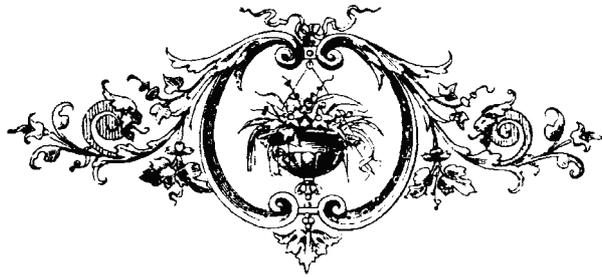


Olivier van Noort in Manila and Brunei, 1600

Anonymous



This text comes from the abbreviated version of Olivier van Noort's

(1598-1600) round-the-world account, composed

for the *Begin ende Voortgang* collection of Isaac Commelin, published in Amsterdam in 1645. The respective original version was published by Cornelis Claesz, in the same city, circa 1602. This passage contains the Dutch version of the naval battle that set Captain Olivier van Noort against Spanish procurator Antonio de Morga off Manila, in December 1600. After crossing the Pacific, the ships *Mauritius* and *Eendracht* met in Filipino waters where they expected to capture the riches of a Chinese vessel or to intercept the galleon *Santo Tomas*, which sailed from Mexico. This was the first of a series of Dutch attacks against Spanish positions in the Philippines and against the normal operation of the Manila-Acapulco shipping route. Those attacks were only to cease when Spain recognised the independence of the United Provinces of Holland with the signing of the Westphalia Peace treaty of 1648. After the aforesaid battle, Van Noort managed to take his ship to the island of Borneo. The Borneo landfall was to prove especially useful to the Dutch given the possibility of learning a great deal on the nature of the main trading outposts of Southeast Asia, as well as on the trade routes ensured by communities from distant latitudes, namely the Chinese. There is a noteworthy moment when they sail by a Japanese vessel carrying the red seal and led by a Portuguese captain. It was one of the ships sailing under license of the central Japanese government but whose crew, as this interesting account testifies, could also be of European origin.

Source: *De reis om de wereld door Olivier van Noort, 1598-1601*, ed. J.W. Ijzerman [2 vols., Amsterdam: Linschoten-Vereeniging, 1926, pp. 116-133]. The following passage was translated from the Dutch to English by Gijs Koster.

O presente texto tem origem na versão

abreviada da narrativa da volta ao

mundo de Olivier van Noort (1598-1600),

composta para a colectânea *Begin ende Voortgang*, de Isaac Commelin, publicada em Amesterdão, em 1645. A respectiva versão original foi editada por Cornelis Claesz, na mesma cidade, por volta de 1602. Começamos por encontrar neste trecho a versão holandesa da batalha naval que opôs o capitão Olivier van Noort ao ouvidor espanhol Antonio de Morga ao largo de Manila, em Dezembro de 1600. Depois de terem atravessado o Pacífico, os navios *Mauritius* e *Eendracht* reuniram-se nas Filipinas, em cujas águas esperavam poder capturar as riquezas de um navio chinês ou interceptar o galeão *Santo Tomas*, que vinha do México. Tratou-se do primeiro de uma longa série de ataques holandeses contra as posições espanholas nas Filipinas e contra o regular funcionamento da linha marítima que unia Manila a Acapulco. Esses ataques apenas cessariam no momento em que a Espanha reconheceu a independência das Províncias Unidas da Holanda, com a assinatura da Paz de Vestefália em 1648. Depois da referida batalha, Van Noort conseguiu levar o seu navio até à ilha de Bornéu. A escala em Bornéu revelar-se-á particularmente útil para os holandeses, pois aí aprendem muito sobre a realidade dos principais entrepostos comerciais do Sudeste Asiático, assim como sobre os circuitos mercantis assegurados por comunidades procedentes de paragens distantes, designadamente a chinesa. De assinalar o momento em que se cruzam com uma embarcação japonesa portadora do “selo vermelho”, cujo capitão era português. Tratava-se de um dos navios que circulavam com licença do governo central nipónico, mas cuja tripulação, como se vê por este interessante testemunho, também podia ser de origem europeia.

Fonte utilizada: *De reis om de wereld door Olivier van Noort, 1598-1601*, ed. J.W. Ijzerman [2 vols., Amesterdão: Linschoten-Vereeniging, 1926, pp. 116-133]. O extracto que se apresenta foi traduzido de neerlandês para inglês por Gijs Koster.

