deses devido aos seus conhecimentos de português que havia adquirido durante a sua infância em Macau.[65] Através da sua colaboração com os holandeses, Zheng Zhilong adquiriu conhecimentos sobre as suas técnicas de navegação, as suas estratégias comerciais, etc. Em 1627 ocorreu na província de Fujian uma grave escassez. Zheng Zhilong fretou as suas naves para trasladar importantes contigentes de população de Fujian para o seu quartel-general no sul de Taiwan, em Zhule, onde lhes providenciou terras e meios de subsistência. Atribui-se a Zheng Zhilong o estímulo definitivo ao crescimento exponencial que se dá a partir daquele momento no processo de emigração de chineses de Fujian para Taiwan. A maior parte desta emigração provinha da zona de Amoy, no estuário do rio Jiulong, onde estavam as cidades de Quanzhou e Zhangzhou, na zona que rodeia a actual cidade de Xiamen. O incentivo deste fluxo migratório incrementava a produtividade agrícola, o prestígio e a influência na costa de Fujian, a dinâmica comercial e o potencial bélico das frotas de Zheng Zhilong. Em 1628 Zheng Zhilong obteve um acordo de reconhecimento por parte das autoridades chinesas em troca de pacificar os estreitos, controlando as diferentes facções piratas e mantendo à raia os holandeses.[66]

Vemos, assim, como os dois primeiros líderes da coalizão pirata do século XVII estão vitalmente vinculados às duas capitais ibéricas da Ásia Oriental, Manila e Macau. Este é um dado que poderia parecer irrelevante, mas que indica como a segunda vaga de piratas chineses, surge num meio onde a presença dos ibéricos e dos holandeses alterou todas as regras de jogo e os horizontes mercantis no mundo marítimo da Ásia Oriental: também as da pirataria.

[65] Leonard Blusse, "Minnan-jen or Cosmopolitan? The rise of Cheng Chih-lung alias Nicolas Iquan", in E. B. Vermeer, *Development and Decline of Fukien Province in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1990, p. 253.

[66] P. Carioti, *Zheng Chenggong*..., p. 253.

VOC BLOCKADE OF THE SINGAPORE AND MALACCA STRAITS: DIPLOMACY, TRADE AND SURVIVAL, 1633-1641

PETER BORSCHBERG*

The history of the United Netherlands East India Company (better known to historians by its corporate initials VOC) has regained fresh interest among a range of early modern historians. In contrast to exposés of the early twentieth century, or even dating from before that period, current historical discourses have largely abandoned the rhetoric of colonial glory and national pride to encompass a broader and multi-faceted perspective that must include commerce and trade, diplomacy, rivalry, or even scientific developments. Presently taking place is a thorough reassessment of a vast pool of colonial sources not only by researchers of early modern Europe, but also by their counterparts of Asian history. This revisitation is by no means limited to VOC-related materials: much the same can be observed for other European presences and engagements within Asia, and indeed with the rest of the world. Portuguese language materials naturally assume a pivotal role in this process of revisiting sources.

The present paper addresses one of the most important chapters in Dutch attempts during the early seventeenth century to wrest control of the emporium of trade and spice from its Lusitanian overlord. This endeavor eventually came to fruition, following several unsuccessful attempts in 1606, 1623, 1627 and 1629.[1]

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[1] According to François Valentijn, *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën, Vervattende Een Naauwkeurige en Uitvoerige Verhandelinge van Nederlands Mogentheyd in de Gewesten, etc.*, 5 parts in 8 volumes, Dordrecht and Amsterdam, Johannes van Braam and Gerard Onder de Linden, 1724, vol. 5, p. 339B, the VOC directors, the Heeren XVII, issued instructions to lay siege *(belegeren)* to Malacca, but no military campaign appears to have been launched in that year. See also

Suffering an (intermittent) eight-year blockade, severe famine and a plague epidemic, the Portuguese port city surrendered to the Dutch on 14 January 1641.[2]

The blockade of the Malacca and Singapore Straits, which spanned a period of eight years between 1633 and 1641, represents a narrow timeframe in what represented a concerted effort to disrupt and curtail Portuguese trading networks across Asia. Freebooting, it was opined by the regents in the Low Countries, would starve the *Estado da Índia* of financial revenue.[3] The concurrent VOC blockade of other Portuguese-held ports, especially Goa, feature important parallels of operation. This should not surprise, for not only were directives issued by a common source in colonial Batavia, there is also a continuity of key personnel responsible for imposing the blockades. Of special interest is Jacob Cooper[4] who acted as the commander-in-charge of the blockade operations in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore. He was later transferred to the blockade of Goa[5] and reassigned to Malacca,[6] where supervised operations for the final land-based assault on the town and fortress in the second half of 1640.[7]

The VOC blockade of the Straits between 1639 and January 1641 finds only passing mention in several exposés on the history of Malacca and the adjacent straits, including Barbara Andaya's *Melaka under the Dutch, 1641-1795,* as well as Dianne Lewis' *Jan Compagnie in the Straits of Malacca.*[8] The blockade is also broadly mentioned by Afzal Ahmed, James Boyajian, and Ernst van Veen, usually in conjunction with similar operations around Asia, such as notably

E. Netscher, *De Nederlanders in Djohor en Siak*, Batavia, Bruining & Wijt, 1869, p. 32; Dianne Lewis, *Jan Compagnie in the Straits of Malacca, 1641-1795,* Athens, Ohio Center for International Studies, 1995, pp. 14-15.

[2] E. Netscher, *De Nederlanders...*, p. 33, concerning the blockade of June 1640 to 14 January 1641. Further particulars to the plague epidemic in Malacca are found below in note 6.

[3] W. Ph. Coolhaas (ed.), *Generale Missiven van Gouverneurs-Generaal en Raden aan Heeren XVII der Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (1610-1638), The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960, vol. 1, p. 403.

[4] Also spelt Coper or Koper, varying across documents.

[5] A short biography of Cooper is found in the *Generale Missiven...*, 1610-1638, p. 394, note 2. According to Pieter Anton Tiele (ed.), *Bouwstoffen voor de Geschiedenis der Nederlanders in den Maleischen Archipel,* The Hague, Nijhoff, 1886, vol. II, p. 263, Cooper made prize of 63 vessels between 16 September, 1633 and November 1634.

[6] J. A. van der Chijs, *et al.* (eds.), *Dagh-register gehouden int Casteel Batavia vant passerende daer ter plaetse als over geheel Nederlandts-India anno 1624-1682,* edited by the Netherlands Ministry of Colonies, 31 vols., Batavia, Landsdrukkerij, 1887-1931. See vol. 1640-1641, p. 39, entry of 28 September, 1640.

[7] P. van Dam, F. W. Stapel (ed.), *Beschrijvinge van de Oostindische compagnie* I, II, The Hague 1929, vol. I.2, p. 318 note 2 and p. 331.

[8] Barbara Watson Andaya, "Melaka under the Dutch, 1641-1795" in *Melaka. The Transformation of a Malay Capital, c. 1400-1980,* edited by Kernial Singh Sandhu and Paul Wheatley, Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1983, vol. 1, pp. 195-241; D. Lewis, *Jan Compagnie...*

the VOC blockade of Goa.[9] Two older contributions that address the military campaigns at large also mention the blockade, Leupe's *Siege and Capture of Malacca from the Portuguese in 1640-1641* (1936) and David Bassett's *Changes in the Pattern of Malay Politics, 1629-1655* (1969).[10] One might also wish to immediately include here the excellent study of René Barendse, *Blockade: Goa and its Surroundings 1638-1654* which can serve to meaningfully extend the picture from the region around the Singapore and Malacca Straits to also encompass Subcontinental India.[11] Barendse's paper has offered a model for the present chapter, with the noteworthy difference that greater emphasis is placed in the present exposé on strategies devised by the two enemies, the Portuguese and the Dutch, as well as their respective treaty partners and supporters.

Before delving into the dynamics of the naval blockade, it is well worthwhile to sketch the bigger picture around the Straits, the Malay Peninsula, Sumatra, and Southeast Asia. For a better grasp of the issues at hand one can point to the aforementioned articles of Basset and Leupe as well as to Denys Lombard's now classic *Le Sultanat d'Atjéh au temps d'Iskandar Muda* for further reference.[12]

As is known from that pioneering work of Lombard, together with some more recent studies such as by Jorge Alves and Paulo Pinto,[13] the Kingdom of Aceh embarked on a trail of imperial expansion in the first half of the seventeenth century and emerged as the dominant power in the region around the Malacca and Singapore Straits. Its cultural and military rival, Johor, was attacked together with other Malay states on the Peninsula, including significantly Perak and Selangor. The Portuguese were traditionally hostile to Aceh (and vice-versa), relations with

[9] Ahmed Afzal, *Indo-Portuguese Trade in Seventeenth Century (1600-1663),* New Delhi, Gian Publishing House, 1991, esp. pp. 48-49; James Boyajian, *Portuguese Trade in Asia under the Habsburgs, 1580-1640,* Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993, pp. 231-232; Ernst Van Veen, *Decay or Deafeat? An inquiry into the Portuguese decline in Asia, 1580-1645,* Leiden, Research School of Asian, African and Amerindian Studies, 2000, pp. 199-202.

