



*Dits 't heelt van Bonte-koe dien Godt, op syne vaert
Tot elckx verwonderingh, heeft wonderlyk bewaert;
Mits hij de Doodt ontgingh, self midden inde Doodt;
In't water, Vuer in Moordt in Dorft en Hongersnoodt.*

Voyage through the South China Sea, 1622

Willem Ysbrantsz Bontekoe



Gedenckwaerdige beschrijvinghe vande Oost-Indische Reyse van Willem Ysbrantsz. Bontekoe van Hoorn.

On June 24 1622 the first and last Dutch attempt to conquer Macao took place. The plan was designed by Jan Pietersz Coen, governor-general of the VOC in

Batavia. Not only did Coen and his Council want to take Macao but they sought to install a fortified basis on the strategic Pescadores island. To that effect, in April of the same year they sent a fleet of eight vessels and more than 1000 men from Batavia, under the command of Admiral Cornelis Reyersz. This signified a radical change in the approach to China, since peaceful negotiations to obtain free trade were set aside; negotiations that had been attempted by Wybrand van Warwijck in 1604 and by Cornelis Matelief in 1607. This change in attitude must be seen in the context of the ending of the *Twelve Years' Truce*: the rekindling of the old conflict between Spain and the Netherlands taking place at the time was rapidly exported to Asia where the Dutch appear strengthened thanks to the anti-Iberian alliance established with the English of the East India Company. En route from Batavia to China, Reyersz incorporated in his fleet three Dutch ships that he met as well as the Japanese contingent sailing on board a Siamese war junk. Already in Macao, he found two Dutch ships and two British ships blocking the harbour. These had been especially sent from the fleet laying siege to Manila. The attackers landed on Cacilhas beach with a contingent of 600 to 800 men, including European, Japanese, Malays and some natives of Banda and Gujarat. Despite the

overwhelming superiority of the Dutch force – both in terms of number, and fire power and military training – the improvised resistance of the Portuguese soldiers, Macao civilians and slaves was enough to stop the invaders and force them to retreat in disarray and with heavy losses. Following their instructions, the majority of Dutch survivors sailed to Penghu, one of the islands in the Pescadores archipelago. There, they built a fort used in a series of anti-Chinese actions including piracy against their ships and attacks on coastal villages. Supported by a fleet of 150 war junks, the Chinese forced them to abandon Pescadores in August 1624, although granting the Dutch tacit authorization to trade in Formosa. Willem Ysbrantsz Bontekoe had sailed from Holland in 1618, living through a series of adventures all over the Orient until finally being recruited for the assault on Macao. After returning to Holland, in 1625, he prepared an account of his wanderings, the first edition of which received the title of *Journal ofte Gedenckwaerdige beschrijvinghe vande Oost-Indische Reyse*, and was printed in 1646 in Hoorn. This work quickly became a classic, and there were around 70 editions or printings in the Netherlands by 1800.

Source: Willem Ysbrantsz Bontekoe, *Memorable Description of the East Indian Voyage 1618-1625*, ed. C. H. Bodde-Hodgkinson & Pieter Geyl [New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1992, pp. 80-91]. The English text was compared with the recent French edition *Le Naufrage de Bontekoe & autres aventures en mer de Chine (1618-1625)*, ed. Xavier de Castro & Henja Vlaardingerbroek [Paris: Éditions Chandeigne, 2001, pp. 87-96]. Revised by Rui Manuel Loureiro.