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On the 14th of the same month on a Thursday morning, the wind still blowing strong from east-northeast, while we were lying there with both topmasts shot through, we saw two sails come out of the entrance to Manila, which at first we took for some frigates. The general¹ sent the sloop with some men to the yacht, saying he would weigh his anchor to go and take a look at them, but when they came closer we saw that they were big ships that wanted to ‘talk’ with us, as we noticed later. Therefore, we immediately hoisted our topmasts and readied all our ordinance and weapons to fight those of Manila. And when our men in the sloop returned on board, we struggled to winch the anchor because we were unable to pull in even a fathom of rope. Consequently, we were forced to cut the rope and abandon the anchor because the ships were drawing very close to us, and we saw clearly that they were warships from Manila with their flags on top.

Our admiral, being under sail, drew somewhat closer to the yacht and at first shouted to it that we had to keep sailing it gently with the wind to make good use of our ordinance. Then again later the admiral shouted to us to confront them because they were to windward from us, whereupon he immediately luffed close to them. The admiral of Manila², being the foremost, approached us, and after we had discharged our guns at him, he immediately boarded our ship with part of his men. These attacked us in a great fury, wearing gilded helmets and shields, very well equipped, clamouring and shouting “*Maina peros*” [*Amainad perros*], so we withdrew under the crooks net, for which reason they thought already to have gained mastery of the ship because they outnumbered us by six or seven men to one. Thereupon from underneath we gave them with lances and muskets such a welcome that their fury quickly cooled because a part of them remained lying on their backs.

Meanwhile their vice-admiral³ also came to us, but, thinking that his men had already captured our ship (because we were getting tired), he followed our yacht, which with its topsails hoisted and before the wind had sailed away from the admiral, hoping (as we suspect) thus to steer clear of him, but the vice-admiral of Manila followed it. For the most part of the day the admiral of Manila lay fastened to our board because his bower anchor was stuck to the crooks net that stood in front of our mast, so the net was badly torn to pieces and made us quite exposed; they vigorously shot

through our ship with muskets and heavy guns, and neither were we standing still on our side, so we became tired and exhausted because many of our men were wounded. Noticing this, the admiral went downstairs, threatening his own men that, if they would not fight, he would set fire to the gunpowder, which was why they took courage again, so some wounded and others came out to keep up the fight to the last man. The enemy also began to become very tired, and many of his men fell overboard.

It is true that they had two Chinese sampans full of men lying ready, but these did not dare to approach because of our guns, so those from Manila became very disheartened, struggling only to get their ship loose from our board, which cost them a lot of trouble. Meanwhile, we bombarded them with our heavy guns, for the last time doing so for only a little while when they had already disengaged, but after that we saw their ship go down. It sank in a short time steep down, such that one saw neither top nor mast anymore. There we saw our enemies before our eyes swimming naked and clamouring, “*Misericordia!*”

According to our estimate, there must have been two hundred swimming in the water, besides which there were those who had drowned in the ship and had thus lost their lives. We lowered our foresail because our main yard had been cut off, and all the main cables were in tatters. What gave us most trouble was the fire that by our shooting had entered between the boards, so we feared we might all be burned, but at long last we succeeded in extinguishing it, so God almighty in His mercy saved and protected us from this danger and heavy attack, for which we cannot sufficiently thank and praise Him because He so miraculously granted us so incredibly great a victory.

When we had gotten rid of the enemy, we brought our ship in order again as best we could and sailed on the little foresail through the heads of those who were lying and swimming there, some of whom we killed by stabbing them to death with lances and discharging heavy guns among them. Among them was also a priest or monk whom we recognized by his tonsure. On our ship five Spaniards lay dead, whom we threw overboard. On them we found a small silver box with little pieces of paper full of incantations of male and female saints to save them because by these the priests and monks guarantee them their safety. Consequently, in these countries people are more

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superstitiously adhering to the Papist religion than they are in Rome or Spain.

Of our men five lost their lives and twenty-six were wounded.... Previously in our ship we had been fifty-three men, young and old, of whom we lost the aforesaid persons. Subsequently, the wounded were bandaged by a good surgeon whom we had with us, called Alexander Courtmans of Antwerp.

While we were under sail, we spotted the vice-admiral of Manila with our yacht, which was a good two miles away from us; then we were not sure how things were on it, but we estimated that our yacht must have been in their power because it seemed to us that its flag, which it had been flying previously, had been lowered, and that the one of Manila was on top. It also seemed impossible that it could have resisted such violence by the Spaniards since it was not carrying more than twenty-four or twenty-five men and boys, and very weak men at that, whereas the ships from Manila were as large as three hundred *last*⁴ because on each of the two ships there may have been as many as four or five hundred men, both Spaniards and Indians, with as many as ten pieces of ordinance.