[10] P. A. Leupe, "The Siege and Capture of Malacca from the Portuguese in 1640-1641", *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society,* 14, 1, 1936; D. K. Bassett, "Changes in the Pattern of Malay Politics, 1629-1655", *Journal of Southeast Asian History* 10, 3, 1969.

[11] René Barendse, "Blockade: Goa and its surroundings 1638-1654", in *Rivalry and Conflict. European Traders and Asian Trading Networks in the 16th and 17th Centuries,* edited by Ernst van Veen and Leonard Blussé, Leiden, CNWS Publications, 2005, pp. 232-266.

[12] Denys Lombard, *Le Sultanat d'Atjéh au temps d'Iskandar Muda 1607-1636,* Paris, École française d'Extrême-Orient, 1967.

[13] Jorge Manuel dos Santos Alves, *O domínio do norte de Samatra. A história dos sultanatos de Samudera-Pacém e de Achém, e das suas relações com os Portugueses (1500-1580),* Lisboa, Sociedade Histórica da Independência de Portugal, 1999; Paulo Jorge de Sousa Pinto, *Portugueses e Malaios. Malaca e os Sultanatos de Johor e Achém, 1575-1619,* Lisboa, Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses, 1997.

Johor were mixed, but ties to Pahang were generally on sounder terms.[14] The VOC was an ally of both Aceh and Johor, but after 1613, was caught in a serious tussle between the two parties, a delicate situation diplomatically as is evidenced by VOC-generated documentation. It transpires from these materials how Aceh maintained the balance of power around the region, but caution ruled after the death of Iskandar Muda in December 1636 and the ascent to the throne of his son, Iskandar Thani.[15] Several promises by the Acehnese (as early as 1633)[16] to assist in military operations against Malacca remained unfulfilled, and gradually the Dutch lost all hope of securing any military support from the Sumatran sultanate.[17] To Aceh's north, Siam entered a period of political instability during a succession crisis that brought King Prasat Thong to the throne in September 1629.[18] Evidence indicates that the Siamese sought the active assistance of Aceh in quelling the unrest in their lands, and evidence also points to Spanish schemes to destabilize and even perhaps even overrun the Siamese kingdom.[19] On the

[14] Peter Borschberg, "Remapping the Straits of Singapore? New Insights from Old Sources" in Peter Borschberg (ed.) *Iberians in the Singapore-Melaka Area,* Wiesbaden and Lisbon, Harrassowitz/Fundação Oriente, 2004, pp. 106-107; Peter Borschberg, "Luso-Johor-Dutch Relations in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore, ca. 1600-1623" in Ernest Van Veen and Leonard Blussé (eds.), *Rivalry and Conflict. European Traders and Asian Trading Networks in the 16th and 17th Centuries,* Leiden, CNWS, 2005, p. 190.

[15] D. Lombard, *Le Sultanat d'Atjéh...*, p. 187.

[16] *Generale Missiven...*, 1610-1638, report of Governor-General Hendrik Brouwer *et al.*, dated 15 December, 1633, p. 395.

[17] See for example *Dagh-Register Batavia*, 1631-34, entry of 6 February (1634), p. 237, where it is reported that the King of Aceh had promised assistance and intends to dispatch an armada with last eastern monsoon against Portuguese Malacca. But it is subsequently reported (*ibidem*, p. 238) that he did not deliver on this promise. Despite repeated requests of VOC for help, the King failed to muster assistance and excuses himself that he already had to deploy his *armada* against Perak, Aru and the west coast of Sumatra. The campaign in Perak alone required 1,100 men and 4 war elephants.

[18] The Hague, National Archives, VOC 1132, fols. 483-489; VOC 1109, fols. 43-51, *Dagh-register Siam*, 10 April 1633-6 November 1633; Dhiravat na Pompejra, *Siamese Court Life in the Seventeenth Century as Depicted in European Sources,* Bangkok, Chulalongkorn University, 2001, pp. 195-196, 201-202, 226; Dirk van der Cruyssé, *Siam and the West, 1500-1700,* Chiang Mai, Silkworm Books, 2002, pp. 55, 61-64. Rodao in his book *Españoles in Siam* mentions the disturbances surrounding the accession of Prasat Thong (*ibidem*, p. 57), but otherwise does not mention the "failed" military expedition to conquer Siam. See: Florentino Rodao, *Españoles en Siam (1540-1939). Una aportación al studio de la presencia hispana en Asia,* Madrid, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1997.

[19] *Dagh-Register Batavia*, 1631-34, entry of 6 February (1634), p. 238. *Ibidem*, entry of April 10-14 (1632), p. 69, reports that the Spanish had dispatched several vessels 300 "white" soldiers and 1,500 Pampangas to the "river of Cambodia" (The Mekong) to destroy "the Empire of Siam" and take great plunder from there. They also planned to seize Dutch ships that are destined for Patani, Siam, Cambodia and Taiwan. Some Portuguese prisoners were cross-examined on these schemes. According to a later entry (*ibidem*, p. 70) it is clear that his Spanish operation had failed

Portuguese side, relations with Pegu and Macassar are generally sound, and news of an embassy of Mataram to Malacca in 1636 and again in 1639 evoked considerable suspicion with Dutch officials in Batavia. It is known that the Portuguese sought the assistance of Mataram which on several occasions was not only reported to have rushed food supplies to Malacca, but even seriously deliberated the dispatch of military assistance.[20] Further to the east, the Dutch established themselves on the great island of Taiwan in 1624. The Tokugawa Shogunate forbade in 1635 the Japanese from leaving the archipelago and in 1639 closed its doors entirely to the Portuguese.[21] The latter decision dealt a serious blow to trading centers, such as Macao that relied heavily on the Japan trade.[22] All of these developments are of course documented and require no further elaboration.

Against the backdrop of this constellation of forces one needs to place the conflict between the *Estado da Índia* and the VOC, the latter representing a technically private enterprise acting as a self-financing arm in the Dutch-Iberian war effort in Asia. The Dutch company pursued a two-pronged approach in dealing with the Lusitanian foe: first disrupting networks of trade and strangling the flow of goods between Portuguese-held ports. Second, by attacking both hard,[23] but especially soft Portuguese targets, the latter translating in practice into intercepting and plundering commercial trading vessels.[24] Both strategies aimed at starving the *Estado da Índia* of financial revenue so as to weaken its ability to carry out swift and decisive military responses. Imposing a blockade was one means of enforcing these objectives, especially when the blockade could be effectively imposed over a sustained period. They were organized and enforced

and that the ships had set sail for Manila.

[20] The Hague, National Archives, VOC 1117, fols. 561-568; D. Lewis, *Jan Compagnie...*, p. 15: "They (the VOC) believed the ruler of Mataram had aimed, by assisting Portuguese Malacca, to divert the VOC's attention from Java. Now Mataram was forced to look to Batavia instead of Malacca as the market for their most important export, rice." – *Generale Missiven*, 1639-1655, report of Antonio van Diemen 18 December, 1639, p. 68. See also D. Lombard, *Le Sultanat d'Atjéh...*, p. 97.

[21] In 1636 the Dutch petition the consent of the Tokugawa Shogunate for imposing a naval blockade on Malacca and other ports of the *Estado da Índia.* Such a move doubtlessly affected Japan's reliance on Portuguese imports, including especially textiles. The Dutch assured the Tokugawa Shogun that his country would suffer no disruption of supplies. *Generale Missiven,* 1610-1638, pp. 508, 514.

[22] Gonçalo Misquitida, *Historia de Macau,* Macau, Instituto Cultural de Macau, 1998, vol. III, 1, p. 23.

[23] Such targets being forts and ports such as for example Goa, Malacca and the Moluccas.

[24] Peter Borschberg, "The Seizure of the Santo António at Patani. VOC Freebooting, the *Estado da Índia* and Peninsular Politics, 1602-1609", *Journal of the Siam Society*, 90, 1-2, 2002, pp. 59-60; Peter Borschberg, "A Portuguese-Dutch Naval Battle in the Johor River Delta and the Liberation of Johor Lama, 1603", *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft,* 153, 1, 2003, pp. 157.

at points of strategic and commercial importance, especially in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore.

A gloss on some of the extant source materials is now warranted at this juncture. For the Dutch side I have relied chiefly on published and unpublished documentation deriving from the VOC, including reports and letters of Commander Jacob Cooper,[25] correspondence from the Sumatra offices to Batavia (especially from the factory in Jambi),[26] the *Generale Missiven*, as well as that magnificent treasure trove of gossip and information for the whole Indonesian archipelago and beyond, the *Daghregister Batavia*.[27]

On the Portuguese side, I have consulted the *Assentos* edited and published by Pissurlencar,[28] and especially individual pieces of correspondence that were intercepted by the VOC during the period of the blockade.[29] The *Livros das Monções* proved useful for gleaning responses to the blockade and VOC aggression in the East Indies in general from an institutional or at least official perspective.[30] For the earlier period of the blockade, that is 1633 to the middle of 1635, there is of course also the published diary of the Portuguese vice-roy of India, the Conde de Linhares. It contains some interesting and useful information on issues pertaining to security and trade.[31] While admittedly far from complete, the materials paint a rewarding account of the situation within the walls of Portuguese Malacca (together with some other port cities of the *Estado da Índia),* and also reveal strategies devised by Lusitanian traders to circumvent the Dutch blockade.