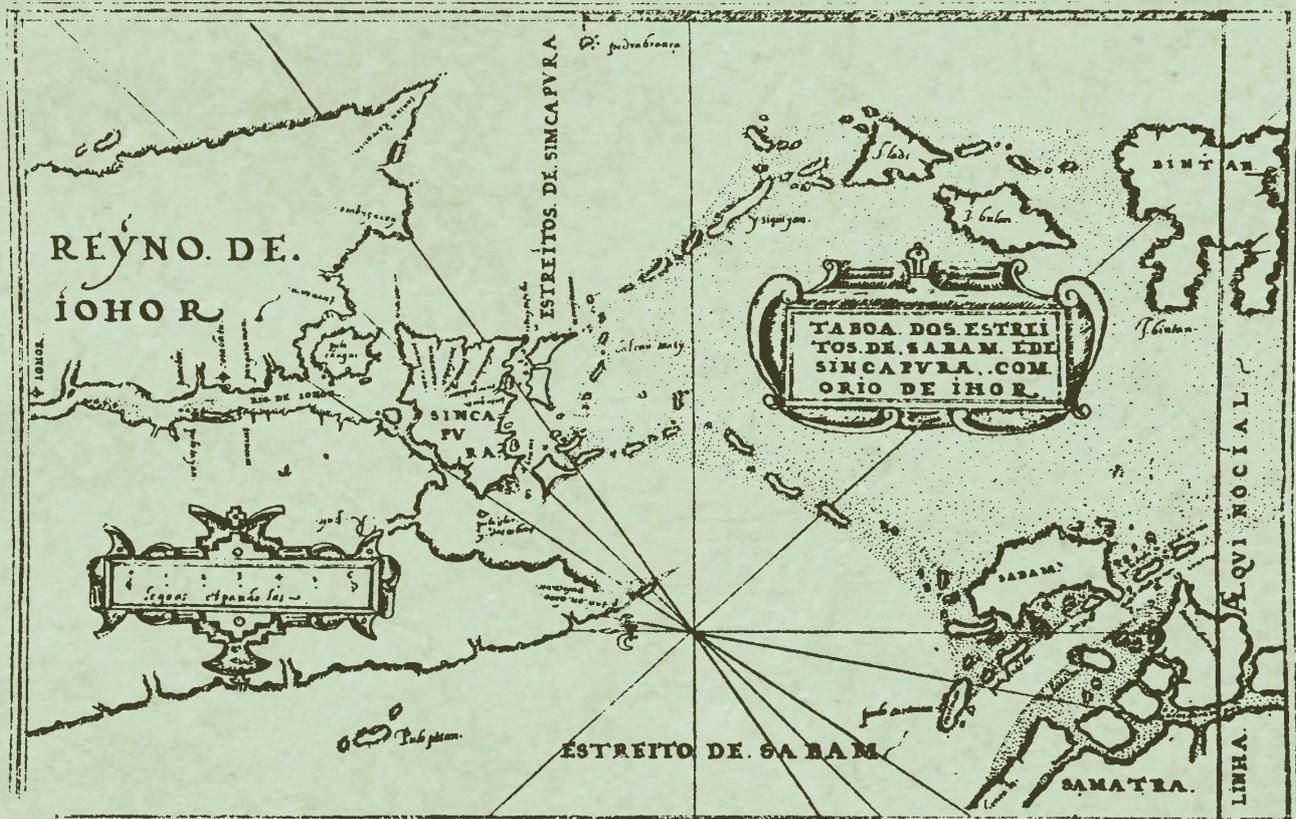
ENCONTROS E DESENCONTROS EUROPEUS NO MAR DO SUL DA CHINA II

A 24 de Junho de 1622 teve lugar a primeira e última tentativa holandesa de conquistar a cidade de Macau. O plano foi gizado por Jan Pietersz Coen, governador-geral da VOC em

Batávia. Além de pretenderem a tomada de Macau, Coen e o seu Conselho ambicionavam ainda a instalação de uma base fortificada nas estratégicas ilhas Pescadores. Para tanto, enviaram de Batávia, em Abril do mesmo ano, uma frota de oito navios e mais de 1000 homens, sob comando do almirante Cornelis Reyersz. Tal significava uma mudança radical na aproximação à China, uma vez que se desistia de negociar de forma pacífica a liberdade de comércio nas suas costas, a exemplo do que tinha sido tentado por Wybrand van Warwijck em 1604 e por Cornelis Matelief em 1607. Esta mudança de atitude tem de ser entendida no contexto do fim da Trégua dos Doze Anos: o recrudescimento do antigo conflito entre a Espanha e os Países Baixos que então se verifica foi rapidamente exportado para a Ásia, onde os holandeses surgem robustecidos graças à aliança anti-ibérica que tinham estabelecido com os britânicos da East India Company. Na rota de Batávia para a China, Reyersz incorporou na sua frota três navios holandeses que se cruzaram com ele, assim como o contingente japonês que ia a bordo de um junco de guerra do Sião. Já em Macau, encontrou a bloquear o porto dois navios holandeses e dois navios ingleses, que tinham sido propositadamente destacados da esquadra que sitiava Manila. Os atacantes desembarcam na praia de Cacilhas com um efectivo de 600 a 800 homens, entre europeus, japoneses, malaios e alguns naturais de Banda e do Guzerate. Apesar da esmagadora