These ships from Manila were made in addition by the governor when he had learned that we were on the coast, and they are the same two ships that yearly sail from Manila to Mexico loaded with silk and other valuable merchandise. These they had fitted out to chase us away from the coast because they do not want any other nations to come and trade there. They had thrown a contingent of Spanish soldiers on them with Indians who are quite familiar with handling muskets and other weapons (having been instructed and trained in this by the Spaniards). The governor of Manila is called Francisco Tello, who has been nominated to this position as the representative of the king of Spain. He holds his main court in Manila, governing all these islands and levying tribute from the Indians, as was explained previously. They trade with those from China, who come there and bring silk, gold, musk and other valuable merchandise that is then again sent from Manila to Mexico by means of these aforesaid ships.

Therefore, we set course away from the island in the direction of the island of Borneo to repair ourselves a bit there and to refresh ourselves because we were totally out of sorts, because our mainsail and rigging had been cut to pieces, and the entire board was equally

in pieces, so we were not at all in a condition to confront the other ship from Manila. By evening, we set our course southwest, and in the night we passed between two islands [Golo and Mindoro], the wind coming from the northeast....

On the 26th of the same month in the afternoon we entered the bay of Brunei. This is a very large bay, bending inwards in the shape of an arm, with some islands lying to seaward such that the bay all around comprises a distance of some two or three miles. It is very bad water, and everywhere has a very good clay soil to anchor in, so there is no sea running hollow, not more than in some rivers. There they also catch much fish because these islands are densely inhabited by fishermen, who came aboard our ship in droves, selling us fish for cloth. We lay in the west of the bay at a cape or tongue of land, about the shot of light cannon away from the land. The king of Brunei had a fleet lying at a cape of one of the islands to keep guard and to protect the fishermen. The commander of the guards drew up alongside and said through the Chinese pilots, who were quite fluent in the local language, that he had been placed here by the king to keep guard, and that he would report on us to him, and furthermore that the city of Brunei was situated another three miles upstream on a river.

The general sent a Chinese who was aboard our ship with a present to the king of Brunei with the message that we had come here in his land as friends and that we would never do the least injustice to any of his people, desiring to trade for business and merchandise. What we kindly requested him was that he allow us to be provided with victuals and water for money, and we wanted to return the favour with our ship and merchandise. The next day many proas drew up alongside our ship bringing fruits, poultry, water and fish, which the general made us buy for cloth. They were very eager to get Chinese cloth, of which we had obtained a little bit off Manila, but they did not want to have the cloth from our country. Some noblemen came alongside to take a look at the ship, to whom the general showed all friendship by giving them presents and in other ways in order that we might trade freely with them.

On the 28th of the same month, the Chinese pilot came, whom the admiral had sent to the king of Brunei. With him in a big proa came one of the servants of the king. On the proa stood the banner of the king with

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two metal basses in front. Among them was a Chinese from Patane, who enjoyed great trust with the king. Our Chinese pilot informed us that the Bruneians refused to believe us, thinking that we were Spaniards, with whom they were at war³, because they said there was another ship on the coast which they thought to be of our fleet. A Portuguese bark had also passed Brunei, which had sent a man there to warn them that we were not merchants, which was why they would not really dare to trust us. But the servants of the king said that they now saw that the contrary was the case, that we were not Spaniards, about which they were glad, and that they wanted to report this to the king.

They also told us that the king had understood that we were another nation and that he would like to have one of our men on land to see him. To this the general answered he would be pleased to do so, provided that the king would leave one of his men as a hostage, and they said they would propose this to the king. Thereupon the general, as a token of respect, gave them some weapons and muskets to bring them to the king because it is a custom here that whatever strangers come here have to pay some homage. Thus they went back, and we honoured them by firing some salutes.

The aforesaid Chinese pilot again went with us to Brunei, to see whether any business could be done. However, here in Brunei they do not grow spices, but they do have the best camphor of all of the East Indies, which they value very much, estimating a pound of it at twenty reals of eight, and one would also not be able to buy three or four hundred pounds. Otherwise, there is nothing on which one could make a big profit because everything is bought up by the Portuguese. Moreover, we traded with the fishermen and farmers, who came on board with various kinds of fruits and poultry with which we provided ourselves, and we also had all our casks filled with water....

This island of Borneo is one of the largest islands of the East Indies, and the city [of Brunei] is situated in a marsh, and everywhere one has to use proas or boats to go from house to house. There are some two to three thousand houses there. Moreover, landward they have many houses and gardens; the place is very populous. And they are big robust men, always having their weapons with them even if they are mere simple farmers or fishermen. These weapons consist of bows and long blowpipes, at the end of which there is iron, like a javelin in our country. They have a quiver in

which there are some twenty to thirty arrows, all of them poisonous. These they blow out with great force, and when someone has been wounded by them so that he bleeds, he must die by the power of the poison with which the arrows have been smeared.