In reviewing sources, the following questions stood at the forefront of my attention: How did the parties on the ground act to enforce the blockade? What specific steps were taken to break, evade, and circumvent the VOC blockade?

[25] The Hague, National Archives, VOC 1115, fols. 754-760; 791-792; VOC 1121, letters of Jacob Cooper (1636), fols. 1-67; VOC 1131, fols. 1283-1288; VOC 1132, fols. 135-141.

[26] The Hague, National Archives, VOC 1118, fols. 483-488, letters of the Jambi factory to the Governor-General at Batavia, 1634; VOC 1119, fols. 1240-1247, letters from Jambi to the Governor-General at Batavia, 1 September, 1636; and 3 October, 1636.

[27] J. A. van der Chijs *et al.* (eds.), *Dagh-register gehouden int Casteel Batavia vant passerende daer ter plaetse als over geheel Nederlandts-India anno 1624-1682,* edited under the auspices of the Netherlands' Ministry of Colonies, 31 vols., Batavia, Landsdrukkerij, 1887-1931.

[28] P. P. S. Pissurlencar (ed.), *Assentos do Conselho do Estado da Índia,* 7 vols., Bastóra-Goa, 1855-1974.

[29] See for example: The Hague, Nationaal Archief, VOC 4818, fol. 561 recto et seq. The intercepted correspondence here covers the years 1633 to 1636. See also VOC 1136, fols. 963-965 where trade relations between Japan, China, Malacca and Goa are discussed together with the closure of the Japan market to the Portuguese.

[30] See for example: Lisbon, IAN/TT, *Livros das Monções,* Cod. 47, fols. 22r-22v; 48/89-89v, 41/74r-74v; Cod. 48, fols 88/70-72v; Cod. 49 fols. 47/62-64; 82/136-139.

[31] *Diário do Terceiro Conde de Linhares, Vice-rey da Índia,* 2 vols., Lisboa, Biblioteca Nacional, 1937.

What were the immediate factors on the ground that induced the fall of Portuguese Malacca in January 1641?

On the Dutch side it is possible to detect a reliance on maritime power and artillery while simultaneously signing new, or invoking existing treaties, with princes in the region. The Dutch also co-opted local merchants and political elites to support their cause.[32] The co-optation of indigenous elites is of course paramount for two reasons: first, because looking at the bigger picture, it is evident to VOC servants at the time that they do not tip or even maintain the balance of power. It is clear that the key to holding the balance of power is firmly placed in the hands of Aceh. In mobilizing their (Malay) treaty partners, the Dutch naturally also had to cast an eye on the Acehnese, and preferably also persuade Aceh's monarch Iskandar Muda and his successor, Iskandar Thani, to lend active military support to the Dutch cause. On the ground, it proved almost impossible to seal off the Singapore and Malacca Straits with anything between five and nine cutters together with undisclosed number of sloops. The vessels and men at the company's disposal was simply insufficient to impose a tight naval blockade on Malacca, or to solicit information from local agents or passing vessels. But the control of specific nodal points in the waters of the Straits facilitated the interception and also seizure of craft destined for Malacca and other Portuguese-held ports. Freebooting was not a new strategy adopted by the VOC, and extant documentation evidences that freebooting activities were successfully pursued in the Singapore and Malacca Straits between 1636 and 1639.

Lusitanian counter-strategies were generally conceived as responses to specific Dutch acts of aggression against both hard and soft Portuguese targets. The co-optation of regional elites is very important for appreciating and also properly understanding the historic unfolding of events. It should be immediately adjoined here, however, that in times of distress, it was not uncommon to devise forward strategies that consciously aimed at upsetting the balance of power in the region around the Singapore and Malacca Straits. In the period under review, the Portuguese offered to improve relations with their long-time enemy and commercial rival, Aceh. For a short span, notably in the months preceding the death of Aceh's Sultan Iskandar Thani in February 1641, some progress was arguably made by the *Estado da Índia* as a result of radically changing tack on the diplomatic front. The matter is admittedly shrouded in obscurity and is difficult to fathom. Source materials reveal that Lusitanian officials had sought to grease the wheels of diplomacy in September 1638. On that occasion the embassy led by

[32] See for example *Dagh-Register Batavia*, 1631-42, 17 April, 1632, pp. 122-123, where it transpires that the VOC has signed new, or renewed existing treaties with the "kings" of Patani, Johor, Cambodia, Jambi, Indragiri and other surrounding places against all attacks of the Spanish and the Portuguese. Siam was not among the treaty partners because its king Prasat Thong was considered "an usurper".

Francisco de Soza de Castro ended in an unmitigated fiasco, consuming Aceh's royal palace by fire and triggering the massacre of almost all those associated with the Portuguese mission.[33] De Soza de Castro survived, but was held prisoner by the court in Aceh, and only returned to Goa upon Iskandar Thani's death a few years after the ill-fated diplomatic offensive.[34] Despite this setback, Viceroy Pedro de Silva's arguably scored success. In October 1638, just one month after the ill-fated Lusitanian diplomatic mission to Iskandar Thani, the Acehnese dispatched their own embassy, comprising two hundred men, to Dutch Batavia. The Acehnese envoys recounted that the Portuguese sought to forge a deal with Iskandar Thani by offering him nominal sovereignty over Malacca in return for Aceh declaring war on the VOC. This enticing offer was accompanied by the sale of jewels to the Acehnese monarch at what is disclosed as a "friendship price".[35] Perhaps the Portuguese offer of nominal sovereignty over Malacca amounted to little more than rumor, and it is well within the realm of possibilities that the Acehnese envoys were toying with the worst fears of their Dutch hosts,[36] or they might have been soliciting rival offers from Batavia. Whatever the case may have been, it is reported with evident relief, that Iskandar Thani turned down the *Estado da Índia's* offer for nominal sovereignty over the Portuguese colony.[37] De Soza de Castro's survival and the growing number of rumors alleging Lusitanian successes at the Acehnese court should not be dismissed.

Were the responses or counter-strategies of the Portuguese new or innovative, and if they were, how so? Was there something unique or unusual about them? Or were they just knee-jerk, 'street smart' reactions to a growing crisis situation in and around the Straits? In order to facilitate the reconstruction of decisions and events, it is advisable to start with the Dutch side, not least because it is to their acts of aggression that the Portuguese of Malacca and further afield

[33] Emma H Blair and James Alexander Robertson, *The Philippine Islands*, vol. 29, Events, August 1639-August 1640, pp. 197-198: "... went from Malacca as an envoy to the king of Achen, regarding himself as quite safe; but that the king gave orders that his men should arrest the envoy as soon as he enter the palace. When they tried to carry out this command, this man and the other Portuguese placed themselves on the defensive; all the men on the ship hastened to their aid with fireballs, and with these they killed many Acehnese, and the palace was set on fire, being entirely consumed. They estimate the losses of the king at five million [Ryals of Eight]. All the Portuguese were killed." The source adduced and translated by Blair and Robertson name the head of the Lusitanian embassy as "Caldeira", but Lombard positively identifies him as Francisco de Soza de Castro. The latter underscores that he is not aware of any other Portuguese mission dispatched to Aceh to strike a peace deal with Iskandar Thani. D. Lombard, *Le Sultanat d'Atjéh...*, pp. 97-98, 233-234.

[34] See D. Lombard, *Le Sultanat d'Atjéh...*, letter of de Soza de Castro dated March 1643.

[35] *Bouwstoffen*, vol. II, pp. 355-356.

[36] *Ibidem*, p. 357.

[37] *Ibidem*, p. 356.

ultimately respond. The present contribution sketches a broad reconstruction and is not strictly shackled to chronology.

The VOC identified key ports and choke points in the Portuguese networks of trade. The company launched a concerted series of blockades aiming at controlling these nodal points. A VOC document found in the National Archives of the Netherlands in The Hague provides a snapshot of how the Dutch company had carefully distributed its limited naval forces across the waters of the South China Sea and the Straits. The targets of Dutch maritime hegemony were not just the colonial port strongholds of the Portuguese and the Spanish in East and Southeast Asia, but also select emporia that remained under the control of local rulers, such as notably Macassar. The latter openly traded with both Iberian powers, and indeed other northern European competitors of the VOC, such as the Danes and the English.