superioridade da força holandesa – quer em termos numéricos, quer em poder de artilharia e em treino militar –, a improvisada resistência dos soldados portugueses, civis macaenses e escravos de Macau conseguiu travar os invasores, obrigando-os a retirar na maior desordem e com pesadíssimas baixas. Cumprindo as instruções que traziam, a maior parte dos sobreviventes da armada holandesa dirigiu-se para Penghu, uma das ilhas do arquipélago dos Pescadores. Aí erigiram um forte, que utilizaram para uma série de acções anti-chinesas, as quais alternaram entre a guerra de corso contra os seus navios e razias sobre os povoados do continente. Apoiados numa esquadra de 150 juncos de guerra, os chineses forçaram-nos a abandonar os Pescadores em Agosto de 1624, mas concederam-lhes uma autorização tácita para comerciar na Formosa. Willem Ysbrantsz Bontekoe partira da Holanda em 1618, protagonizando uma série de aventuras por todo o Oriente, até finalmente ser recrutado para o assalto a Macau. Depois de regressar à Holanda, em 1625, preparou o relato das suas andanças, cuja primeira edição, intitulada *Journal ofte Gedenckwaerdige bechrijvinghe vande Ost-Indifche Reyfs*, foi impressa em 1646 em Hoorn. A obra depressa se tornou num clássico e conhecem-se cerca de 70 edições ou reimpressões publicadas nos Países Baixos até 1800.

Fonte utilizada: Willem Ysbrantsz Bontekoe, *Memorable Description of the East Indian Voyage 1618-1625*, ed. C. H. Bodde-Hodgkinson & Pieter Geyl [Nova Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1992, pp. 80-91]. O texto inglês foi confrontado com a recente edição francesa *Le Naufrage de Bontekoe & autres aventures en mer de Chine (1618-1625)*, ed. Xavier de Castro & Henja Vlaardingbroek [Paris: Éditions Chandeigne, 2001, pp. 87-96]. Revisão de Rui Manuel Loureiro.



EUROPEAN ENCOUNTERS AND CLASHES IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA II

With these voyages in the *Bergerloot* as also the *Groningen* I was busy some two years. It was then resolved that with this same ship I should go to China in company with seven more ships under Commander Cornelis Reyersz of Gouda, with intent, were it possible, to capture the town of Macao, or to go to the Pescadores and try all possible means to establish trade with the Chinese, all of which was expressed more fully in the instructions given us by Governor-General [Jan Pietersz] Coen. The general to that end had sent letters to many places, ordering the ships to join us at such and such points which we should pass, among others also to the Manillas [Philippines] to Commander Willem Jansz, who with some Englishmen was there on an expedition, that some of his ships should join us, which also took place.

On April 10, after we had lain for some time before Batavia, we set sail, being eight ships; set our course to go through the Strait of Balimbam [Palembang]. On the 11th we had sight of the island of Sumatra. We here fell more southwards than we reckoned, by which we surmised the current ran out of the Strait of Sunda. On the 12th, 13th, 14th and 15th we had variable wind and weather, [and] passed the island of Lucipara [Lepar]. On the 16th and 17th we reached the island of Banka [Bangka]. On the 18th we met with the ship *Nieuw Zeeland*, coming out of Japan, which had with her two Portuguese sloops taken by our ships before Malacca, going to Batavia.

On the 19th to 25th we made little progress, the wind and current being mostly against us, so we often had to come to anchor. On the 29th in the afternoon we came to the northern end of the Strait of Balimbam [Palembang], and the island of Banka [Bangka] was southeast of us at about a mile distant; we continued north to the island of Pole Pon [Singkep]. On the 30th we came to anchor at the southeast end of Pole Pon [Singkep] in twelve fathom and sandy ground. Its coast is highland. On May 1 we lay to the west side of the aforementioned island in nineteen fathom anchor ground over against the most northerly sand-bay, where the fresh water is a little within the wood, in a flat hollow or dell. From the north end of the island of Banka [Bangka] to this above-mentioned island the course is

north nineteen miles. The same day we set sail again; set our course northeast and northeast by north, so as to sail above or to the east of the island of Linga [Lingga].

