR DO SUL DA CHINA II

to get him the permission he so desired, but as far as they were concerned, they feared that the Dutch would become discouraged with the quantity of gifts they would be obliged to make to China.

These also obtained a letter from the treasurer [of Patane], Dato Sirivara, to the mandarin of Sineau [Chincheo], in which he informed of the voyage of the Dutch and begged that they should be granted freedom to trade, in which case their vessels would follow the letter. To have this letter taken faster and more safely, in order that it could arrive before the vessels, we paid as postage sixty reals of eight to the nacoda. After having taken supplies in Patane, where there were plenty, the vessels set sail on the 27th of that same month of June 1604 and followed their way towards Canton to wait there for the yacht, or shallop, the *Sphere of the World*.

Before their departure, a junk from Borneo arrived in Patane bringing an ambassador of the king of that island, who had with him eight Dutch prisoners that he released. They were admiral [Jacob van] Heemskerck's people, who were in a dinghy with no weapons, had been taken prisoners by Borneo inhabitants, which made the king very cross, as he remarked in a letter he had written to the admiral and to whom he offered free trade in his nation. According to these prisoners' report, the king of Borneo and the people of his court were very well disposed towards the Dutch, but they complained strongly of certain people who had ill-treated them, as a result of which three of them died in jail. The admiral admitted these eight men into his service, distributing them among his vessels.

On June 15, the vessels were navigating on the China coast to the west of Sancheo [Shangchuan] near Anseado des Ladrones [Thieves Bay], to where they had diverted due to the ignorance of the pilots. Their alternative was to navigate the same course along the coast until the 25th of that month, having spent the time sailing among the Canton islands a little below Macao, believing that they would find a passage to go to that city.

However, after sailing among these islands until the 25th without discovering a passage, they left again and went back to the open sea, to go by the route the Portuguese used to take. On that same day we saw five or six Portuguese yachts which had passed among the islands in the belief that they would catch unawares a launch which was going ahead and out of the vessels' sight. However, they were strongly driven off, and they had no luck with the launch.

On the 28th the vessels were caught by a tempest coming from the northeast, obliging them to get away from the coast to the open sea. They lost their launches, their two dinghies and a man, but on August 2 they recovered the dinghies after having been pushed quite far. This tempest had pushed us away from Macao, and we did not see a chance of getting back as a result of the strong winds and the currents that were always contrary, so we decided to seek another port.

Therefore, we sailed to the east, and we found ourselves on the coast of Peho [Penghu], an island under the rule of the Province of Sinseau [Chincheo] lying at about 23 and a half degrees, to the right under the Tropic, at about twenty-two leagues to the east of the Laman [Lamao] Island where, by pulling out a little from east to the north, we found to their west side a harbour or a bar, where they cast anchor on August 7, and there they were protected from all winds.

On August 9, the admiral sent one of his Chinese with the letters to the mandarin, begging him to grant them freedom of trade. While we lay at anchor waiting for a reply, the shallop *Sphere of the World* entered the harbour and cast anchor in the harbour near the vessels on the 29th of that month, after having been exposed to the dangers of the already referred tempest, and having experienced great pains to keep afloat.

After that day, we often received news from the mainland. Some nobles and servants of the mandarin came on board, sometimes with good news and sometimes with some doubtful news. Finally, on October 20, the Dutch believed that all difficulties had been overcome because the *capado* [eunuch] of the province sent a *tsiappe* [*shibo*], or commissioner, to get some people and take them in order that both sides could meet and discuss the trade matter.

This news, which appeared to be very pleasant, came together with a lot of disagreements and bitterness of difficult digestion. They started by asking for a gift to the *capado* and another one for the king, and these gifts should be of significance. They should not amount to less than forty or fifty thousand reals of eight, not considering those that it was also necessary to give to the *conbon* [*junmen*]³, or governor, and to other important lords. In the meantime, the Dutch took courage and appointed people to go and speak to the *capado*, but as there was nearly always bad weather along all the coast of China, it was not possible for the junk to return, and in spite of having set sail several times, it always returned to cast anchor.