Judging from specific documents such as ms. VOC 1108,[38] it is also evident that the Dutch dispatched only a handful of small to medium-sized vessels to impose a stranglehold on the Singapore and Malacca Straits. Given the state of technology of the day, it was difficult, if not impossible, to exercise a tight control over the commercially important waters of the Straits with so few ships and sparse manpower. For this reason, the Dutch positioned their ships and men at specific nodal points of maritime traffic, and at the same time sought to co-opt the local population in amassing information on the movements of the Portuguese around the Indonesian archipelago and the Malay Peninsula at large. In the Straits of Singapore, there are three such points of special interest: the most easterly is the entrance at the Singapore Straits around Pedra Branca;[39] at the mouth of the Johor River opposite the northern entrance to the Riau Strait known as the Hook of Berbukit (October through May);[40] and the north-north-eastern coast of the Carimons.[41] The three locations are visible on Map Annex 1.[42]

[38] The Hague, National Archives, VOC 1108, fols. 619-620, List of Dutch Naval Power in the East Indies, dated 15 August, 1633.

[39] *Dagh-Register Batavia*, 1631-1634, p. 238, report of 6 February, 1634. *Ibidem*, report of 18 February, 1634, p. 246; Ibid, report of 9-13 April. 1634, p. 291, entry of 11 April; *ibidem*, report of 10 December, 1634, p. 453; *Generale Missiven*, 1610-1638, report of Brouwer *et al.* dated 15 December, 1633, p. 395.

[40] *Dagh-Register Batavia*, 1631-1634, p. 452 (report of 10 December, 1634). *Generale Missiven*, 1610-1638, report of Brouwer et al. dated 15 December, 1633, p. 395, where in the instructions to Commander Cooper the location is described as: "... bijoosten de Straet van Sincapura, tusschen het vaste lant van Yhoor en de eylanden van Bintangh..., that is "... east of the Strait of Singapore between the mainland of Johor and the Island of Bintan"...

[41] There are two islands, Great Carimon or present-day Karimun Besar, and Carimon Minor or Karimun Kecil.

[42] *Dagh-Register Batavia*, 1631-34, p. 294, report of 27 April, 1634.

The islet Pedra Branca is situated at the eastern entrance of the Singapore Straits, and from the waters around this navigational landmark it is possible to monitor maritime traffic in and out of the Singapore Straits, as well as ships skirting the eastern coast of Bintan en route to Java, Macassar, the Moluccas, and Timor. The Hook of Berbukit is situated at the mouth of the Johor River. From here it is possible to monitor ships entering the river or passing through the Singapore and Johor Strait.[43]

The Hook of Berbukit is also situated opposite the northern entrance of the Riau Strait. The latter connects the principal port on Bintan with other islands of the Riau Archipelago and eastern Sumatra. From the northern coast of the Carimons it is possible to monitor all traffic passing through the Malacca Straits into the so-called Straits of Sabam,[44] the Durian Straits, and ships heading for one of the four routes near or around Singapore. In fact, the Dutch already had already recognized the north-eastern shore of Great Carimon the single most important nodal point in the region by 1614/5.[45] During the entire period under review, the VOC used the island's sandy eastern shoreline as a camp, a depot for supplies from Batavia, and also as a place to beach, careen and repair their weather-beaten vessels.[46] Apart from food supplies, vessels were in constant need of pitch and new anchors, the latter not least because of the very strong currents in the Straits and especially around the Carimons. During the change of tides, the waters around the islands can resemble a flowing river.

To the north in the Strait of Malacca, the Dutch assumed positions in two key positions: outside the port and colony of Malacca on a small island commonly referred to in Portuguese and Dutch colonial documents as *Ilha das Naus* as well as in the waters off Cape Rachado. The *Isla das Naus* was reportedly out of the range of cannon-fire from the fortress *'A Famosa* and had been used amongst others by Admiral Cornelis Matelieff de Jonge during his sea-borne attack on Malacca in 1606.[47] Based on the sources consulted, it remains insufficiently clear how long the Dutch were able to hold their artillery position on the *Ilha das Naus* during the period under review.

[43] The Johor Strait is also known as the Tebrau Strait.

[44] *Ibidem*, p. 452, report of 10 December, 1634.

[45] The Hague, National Archives, *Report of Adriaen van der Dusschen*, dated 19 May, 1615, VOC 1061, fols. 76-83. See also P. Borschberg, *Luso-Johor-Dutch Relations...*, p. 204.

[46] *Dagh-Register Batavia*, 1631-1634, p. 385.

[47] *Ibidem*, p. 386, entry of 28 July 1634; P. Borschberg, *Luso-Johor-Dutch Relations...*, pp. 197, 213; After the attack of Cornelis Matelieff on Malacca, a fortification was supposedly built on the island with the evident intention of thwarting a second shelling of the city by Dutch artillery. See Armando Cortesão, and Avelino Teixeira da Mota, *Portugaliae Monumenta Cartographica,* Lisboa, 1960, vol. 5, plate 590/60 I *(Demonstração da Ilha das Naos)* and *ibidem*, 59B *(Demonstração da Fortaleza de Malaca)*. Prior to the construction of these structures, warships patrolled the waters around the islets and outside Malacca harbour.

Cape Rachado represented the most northerly strategic point for the VOC blockades and offered a view across the Malacca Strait. This position enabled the Dutch blockaders to monitor, control, or intercept maritime traffic from north Sumatra and ports around the Bay of Bengal during the southwest monsoon between June/July and September each year.[48]

As there were only a handful of cutters with a few hundred men to control this yawning pelagic space littered with shoals and islets, intelligence on expected supplies of goods, food and weapons earmarked for Malacca proved vital for the success of the blockade operations. It was always beneficial to keep one's ear to the ground to ascertain the mood inside the stronghold of Malacca. According to sources consulted, there were three underlying patterns for obtaining information about the Portuguese and their activities at large. One was to intercept ships carrying correspondence to and from the Lusitanian port and colony. Correspondence and instructions taken from the captured ships by the Dutch from other parts of the far-flung *Estado da Índia* and especially Portuguese India's capital Goa gave the blockaders a tremendous advantage. A second tactic involved the cross-examination of mariners whose vessels were stopped and boarded around the aforementioned strategic nodal points in the Singapore and Malacca Straits. Then there were the prisoners and defectors whose testimonies one should always read with caution.

The third, and probably also the most important source of intelligence, consisted of the testimonies solicited from Asians whose sovereigns were bound to, the VOC by alliance or formal treaty. In formation could be sourced across a wide spectrum of society and using a wide range of pretexts. For example, Commander Cooper visited Johor's upstream capital Batu Sawar under the pretext of purchasing provisions for the Dutch naval squadrons stationed in the Straits, but the visit also offered a tremendous opportunity to exchange information and gossip on the state of affairs in Malacca.[49] The VOC vessels in the Straits additionally garnered useful information on the general mood in Malacca by entertaining flying vendors in *sampans* who routinely pulled up to the side of the Dutch vessels offering fresh fruit, vegetables, eggs and live chickens for sale. These vendors knowingly or unknowingly played an important role in feeding the blockaders with information on the movements around the port of Malacca and the region around the Straits at large. Sometimes they even entertained VOC crews with tales of Portuguese merchants who successfully evaded the Dutch blockade. Needless to say, many of the stories recounted were almost certainly exaggerated or embellished with dubious details when they were passed on from mouth to mouth, so reason and caution is advised when reading the Dutch reports.

[48] *Dagh-Register Batavia*, 1631-1634, p. 384, entry of 9 September, 1634; incident of 13 July, 1634, *ibidem*, p. 387. See also note 43.

[49] *Ibidem*, p. 387, entry of 20 June, 1634. *Ibidem*, entry of 9 September, 1634, p. 387.

Today, naval blockades are understood a matter for naval forces, but this is clearly not the case in the early modern period, and especially if imposed by an integrated trading company like the VOC. Sources reveal that the Dutch blockades of the 1630s were also taken as an opportunity to strike up deals and trade in the regions surrounding the Straits of Singapore and Malacca. An incident taken from the *Daghregister Batavia* of 1634 shall serve as a classic example to underscore this observation.[50] The *Texel* belonging to the fleet of Commander Cooper was dispatched to Arakan (present day Mrauk-U, Myanmar) carrying two ambassadors and an unspecified consignment of cargo. Instructions issued to the *Texel* were to strike up business deals in Arakan generally, procure rice, benzoin, red lacquer *(gummalacca)* for the Dutch company,[51] as well as 300 slaves of both sexes aged between 10 and 25. The VOC first opened trade with the peoples of present-day Myanmar in May 1634, and by July the following year, the King of Arakan requested Dutch for "assistance in his struggle against the Burmese" of Ava.[52]

Last but certainly not least, the Dutch engaged in what could be generously dubbed "public relations exercises", especially with the enemy. Judging from the interviews conducted with Portuguese officers, traders and defectors, the Dutch became aware that rumors in Malacca and around the region had painted them as faithless scoundrels, rebels and ruthless slave traders. Merchants widely believed that the Dutch would not only seize ship and cargo, but enslave the crew and dispose of their human cargos on the local slave markets. This accusation, while technically false, was not entirely unbelievable, for Commander Cooper, frustrated with the common Portuguese practice of immolating ship and cargo, issued instructions to drown those who sabotaged their own vessels, and in turn shower generosity on those who surrendered.[53] In order to rehabilitate themselves and also boost their credentials in the eyes of their Lusitanian foe, and with an eye cast on mollifying the Portuguese into forfeiting their ship and cargo as prize war rather than setting them ablaze, the Dutch engaged in a sporadic number of cash-for-prisoners exchanges meant to counterbalance negative impressions and rumors.[54] The sums involved in these cash-for-prisoner exchanges were by no means paltry, and residents of Malacca were known to send out *sampans* laden with fresh fruit and other provisions as a token of genuine gratitude for releasing Portuguese prisoners.