On the 2nd we kept twelve miles northeast by north. After noon the east corner of the island of Lingga was four miles southwest by west of us. The coast is very high on the north side. From the west side of Pole Pon [Singkep] to the east side or corner of Lingga the course is north-northeast and so northerly nine miles, depth eighteen, nineteen, twenty fathom. On the 3rd the island of Pole Paniang [Pulo Panjang] was west and southwest of us. On the 4th we took our height and found 1 degree 48 minutes north of the equator. In the afternoon we had sight of the island of Laur [Pulo Aur], about eight miles northwest of us, the coast high, rising like a lofty mountain, deep thirty-five fathom. On the 6th the island of Pole Timon [Pulo Tioman] was west of us about six miles; set our course north-northeast to the island of Pole Candore [Pulo Condore].

On the 9th orders were given for us, with three ships, to go forward, to the island Pole Cecir [Pulo Cecir], to wit, the ship *Groningen* (on which I was), de *Engelse Beer* and *Sint Nicolaas*. On the 18th in the morning we had sight of the island of Pole Candore [Pulo Condore] north-northeast of us about nine miles. It is a high coast with small islands lying for the most part on the southeast side of the large island. The watering-place is on the southwest side. From the island of Pole Timon [Pulo Tioman] to this island the course is straight north-northeast following the charts; in the waterway deep thirty-five, forty, fifty, sixty fathom, soft ground, but coming near to Pole Candore [Pulo Condore] you find again thirty, twenty-five, twenty fathom, hard sand. In the evening we sailed close round the east of the island, about a good half-mile from the most easterly islet; deep eighteen and twenty fathom. We set our course to northeast for the coast of Champey [Champa]. On the 21st in the evening we could still see Pole Candore [Pulo Condore] from the main topmast.

On the 22nd we had sight of the coast of Champey [Champa]. When you are about seven or eight miles from the land, it appears as if it were islands. On the 24th we had sight of our other ships again, being at the height of 10 degrees 35 minutes. We were about one and a half miles from the land; the shore here is low, of white sand, but the interior of the land is high and

"Straits of Sabah and Singapore, with the Johor River".

Manuel Godinho de Erédia, *Atlas-Miscelânea*. In Armando Cortesão and Avelino Teixeira da Mota, *Portugaliae Monumenta Cartographica*, vol. IV (Lisbon: INCM, 1987).

ENCONTROS E DESENCONTROS EUROPEUS NO MAR DO SUL DA CHINA II

hilly. Along the coast, one, two, three miles to sea, it is deep seventeen, sixteen, fifteen, fourteen, thirteen fathom and sand. At evening we came to anchor all together in fifteen fathom under a point or corner named Cape of Cecir, being in the height of $10\frac{3}{4}$ degrees. To the north of this cape there is a large bay, where further along the shore is duneland, the inland country very high and mountainous. The coast, from this cape, runs northeast by east.

On the 25th we were close to the islet with the cliffs of stone, named Pole Cecir de Terre [Pulo Cecir da Terra]. Here on the north of the land there is an inlet which runs into the high ground like a river. The dune coast here comes to an end, and there follows high land with deeper water, thirty, forty, and fifty fathom. On the 26th we came to anchor in Malle Bay (by the inhabitants called Bay of Paderan [Phan Rang]). Here our chief mate Abraham Thijssz of Flessing went over to the ship *Sint Nicolaas*, bound for the Manillas [Philippines], to see if he could find some ships of Willem Jansz's fleet. There are here many high palm trees by the houses along the shore.

The next day we sailed with our four ships to another bay called Canberine [Cam Ranh], about six miles further, and found here water and wood in plenty, as also refreshment in abundance. We got some seventeen oxen and a good number of fowls, but a *speck*¹ of ours deserting to the inhabitants, we could obtain no more refreshing afterwards. On June 4 I went with the boat to our companions in the Bay of Paderan [Phan Rang] to report to them of our adventures, and returned on the 6th day of that month. Meanwhile the sloop *Sint Kruis* had come to us. The next day we set sail and came to the sloop *de Haan*, which had captured a Japanese junk, and there by our own ships. On the 10th we saw a small island that lay under the coast in shape like the Coxbroad [Mew Stone] by England.