EUROPEAN ENCOUNTERS AND CLASHES IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA II

In between these happenings, on November 18 1604, a small army of fifty junks was seen approaching with soldiers sent by the *conbon* [*junmen*], under the command of a person with great authority named *Touzy* [*Dusi*] and of a much better quality than had ever been sent to the Portuguese in Macao. This lord had been ordered to cautiously encourage the Dutch to leave, as the laws did not allow them to grant freedom of trade without an express authorisation from the king.

The Chinese goldsmith, named Lampoam, who was the person that we had sent ashore, came back with this army, and having returned on board, advised the admiral that the whole province [of Fujian] was in trouble and in a state of alarm, after the *capado* had sent people to bring the foreigners into the country. However, the worst was that two Chinese, representing the Portuguese in Canton, were there with a considerable sum of money to prevent them from receiving the Dutch and that they should not allow us to trade. Moreover, they were in possession of false testimonies that had been bribed by them and with so many other calumnies that they had managed to cause the impression desired by them, as not only did they cause many losses to the Dutch but occasioned also that many bourgeois and merchants got into trouble or were even sent to jail.

The arrival of the *Touzy* [*Dusi*] with his fifty junks interrupted the voyage that the Dutch deputies should make to the mainland, as the *capado*'s commissioners did not want to take them there against the governor's orders. Therefore, they returned with their junk on November 23 to go and report to their master the *capado* what had happened and also the *conbon*'s [*junmen*'s] orders brought by the *Touzy* [*Dusi*]. When they departed, they promised the Dutch that they would inform, as soon as possible, what would have to be done. Thus, they advised the admiral to win time and to remain there for another sixteen to eighteen days in order to learn what the *capado* could negotiate in their favour, in which case he would certainly be informed; but they told him that if he did not receive any news within that period, he just had to leave, convinced that the time was not favourable for his enterprise; that, nonetheless, he should not despair of obtaining, some other time, what he asked for, as they were sure that their master, the *capado*, was well disposed towards the Dutch and that he would strongly defend their business.

After the departure of these commissioners, the admiral met with Commander *Touzy* [*Dusi*] and with the other army officers, who, in his opinion, appeared to be rather favourable. These assured him that he would easily find cargo for his vessels and that they would bring to him all that he may desire if he found a harbour or another port in any one of the neighbouring islands not under China's domain and where his vessels could cast anchor and sojourn.

With this advice he begged the commander to lend him a junk so that he could send pilots to the east-southeast and to the southeast in order to explore the highlands they could see and find out whether a harbour existed there. The commander granted him the junk, which returned without finding what they were looking for. However, the Chinese pressure was so strong that they had to make the decision to leave.

Put before such pressing need, the admiral consulted one of the Chinese, a silk merchant, and asked him to where he could set sail to invest comfortably the funds he had brought in Chinese goods. After getting advice from different persons, he decided to return to Patane, as it was the most appropriate place for his intentions, and the Chinese promised that three or four junks loaded with goods would follow him. The commander also offered to contribute with all his power to this enterprise.

As we had waited until December 15, 1604 with no news from the *capado*, we set sail with the regret of not having found an advantage nor having traded along all this way. However, this voyage was somehow the basis upon which we later progressed as we had the happiness of having in our favour the *capado* and various other persons of quality and power, who later showed signs of their affection. Also, right from the start, we did not consider this enterprise a completely desperate one. It was promised that all these lords would act in favour of the Dutch and that they would have news brought by the first junks we saw. **RC**

NOTES

- 1 This passage alludes to the capture of some of the men of Jacob van Neck's fleet, off Macao, in 1601.
- 2 To 'run amok' was a Malay expression that meant 'to go into a murderous frenzy'.
- 3 Literary name of the governor.