[50] *Ibidem*, p. 389.

[51] P. van Dam, F.W. Stapel (ed.), *Beschrijvinge...*, II.1, p. 821, also *gommelack, gomlak* or *schellak*. A red-coloured gum used as a varnish; red lacquer.

[52] Wil Dijk, *Seventeenth-century Burma and the Dutch East India Company, 1634-1680*, Singapore, NUS Press, 2006, pp. 17, 88.

[53] *Generale Missiven*, 1610-1638, pp. 467-9.

[54] See for example *Dagh-Register Batavia*, 1631-1634, p. 388.

At this juncture one has already entered into the subject of Lusitanian responses to the Dutch blockade. From the vantage point of the Portuguese it was not only imperative to mollify the Dutch aggressors as far as possible, but also to forestall the Malays from being drawn into the circle of, and ultimately from being co-opted by, the VOC. Secondary studies by English and Dutch authors frequently dwell on heavy-handed blunders of the *Estado da Índia's* leading officers and rarely delve into the deft maneuvers that are also evidenced from period materials. Diplomacy in the early modern Malay world was beset with scandal, bribery, sex and intrigues that most certainly add spice and infuse a good dose of entertainment value into a given narrative. As for co-opting the Malays for their own political, strategic or commercial ends, the Portuguese proved very capable. From time to time VOC servants begrudgingly conceded to their superiors in Batavia or Europe that, alas, they had been outsmarted, outwitted and outmaneuvered by their Lusitanian counterparts.

No amount of intelligence could place a handful of craft and a few hundred men in a position to establish and maintain a tight stranglehold on maritime activity in the Straits of Singapore and Malacca. The fact remains that the VOC blockades only scored uneven successes against the imagination and ingenuity of the Portuguese traders. On the Dutch side we learn of efforts to evade the VOC blockade mainly from recorded cross-examinations of persons who had failed and been captured by the Dutch. The picture, therefore, is not a complete one, and the evasive strategies revealed by period documentation are neither complete nor genuinely representative. When the numerous accounts are put together, however, four basic strategies are uncovered:

The first strategy was to divert cargo beyond the maritime stranglehold of the Dutch such as along overland and riverine trading networks. One move was to station an agent on the island of Tioman *(Tymão)*[55] which is located off the south-eastern coast of the Malay Peninsula (see Map Annex 1). For centuries before the arrival of the European traders and colonists, this island served as a provisioning and watering station for passing ships. The said agents were charged with duly informing captains of the presence or activities of Dutch naval squadrons in the Straits. Ships were subsequently diverted along other maritime routes (if that was even possible), or (as was usually the case) urged to call at friendly ports such as Pahang *(Pam, Pão,* present-day Pekan*)*.[56] This port served inter-

[55] In Portuguese documents also spelt Timão, Timaon, Tymão.

[56] The port city is also variously spelt as Pam, Paan or Pahão in Portuguese sources. – See also *Dagh-Register Batavia*, 1631-1634, p. 386, report of 28 July 1634. Three defectors report that four vessels inbound from Macao had been rerouted to Pahang, where they lay at anchor. They were expected to arrive in Malacca soon. – A classic account of the the "Tioman agent" (albeit from an earlier period) can be found in the *journal* of Hendrick Janszoon Craen, chief merchant *(opperkoopman)* aboard the Dutch merchantman *Gelderland*, entry of 17 March, 1609. According to

mittently as a *rendez-vous* where Portuguse-flagged ships from different parts of east Asia and the Indonesian archipelago could assemble in time and later sail in convoy to Malacca.[57] Sometimes the Portuguese-owned cargo was unloaded and transferred to smaller vessels. This move featured several advantages: spreading the cargo over different vessels substantially reduced the risk of loss to the enemy – or more rarely, to the forces of nature. The cargo was then brought along the Pahang River, its tributaries, the Bera and Serting, across the *penarikan* and then downstream to Muar.[58] Sometimes other inland trading routes were taken that are mentioned only in passing. Another attested strategy of evading enemy squadrons was to sail and row smaller vessels very close to the shoreline during the darkness of night and, preferably, at high tide. Hugging the shoreline during the wee hours in the moonlight sometimes also worked for larger vessels, as at least one account can attest.[59] As a rule, small vessels are difficult to detect at night, and even when spotted, the shallow waters in close proximity to the shore were not accessible to sailing craft armed with cannons such as the ones used by the VOC during the blockade. Even if spotted, the smaller, low-lying Malay craft, such as *sampans,* were often beyond artillery and gunfire range or were at least difficult to hit by artillery fire because of distance or poor visibility. By the time the Dutch had launched a sloop to reconnoiter the situation, the *sampans* could hide in narrow estuaries, in coastal mangroves or simply get a good head start by rowing.

When Portuguese vessels entered the Singapore Straits, but could not proceed without danger of attack and seizure by the Dutch, they sometimes called at Bulan (*Bulão*) and as mentioned in the case of Pahang redistributed their cargo among a several smaller craft.[60]

The second major strategy was to open up new sailing routes through and around the sprawling Riau-Lingga Archipelago. A report of Dutch Governor-General Hendrik Brouwer to his superiors in Europe, dated 15 August, 1633,

this testimony, an "envoy" *(ambassedoor)* from Pahang showed to the Dutch a message written in Portuguese warning a "captain of a gallion coming from Macao" that, when he arrives in Tioman, he should not under any circumstances sail beyond the navigational landmark Pedra Branca near the eastern entrance of the Singapore Straits, but exhorts him to unload his cargo and ship it "overland" to Malacca. See A. de Booy (ed.), *De derde reis van de VOC naar Oost-Indië onder het beleid van Admiraal Paulus van Caerden uitgezield in 1606,* vol. II, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1970, p. 78

[57] *Dagh-Register Batavia*, 1631-1634, p. 388, report of 28 July, 1634, where it is reported that the two cutters (jachten) Salm and Daman captured about 7 vessels around "Pulo Pican". Pulau Pican or Picão is off the western coast of Peninsular Johor, between Pontian and Tanjung Bulus. (See map annex 2).

[58] P. Borschberg, *Luso-Johor-Dutch Relations...*, p. 191.

[59] *Dagh-Register Batavia*, 1631-1634, pp. 411-412, entry of 16-20 October, 1634.

[60] *Dagh-Register Batavia*, 1636, pp. 165-166, Memorie van Pascoal Barretto voor Sr. Ant.o Gomes ende Carvalho in absentee an Sr. Bras Pinto de Matros.

disclosed the presence of two cutters, the *Dieman* and the *Daman,* patrolling the waters around the island of Lingga "since July".[61] One Portuguese vessel was spotted in the same area the following year.[62] Its captain abandoned ship and sought to flee to Malacca in a dinghy. The Dutch intercepted him as he was about to enter the harbour and was taken prisoner.[63]

The presence of patrols around Lingga since the middle of 1633 was most certainly no coincidence. Pedro Bartollo, a name that surfaces in several letters of the contemporaneous Portuguese Vice-roy, the Conde de Linhares, is seen to have "discovered" or at least opened up for more regular maritime traffic a new passage that ran to the south of Bintan, Galang and west to the Carimons.[64] This previously uncharted route ran straight through the heart of the Riau Archipelago and found its historically earliest and most important cartographic entry on two surviving maps penned by André Pereira dos Reis. One is presently found in the Casa da Bragança at Vila Viçosa,[65] the other forms part of the W. A. Engelbrecht Collection at the Maritiem Museum Prins Hendrik in Rotterdam.[66] The two hand-drawn charts are very similar, but crucially, not identical. Only the Rotterdam specimen credits the "discovery" of the new maritime route across the Riau Archipelago to Pedro Bartollo in 1633. That year marked the beginning of the maritime blockade of the Singapore and Malacca Straits by the VOC. The new maritime passage named the *Canal de Conceição de Nossa Senhora* (Channel of the Conception of Our Lady) was not used for long before local fishermen from Bintan tipped off the Dutch. Indeed, members of the same Malay or *orang laut* family lent assistance to different parties: the father acted as a pilot for the Portuguese, while the son alerted the Dutch squadrons. The following testimony dating from the beginning of the maritime blockade evidences the use of this new maritime route through the heart of the Riau Archipelago.[67]

[61] *Generale Missiven,* 1610-1638, p. 376.

[62] The Hague, National Archives, VOC 1108, List of Dutch Naval power in the East Indies, 15 August, 1633, fol. 619 recto, where it is explained that the cutters (jacht) *Diemen*, *Daman* and two unnamed sloops were stationed "before Malacca". The words "voor Malacca" were subsequently deleted and replaced in a different hand with the two words "omtrent Lingen", meaning "around Lingga".