On the 20th, having sighted several islands on our way, we saw two sails close under the coast. At evening we came to overtake the ships to the Manillas [Philippines]; *de Hoop* with the *Bull*, which was English, kept near them all night. On the 22nd we came to Macao and let anchor fall in four fathom soft ground. We were then fifteen sail strong, ships and sloops, among them two English ships. We had a roll-call of our men and had them exercise round the mast, in which they were instructed according to the use of war. They did the same on the other ships.

On the 23rd, afternoon, with three of our ships, to wit, *Groningen*, *de Galias* and *de Engelse Beer*, we came close up to the town [of Macao] and anchored in three fathom at low tide, about a pedreiro shot from the shore; we shot that evening therein five shots. In the night, two of us, to wit, *Groningen* and *de Galias*, came to the distance of a little more than a musket-shot before the town in three fathom, half flood-tide and soft ground. It was agreed that I and our merchant Bosschert, of Delft, with our men, should row to land and help to storm the town, but this resolution was changed, so as not to deprive the ship of captain and merchant at the same time, and I was to stay on the ship and look to affairs, and our commander go as captain of the force on land.

In the morning, being the 24th day, at break of day, we shot into the town with all our broadsides so that it shook, as much shot as the pieces could bear. A short time after, Commander Cornelis Reyersz landed with about six hundred men able to bear arms. Two sloops ran close in shore where the commander landed, so that in case it went ill with our men they could retreat into them, and also to protect the boats and small vessels. The Portuguese had thrown up a breast-work at the spot where our men were to land; from that they offered some resistance, but when our men pressed forward, they fled up the slope to a monastery. Being on land, our men advanced valiantly on the Portuguese, who made several sallies against us, but were driven back continually with great courage. Then by mischance some half-barrels of powder got afire, which placed our men in a quandary, for before any other could be brought, the Portuguese were acquainted thereof by some Japanese deserters. Our men minding to draw off, the Portuguese on that afore-mentioned report came and fell on them, and as they, through want of powder, could not sufficiently defend themselves, many were slain. The rest retired in much confusion into the boats and came on board. We reckoned to have lost 130 men in all, and had also as many injured, among them Commander Cornelis Reyersz, who when first our men landed, was shot in the belly, but by God's help he was cured of his injury.

The men again on board, we sailed off about three-quarters of a mile and fetched water from an island south of Macao. We took in again our chief mate, Abraham Thijssz, who had been formerly put off. On the 27th day, the two English ships departed with the

EUROPEAN ENCOUNTERS AND CLASHES IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA II

Frontispiece of *Journal of the East India Voyage of Willem Ysbrantsz. Bontekoe*, Hoorn, 1644.

ship *de Trouw* to Japan. The ship *de Hoop* was also placed under our flag. On the 28th day *de Beer* and *Sint Kruis* sailed to the island of Lemon [Leme] and further to inspect the coast of China. On the 29th day we all set sail for the Pescadores, save the ship *de Hoop*, the sloop *Sint Nicolaas* and the small sloop *Palicatta*, which were to stay there till the end of August to watch for the ships that might come there from Malacca.

On the 30th we passed Idelemo [Leme], otherwise the Hare's Ears; ran east and east by south to go above Pole or Pedro Blanco [Pedra Branca]; the islet looks from afar like a large ship or caravel. On July 4 from our top we had sight of the islands of the Pescadores. On the 6th day the ship *de Beer* came again to us from the coast of China; we held together round the outside of the islands. On the 10th we came to anchor behind one of the islands; it rises like a table and was one of the highest islands of

the Pescadores. We saw between the islands some Chinese fishermen, but they fled before us.

The next day we weighed anchor and ran into a fine enclosed bay, in eight or nine fathom anchorage. This country is flat and stony, has no trees from which to get wood, is grown over with long grass; it has reasonably fresh water to be got from wells, but the weather being dry it is brackish. The water is found in two inlets where the ships lie. Otherwise here is no refreshment; it must all be brought there, and as this place was appointed to us for a rendezvous, we put in to a harbour at the end of Isle Formosa, named Tayowan [Dayuan], where the Chinese have some trade. From there we afterwards, with our sloops, fetched much victual. It lies thirteen miles from the Pescadores, has no more than eleven foot of water at the entrance, which is somewhat crooked, so large vessels cannot come into it.