They are all of them Muslims of the creed of Muhammad and would rather die than eat pork, which is why there are no pigs here. They also take as many wives as they can feed. The women here are very robust. Many came on board to trade, with which they seek to make a profit, and when our men improperly pointed at them or laid their hands on them, they offered resistance against this. Nay, they would even have stabbed them in the skin with a javelin or a blowpipe. They look brown like other Indians and dress in some cloth wrapped around the body, but the commoners usually go naked. Nevertheless, they also usually have a dress in yellow or some other colour which they can wrap around their body in several ways. Moreover, they wear a turban on their head that is also made of thin cotton cloth.

The king of Brunei is a youth who is still under guardianship because his uncle, who is an old man, rules in his stead. They keep their court in the city of Brunei with many slaves and a large following. The nobles or those who are relatives of the king live in great state. Of these, some came alongside our ship in proas with an awning protecting them against the sunlight. In speaking, these nobles maintained an air of gravity, and they were greatly respected. In the middle of the proa stood a table on which some silver vessels had been placed, in which they keep the betelnuts and chalk they continually chew on.

We lay in the bay of Brunei and had already taken in a reasonable stock of water without obtaining profit from our business.... Therefore, the general decided with the common officers to sail thence to Java and the city of Bantam to see whether we could make a deal or do business with our merchandise, and so we made preparations to set sail from there....

On the 3rd of the same month, ... at daylight, having the wind from the land, we weighed the anchor and made sail. When we were underway, we saw a ship positioned behind us, which we approached. It was a sampan that came from Japan and wanted to go to Manila, but because of a storm, it had drifted off course and had been forced to put in here at Brunei to lay in a fresh provision. And it had to stay there another four

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months to await the monsoon before it could arrive in Manila. The general had its captain draw up alongside our ship. He was a fat old man from Port a Port, called Emanuel Luis. He had long lived in Malacca and Macao, in China, but now he lived in Japan, in a city called Nagasaki. He had sailed from a harbour or island called Kyushu two months ago. Most of his men were native Japanese who had their heads shaved in the manner customary in that country. His pilot was a Chinese.

This captain informed us that in Japan a big Dutch ship had arrived from the fleet of Pieter Verhaghen⁶. It had miserably drifted off course because most of its men had died of hunger and disease. When they arrived, there they were only twenty-five men, of whom another eleven had since died, so only fourteen of them were alive. The place where they first arrived is called Bungo, situated at 34 degrees 40 minutes. And the king of Japan ordered the ship to be brought to another harbour, called Tosa⁷, situated at 36 and a half degrees, where the ship is lying at four anchors in a good harbour. This aforesaid captain also said that all its men were free and at liberty to go where they pleased, and that they had also been given permission to build a small ship to sail to wherever they pleased, but were unable to do so.

So much was clear to us that this was the admiral of Verhagen's fleet of ships, a ship of about 250 last. They had made the crossing with two ships, one of which they had been forced to abandon because, as the Portuguese captain said, it was carrying a lot of ordinance with many reals of eight and much merchandise. The general entertained the captain as handsomely as he could, bought some hams and other victuals from him, and paid him to his satisfaction, begging him that (when he would be back in Japan) he would do the Hollanders⁸ all the favours that were within his power. This he promised to do, and he very much wanted the admiral to give him a flag of our country, with a passport, which was given him in the name of His Excellency. With those he returned to his ship, saying that he would put in at the harbour of Brunei and there await the time of the monsoon to sail to Manila.

On the 5th of the same month in the morning, the wind being east, we weighed our anchors and sailed out of the entrance to Brunei on a northern course. On our port side lay some shoals, which we passed over at five or six fathoms. Having come outside the bay, we set our course northwest to seaward, and having come some way onto the sea, we set our course west, with a fair wind blowing from the northeast. **RC**

NOTES

- 1 In 17th century European navies, the general was the first in command, followed by the admiral.
- 2 Antonio de Morga.
- 3 Juan de Alcega.
- 4 One *last* equals about 2,000 kg.
- 5 Brunei had periodic clashes with the Spaniards from Manila, who repeatedly tried to control the sultanate.

- 6 The ship *De Liefde*, commanded by Captain Jacob Quaeckernaeck of Rotterdam.
- 7 The Dutch text has Atonza.
- 8 The term does not refer to all Dutchmen (which is modern Dutch usage) but only to the inhabitants of the Province of Holland.