[63] *Dagh-Register Batavia*, 1634, p. 388, report of 20 June 1634.

[64] The Hague, National Archives, VOC 4818, Intercepted Portuguese Correspondence (1634), fols. 565v-566r, under heading number 8. This section reports the existence of several passages to the south of Pedra Branca across the Archipelago that are little known except to the Malay and the *saletes* (or *celates, orang laut*) who frequent them with smaller craft. Pedro Bartollo is reported to be cognizant of such uncharted passages.

[65] A. Cortesão and A.T. Mota, *Portugaliae Monumenta...*, vol. 5, plate 578, chart 15C.

[66] *Ibidem*, plate 543, chart B.

[67] *Dagh-Register Batavia*, 1631-1634, pp. 162-163.: "Item, dat d'onse vuijt zeecker Mallaijer van Bintang vernomen hadden, dat vier cloucke Portugeesche navetten comende van Maccauw vuit vreese van onse cruijssende jachten te rescontreren, haere passagie door de eijlanden ende

> "Item, our [people] have learnt from a Malay of [the island] of Bintan that four Portuguese navettes arriving from Macao took their passage through the islands and shoals of Bintan for fear of encountering our cruising cutters. Our people, being advised of this, pursued these craft with the entire fleet through the aforementioned islands and shoals. They used as their guide the aforementioned Malay, who not only possessed good knowledge of said islands and shoals, but also because he had an arrangement with his father (whom the Portuguese had hired as their guide) to keep the Portuguese navettes cruising among the islands and the shoals until our ships arrive. Then our [men] chased after the said Portuguese navettes and cut off the route (which they would have to ply). When the Portuguese discovered that [our ships] were closing in on them, and realizing that they were too weak to withstand our might, they laid fire to their navettes which were loaded with all sorts of flammable materials and fireworks, without being able to salvage anything in particular, except for the ready gold. The ships burned so furiously that neither our men nor the natives of the aforementioned islands ... were able to extinguish the flames."

Another maritime passage situated to the south of the Singapore Straits ran between the present-day islands of Batam, Rempang and Bulan. This is also marked as viable passages on the two aforementioned Portuguese naval charts.

In addition to exploring the islands of the Riau Archipelago, the blockade of the Singapore and Malacca Straits prompted the Portuguese to reconnoiter the eastern coast of Sumatra. One report testifies to the bewilderment of a Dutch crew on learning that a Portuguese ship had managed to evade their attention. How was it possible for a sizeable Portuguese vessel to pass undetected? The Portuguese followed a group of Malay or Javanese traders who evaded the Dutch blockade by sailing between the islands off the eastern coast of Sumatra.[68] According to a report of Governor-General Brouwer to the Heeren XVII dated 27 December, 1634, this "nice channel" measuring "at least three fathoms deep"

drooghten van Bintam genomen hadden, ende dat d'onse daer over te raede geworden waren, deselve door de voorseijde eilanden ende drooghten, met de gantsche vloote te vervolgten, ende tot een guide te gebruijcken den voornoemden Malleijer die van ditto eijlanden ende drooghten niet alleenlijk goede kennisse hadde, maer ook met zijnen vader (wien de Portugeesen tot haeren leitsman gebruijkten) versproocken was, de Portugeesen tot aencompste onser scheepen inde voorseijde eilanden ende drooghten dralende te sullen houden. Welken volgende d'onse de voorseijde Portugeesche navetten... nagejaecht ende den weg (die deselve nootwendich mosten passeren) affgesneden hebben, naerder ende naerder aprocherende, t' welcke de Portugeesen vermerckende, ende haer tegen onse macht te swack vindende, hebben deselve navetten alvooren met alderhande brandende materie ende vierwerken behangen sijnde, in brandt gesteecken, zonder dat zij vuijt deselve iets zonderlings als het gerede goud hebben connen salveeren, also soo schierlijcken in den brandt geraeckten, dat die noch door ons noch door de inwoonders van de voorseijde eilanden... geblust conden werden." Translation into English by P. B.

[68] *Dagh-Register Batavia*, 1631-1634, p. 412.

found its entry at the estuary of the Campar River and exited just "across from Malacca" (see Map Annexe). This passage, referred to as the Strait of Bengkalis and subsequently in Dutch sources as the Brouwer Strait was frequented by several Javanese and Malay vessels that, evidently for quite some time, plied the waters of the channel in the dark of the night and thus evaded the Dutch blockade undetected. The Governor-General informed his superiors that measures had been taken to plug this backdoor channel, and it became part of the regular 'beat' of the VOC patrols for years to come.[69]

The third strategy was to use proxies for trade and transportation. As for European parties, the Portuguese made use of the Danes and at least on one occasion chartered an English vessel to transport supplies from Portuguese India to Macao. The Dutch were painfully aware of such European proxies, and even if they did not intercept and impound craft and cargo, they did monitor the movements of these proxies very closely. Officers in Batavia and on the ground feared – with some justification no doubt – that strong action taken in the East Indies against European-flagged vessels other than the Iberian enemy would almost inevitably have to serious diplomatic and economic repercussions back in Europe. Understandably, no one wanted to precipitate a diplomatic crisis back home, so they turned a blind but wary eye on Portugal's European proxies.

Proxies may also have been used to conduct trade at ports that were either hostile to Portugal, or at least not tied to the stringent conditions of a Dutch commercial contract. Sometimes Dutch allies were courted as well. The VOC had to repeatedly remind treaty parties, such as significantly Johor, that they were to abide by their agreements and sever all commercial relations with the Portuguese. This was not unique to the blockade of the 1630s, and the VOC had given the Johoreans similar reminders earlier between 1610 and 1623. It was an open secret in the Malay world, how, despite on-again off-again Luso-Johor relations on the diplomatic and military front, commercial ties painted a completely different picture. In order to satisfy Dutch demands for tighter co-operation under the alliance agreement struck in 1606, the Laksamana of Johor had some Portuguese trading vessels impounded and surrendered them to the VOC as prizes of war. Even then, after rounding up the proverbial "usual suspects" firmly engaged in Luso-Johor trade, relations quickly 'normalized' and returned within a short period to the more familiar patterns of trade, exchange and interaction.

The fourth strategy – if this can be deemed a strategy proper – was to enter Malay ports that were not under contract with the Dutch, chiefly citing the pretext of making a distress call. It then just so happened that in order to pay for the supposed repairs, the captain had to sell of some of his cargo. Some instances may very well have been genuine, but when the Dutch learnt of one such inci-

[69] *Bouwstoffen*, vol. II, p. 263. Also *Generale Missiven*, 1639-1655, report of Antonio van Diemen, 18 December, 1639, p. 68.

dent, they concluded that this was just another cunning ploy of Malacca merchants to dispose of their cotton pieces and clothing under utterly false pretexts. But sometimes a pretext was not even necessary. The *Generale Missiven* for 1638 have the Portuguese selling cloth and textiles in Perak and highlight that the sales went down very well with the local population.[70]

This was the wider state of affairs in and around the Straits of Malacca and Singapore. The actual Portuguese entrepôt and colony of Malacca, meanwhile, was subjected to oscillating fortunes. It is useful to establish here a distinction between the VOC stranglehold in the Straits, and the Dutch blockade of the colonial port settlement. Whilst it transpires from VOC source materials that the maritime aspect of the blockade remained in force between 1633 until the fall of Malacca in January 1641, the blockade of the port does not appear to have been in force uninterrupted. According to a report of Governor-General Antonio van Diemen to his superiors in Europe dated 28 December, 1636, a blockade had been continuously in force for just over three years. He observed for the benefit of his superiors in the Netherlands: "As a result of our constant cruising outside and around Malacca since the year 1633, this city had become very depressed and fallen into a dire famine."[71] Maintaining the blockade of Malacca emerged as a costly undertaking. Ever a vigilant eye cast on the company's bottom line, Governor-General van Diemen lamented that, despite the presence of eight cruisers and 412 men to enforce the blockade, few prizes of war were taken. In other words, hopes that the maritime blockade of Malacca might become self-financing – or even turn in a profit – by seizing Portuguese flagged vessels as booty of war were completely dashed.

The cost of the blockade in terms of ships, manpower and funds had to be justified financially by the taking of prizes. This was not just a war by the force of arms, but a war of nerves, patience, survival and timely supplies. In December 1637, van Diemen dryly acknowledged the munificence of some vessels rushed from Goa to relieve Malacca and underscored the serious damage inflicted on Portuguese shipping in the Malacca Straits. The following year 1638 saw no naval assistance arrive from Portuguese India whatsoever.[72] Rumors and gossip swirled in Batavia that the "constant cruising in the waters of Malacca" had critically reduced the level of trading activity and that serious tension had emerged

[70] *Generale Missiven* 1610-1638, p. 387.