ENCONTROS E DESENCONTROS EUROPEUS NO MAR DO SUL DA CHINA II

On the 19th day we sailed, namely the ship *Groningen* and *de Beer*, to go over to the coast of China. We met with the sloop *Sint Kruis*. The next day *de Beer* broke her foreyard, by reason of which we were forced to take in sail to keep in company with her.

On the 21st we had sight of the mainland of China and came before the renowned river Chinchu [Jiulong Jiang]. This river is easily recognisable, for such as Jan Huygen van Linschoten² doth relate: at the corner on the northeast side are two hills, one of which is like the pillar of a church, and the southwest side of the river is low, sandy ground, and a little to the inside of the southwest corner can be seen a tower or what has the likeness thereof. Here we should have run on the southwest side under a small round island, but as the ship *de Beer* could not make the road, we had to stand out to sea again, for her broken yard was not yet repaired. It now began to blow hard, so the next day our foresail blew out of the bolt-ropes. We beat up against the wind, but were driven strongly to the north.

On the 25th we sighted a very broken coast at the height of 27 degrees 9 minutes, which we surmised, both by the writing of Jan Huygen [van Linschoten] and by the showing of the chart, to be in the island of Lanquyn [Nanji]; came to anchor under it in fifteen fathom. We saw many Chinese fishermen, about three, four, five to six miles out from land. We did every day our utmost to steer south but were driven continually northward, from which it appears there goes a strong northerly current. On the 27th came a fisherman alongside of us who sold us some dried fish. On August 9 we found ourselves by the islands of China, which are very numerous; came to anchor in fifteen fathom. Judging by the chart and the height we took, we did conjecture to be about the Cape de Somber [Songman] but could not see either cape nor coast, therefore judged the cape to be more northerly than shown by the charts.

On the 11th we weighed anchor and ran under the island of Lanquyn [Nanji], which lies 28 1/2 degrees north of the equator, in a tolerable road on the north side which we had discovered with the boat, to seek water

and refreshment; found none or scanty victuals, but there was good water. As we lay here there came to us some Chinese in their sampan, who presented us five baskets of white sugar for each ship. They were, we surmised, so far as we could understand from them, Chinese pirates, freebooters on their own nation. The next day we fetched our water and set sail again, but prospered little.

On the 18th day we cast anchor again on the west side of the same island in a better road than the other; it was a harbour where one is sheltered from nearly all winds. Here the aforesaid pirates had their anchorage, they brought us some victual which they knew where to find, but it was of little use for the whole of our ships' crews. They many times proposed that we should go with them to the coast, and so they might be in our shelter, they would bring refreshment for us, boat-loads thereof, yet we thought it not advisable to do this. They hoisted prince-flags³ on their little ships and under that ensign robbed their own nation.

We set sail again to join our other ships in the Pescadores, where after much variable weather we arrived on September 22. There we saw our men at work to throw up a fort or castle. We found also two ships with a sloop more than we had left there, come later from Batavia, to wit, the ship *de Gouden Leeuw*, the *Samson* and the sloop *Singapore*.

The next day there came two sloops from the coast of China, having left one behind that was wrecked on that coast, but they had saved the men and the guns; in this the Chinese had been very helpful to them. These ships had been sent out to talk for traffic with the Chinese, who sent them back with great expectations and did promise to come to us with an ambassador in the Pescadores to speak further together, which on the 29th day they did. They came in four junks with their ambassador to agree with our commander and council about the traffic, but nothing was carried out, for all they promised they kept not, seeking by these means to move us from the Pescadores, the which was contrary to the orders given us by our governor-general. **RC**

NOTES

- 1 Bacon: term by which the Dutch depreciatively named the Portuguese and the Spaniards.
- 2 Reference to the *Itinerario* of the Dutch traveler Linschoten, published in Amsterdam in 1596, which is based on materials

collected by the author during the years he resided in Goa: from 1583 to 1587.

- 3 The flag of the Prince of Orange, usually carried by the Dutch.