[71] *Bouwstoffen*, vol. II, pp. 298 et seq., but esp. p. 305. Similar observations are also made in *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën*, vol. 5, p. 340A, where Valentijn identified the lack of food supplies as critical in the fall of Portuguese Malacca. But he later admitted on p. 314A that the Dutch never succeeded in completely severing supplies to the city. See also Manuel de Faria y Sousa, *The Portuguese Asia, or, The history of the discovery and conquest of India by the Portuguese, etc.*, London, Printed for C. Brome, 1694-1695, vol. 3, part IV, chapter 13, p. 411.

[72] *Bouwstoffen*, vol. II, report of Antonio van Diemen to the Heeren XVII, 22 December, 1638, p. 358.

between the city officials and the *casados*. Nay, even the city officials had got in each others' hair, as the famed chronicler Faria y Sousa observed with evident alarm: "At Malacca the Feuds were so great between the Commander of the Town and the Admiral of the Coast, that the latter shot an Uncle of the other".[73] Such utter confusion, rivalry and tension, Governor-General van Diemen patiently lectured his superiors in Holland, offered the opportune moment to "attack our enemies and make us masters of the city."[74] The final push on the besieged Portuguese enclave followed in June 1640, with military operations stepped up after September that year when Commander Cooper was redeployed to the Malacca Strait.[75] According to the seventeenth century VOC historian Pieter van Dam, Cooper and other officers played a meaningful role during the Dutch ground assault on Malacca. He also reports that many Dutch troops and officers fell victim to the plague, which was hopping from bed to bed in the Dutch military camp as well as within the walls of the Portuguese stronghold.[76] Cooper himself eventually succumbed to the black death.[77] Malacca, one surmises, caved in not to the force of Dutch arms, but to the dreaded "black trinity" of war, famine and the plague.[78] With the benefit of hindsight, the final stand drew closer when Malacca's officials expelled all women and children from the city, a move that doubtlessly also accelerated the contamination of libidinous Dutch troops with the plague. Malacca surrendered on January 14, 1641, after what Valentijn reports was a tough stand by the last few hundred men.[79]

Looking back to the years immediately preceding the fall of Malacca to the Dutch, the following questions merit further exploration: What did the *casados* and city officials do in order to circumvent the Dutch blockade and its objective to starve the colonial port city of financial revenue and food supplies? Period reports are beset with contradictions as to the actual state of Malacca during the blockade. It is important to bear the provenance of the information in mind and

[73] M. F. Sousa, *The Portuguese Asia,* vol. 3, part IV, chapter 13, p. 411.

[74] *Bouwstoffen*, vol. II, report of Antonio van Diemen to the Heeren XVII, 22 December, 1638, p. 359.

[75] *Dagh-Register Batavia*, 1640-1641, p. 39; E. Netscher, *De Nederlanders...*, p. 33; F. Valentijn, *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën...*, vol. 5, p. 340A; Cooper's important role is also briefly mentioned in F. Valentijn, *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën...*, vol. 5, p. 340A, where he is named "Koper".

[76] P. van Dam, F. W. Stapel (ed.), *Beschrijvinge...*, I.2., p. 318, note 2 and p. 331. F. Valentijn, *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën...*, vol. 5, p. 314A.

[77] F. Valentijn, *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën...*, vol. 5, p. 341B.

[78] Even some period documents do not readily acknowledge the plague epidemic, but see a serious famine behind the fall of Portuguese Malacca. See for example: E. H. Blair, and J. A. Robertson, *The Philippine Islands...*, vol. 35, News from the Philippines, 1640-1642, p. 115.

[79] F. Valentijn, *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën...*, vol. 5, p. 341B, said nothing about the expulsion of women and children from the city, but mentioned only those who defected to the Dutch because they were starving.

evaluate extant reports with a critical eye. Attention shall be first cast on the situation with regard to food supplies.

As is known, Malacca was highly dependent on food imports not just in the Portuguese colonial period of 1511-1641, but according to several testimonies, including significantly also the often-cited *Suma Oriental* of Tomé Pires, already well before European colonial rule. Staples such as rice were key imports into the city. In the late 1630s, prices of this staple food in Malacca rose persistently to 70, 80 and then 120 Ryals-of-Eight per *last.*[80] That rose to 10 Rijksdaalder for one *gantang* of dry rice toward the end of the siege in December 1640.[81] To the ordinary ship boy serving in the VOC, for example, this sum was equivalent to at least six months' salary. Judging by the price and its wild fluctuation across the period of the maritime blockade, supplies were naturally very tight but not entirely severed. The *Daghregister Batavia* entry of 22 October, 1640, reports that nine vessels had successfully slunk out of Malacca harbour under the cover of night. The crew had been charged with the task of procuring sago and rice and transporting these overland into the city.[82] With reference to maritime trade it is evident that supplies of rice and other foodstuffs continued to arrive, even if some of the ships were intercepted or captured by the Dutch.[83] The *Daghregister Batavia* reports for 10 December, 1634, that twelve *prahus* from Mataram (Java) bearing a cargo of rice and destined for Malacca were intercepted by the Dutch in the Strait of Sabam located to south of the Carimons.[84] Supplies of flour and wine arriving from Goa and Cochin were intercepted off Cape Rachado - both of these locations among the nodal points of control used by the Dutch and described above.[85] More supplies were rumored to arrive that year.[86] In 1634 sloops belonging to the cutter *Nassau* caught up with some smaller vessels carrying provisions of rice to Malacca that were sailing very close to the shore in order to avoid detection.[87]

It further transpires from a report of Governor-General Antonio van Diemen dated 18 December, 1639, how the VOC had solicited the assistance of Aceh in

[80] *Bouwstoffen*, vol. II, report of Antonio van Diemen to the Heeren XVII, 22 December, 1638, p. 358.

[81] F. Valentijn, *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën...*, vol. 5, p. 341B. One *gantang* in Malacca (800 *gantang* being equivalent to 1 *koyang* or 4800 Amsterdam pounds) was equivalent to about 6 pounds. See: Anon, *Verhandeling der Munten, Maaten en Gewigten van Neerlandsch India,* Batavia, c. 1785, p. 488.

[82] *Dagh-Register Batavia*, 1640-41, p. 58.

[83] On the dispatch of rice to Malacca from the Philippines at the end of the blockade, see E. H. Blair and J. A. Robertson, *The Philippine Islands...*, vol. 29, events in the Philippines August 1639-August 1640, p. 197. It is not known whether this consignment arrived.

[84] *Dagh-Register Batavia*, p. 452.

[85] *Dagh-Register Batavia*, 1631-1634, p. 387.

[86] *Ibidem*, p. 389.

[87] *Ibidem*, p. 386.

interrupting Malacca's food supplies. At the request of the VOC, Aceh dispatched four rowed galleys and sixteen banteens for this very purpose. They incidentally never arrived at Malacca, for the Acehnese vessels were quickly redeployed to relieve Pahang from a joint attack by Johor and Patani. It is also reported that the Portuguese participated in, or at least lent their support to, this attack on Pahang.[88]

As indicated, Malacca did not rely on sea-borne trade alone, and this was particularly true with reference to food supplies. Several documents dating from the year 1639 speak of consignments of food brought in overland from Johor, supplies, one is informed, upon which Portuguese of Malacca had become more dependent than ever.[89] Despite all the rhetoric to the contrary, especially in Dutch sources, Johor's relations with Portuguese Malacca in the late 1630s was probably far better than appears at first glance, and the on-again, off-again relations between the two parties was certainly nothing new.[90] In fact all powers around the Singapore and Malacca Straits were playing hard political games. While the VOC was actively soliciting the military assistance of Aceh in its war effort against the Portuguese,[91] Johor was drawn closer into the orbit of Lusitanian interests. Shortly before the final assault on Malacca in 1640 this new constellation of forces taking shape on the Malay Peninsula appears to have entered a radical reversal when the VOC began to tighten their relations with Johor in 1639.[92] On December 18, 1639, Governor-General van Diemen openly conceded to his superiors in Amsterdam that any sea-borne assault on, and conquest of, Malacca could no longer be cleanly separated from the entrenched rivalry between Aceh and Johor. In order to move forward, it was important to identify and stake out clear priorities: First "Malacca has to be won, and [then] the Acehnese brought into a balance of power with Johor."[93] With the benefit of hindsight, so it came to pass. Valentijn and Netscher both underscore that the Aceh monarch failed to dispatch any military assistance to the Dutch, but in his stead, the Johor dispatched in late July and early August 1640 "forty vessels".[94] Barbara Andaya deemed the effectiveness of the Johorean troops in the final assault on Malacca absolutely "vital", and in casting her verdict, took serious

[88] *Bouwstoffen,* vol. II, p. 390.

[89] See for example *Bouwstoffen,* vol. II, report of Antonio van Diemen and Council to the Heeren XVII, 12 January, 1639, p. 365.

[90] P. Borschberg, *Luso-Johor-Dutch Relations...*, pp. 189 et seq.

[91] *Bouwstoffen*, II, p. 390.

[92] In response thereto, Portuguese Malacca sought to negotiate a peace deal with Aceh. See above, notes 34 and 35.

[93] *Bouwstoffen,* II, p. 390.

[94] F. Valentijn, *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën...*, vol. 5, p. 340; E. Netscher, *De Nederlanders...*, p. 33.

issue with Netscher's earlier position that the Johoreans proved utterly useless in the final onslaught on Malacca in late 1640.[95]

During the period of the blockade, Portuguese Malacca's trading relations with the outside world broadly mirror the problems and dynamics of food supplies. Again, there are conflicting testimonies as to the state of trade and commerce in the Lusitanian entrepôt. Dutch reports, based on rumors together with the testimonies of defectors and prisoners, painted a picture of a Malacca that had ground to a complete standstill, a pathetic ghost of its glorious past. "It is certain that Malacca, Macao and other fortresses on Ceylon will not be able to withstand much longer" one testimony of 1639 would have it.[96] The absence of larger carracks plying the waters of the Singapore and Malacca Straits were further taken as a clear signal that the emporium was in serious distress. In a self-congratulatory tone, Governor-General van Diemen informed his superiors in December 1639 that, as a result of "constant cruising of our cutters in Malacca's navigable waters the city has been almost reduced to the outer extremities" and merchants generally avoid the port.[97] Portuguese (and probably also Spanish) merchants, inbound from Macao or Manila, the Governor-General further highlighted, often alter their familiar course and invest great pains in discovering, or opening up, alternative maritime routes to Sub-continental India and ports further beyond in the western Indian Ocean. Such alternative routes often made substantial diversion from the original path, including specifically the Straits of Sunda and Bali, and sometimes brought their ships as far south as Solor and Timor.[98] In another report, filed in August 1633, VOC servants informed of "Macassarese and Javanese junks in Malacca" and in December of the same year also of heightened maritime traffic of the Macassarese to the ports of Malacca, Macao and Manila. Such activity fanned fears in Batavia that commercial activity in enemy ports could only serve to fill Spanish and Portuguese coffers.[99] Still, ships continued to call at Malacca, as even Van Diemen was forced to concede in late 1639. Several smaller craft described as foists had arrived from Goa, Nagapatnam, and Java, and one vessel completely evaded the attention of the Dutch blockaders before setting sail for Macao.[100]

Spreading the cargo over several smaller vessels reduced the risk of seizure and therefore of loss and forfeiture to the enemy. Whilst it is true that large carracks and galleons were not sighted or seized by the Dutch enemy, Portuguese

[95] B. W. Andaya, *Melaka under the Dutch*..., p. 197.

[96] *Generale Missiven*, 1639-1655, report of Antonio van Diemen, 18 December, 1639, p. 55.

[97] *Bouwstoffen,* II, p. 390, Antonio van Diemen to the Heeren XVII, 12 December 1639.

[98] See also *Generale Missiven*, 1639-1655, report of Antonio van Diemen, 18 December, 1639, p. 13, where it is reported that maritime traffic between Goa, Macao and Manila was re-routed through the Sunda Strait. See also E. Van Veen, *Decay or Defeat*..., pp. 200, esp. note 121.

[99] *Generale Missiven,* 1610-1638, p. 403.

[100] *Generale Missiven,* 1639-1655, p. 68, report of 18 December 1639.

Malacca's business continued, albeit at a reduced level. In fact, James Boyajian appraised the annual average value of trade in Malacca throughout the period of the blockades under review at 500,000 Cruzados, mainly from its trade with ports around the Bay of Bengal. That sum is far greater than the paltry 150,000-170,000 guilders reported by the VOC for the much of the 1640s and 1650s![101]

Closing Thoughts

Secondary literature has placed considerable emphasis on the *military* aspects of the victory, and to a lesser extent, on the diplomatic, social and economic effects of the blockade. In her book *Jan Compagnie in the Straits of Malacca,* Dianne Lewis wrote: "On 14 January 1641, the forces of the United Netherlands East Indies Company victoriously entered the Portuguese fortress of Malacca."[102] Like Barbara Andaya, Lewis showed surprisingly little interest as to why Malacca surrendered, but both hastened to underscore that hopes of inheriting the "enemy's commerce" proved illusory and efforts in justifying the high cost of the blockade and military campaign to the Heeren XVII proved problematic, if not utterly futile.[103]

From the documentary sources reviewed it transpires that the Lusitanian stronghold – that erstwhile 'Queen of the East' – was defeated by the "black trinity" of war, famine and the plague. The long blockade, while very costly, reduced, but did not entirely quash, commercial activity. Food supplies, while always a problem throughout the period of the blockade, only began to run seriously short at the time of the final onslaught. The ensuing famine together with the plague epidemic of late 1640 and January 1641 pushed the city authorities to expel women and children outside the city gates. Decimated numbers, plague and starvation – but to a lesser extent the force of Dutch arms – pushed Malacca toward surrender.

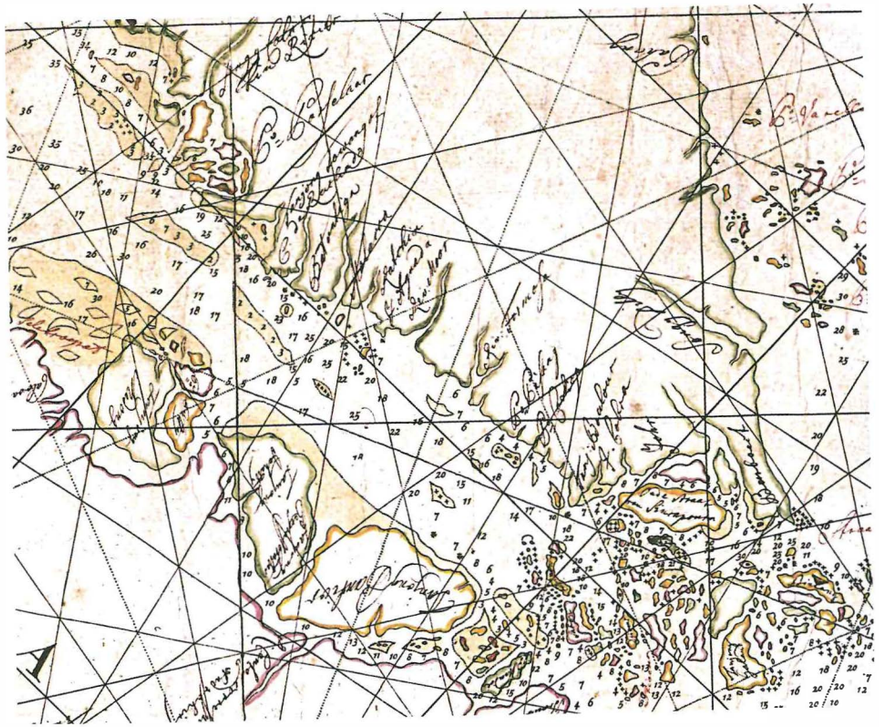
The costs associated with the Malacca blockades of 1633-1641 may have been high, and plunder taken from Portuguese traders disappointingly low. But one of the now long-forgotten legacies of the blockade is that the region around the Straits of Singapore and Malacca became one of the best-explored and best-mapped pelagic spaces in Southeast Asia!

[101] J. Boyajian, *Portuguese Trade*..., p. 231; D. Lewis, *Jan Compagnie*..., pp. 135-136.

[102] D. Lewis, *Jan Compagnie*..., p. 12.

[103] *Ibidem*, pp. 16, 17; B. W. Andaya, *Melaka under the Dutch*..., p. 197.

Map Annex 1



HESSEL GERRITZ, *Sumatra, the Malay Peninsula and the Straits* (extract), date uncertain, probably 1630s. Note the maritime channels and the depth of water measured around Sumatra's well-surveyed offshore islands. The Straat Brouwer runs behind the two offshore islands marked in yellow and green.

PODER E FINANÇAS NO ESTADO PORTUGUÊS DA ÍNDIA: C.1687-1820

ELEMENTOS PARA A SUA COMPREENSÃO

ARTUR TEODORO DE MATOS *

É conhecida, no essencial, a administração que os portugueses adoptaram quando resolveram instalar-se no Hindustão. Abundam os relatos que espelham o modelo administrativo que foi sendo adoptado e que, de certo modo, reproduzia o da metrópole. Todavia, à medida que os séculos avançam, nem sempre é possível descortinar com exactidão as instituições administrativas e financeiras que iam ajudando a garantir a sobrevivência do império português no Oriente, em período em que os seus opositores se iam implantando em territórios e praças outrora sob a bandeira portuguesa. Em estudo recente tentámos estabelecer as linhas gerais da administração central do Estado Português da Índia. Voltamos a ela, não para repetirmos ou corrigirmos, mas para tentarmos estabelecer os organigramas de tal administração, bem como um juízo financeiro de período tradicionalmente considerado – nem sempre com justificado fundamento – de caos financeiro.

Ao findar a década de 80 do século XVII Goa mantinha a divisão administrativa herdada: Goa e Ilhas adjacentes, Salsete e Bardez. Na Cidade de Goa residia o governador ou vice-rei, com a sua corte, estando também aí sedeados os organismos e o funcionalismo superior do Estado.[1]

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[1] Para a elaboração deste organigrama servimo-nos, sobretudo, do «Livro de contas que escreve a Sua Magestade D. Rodrigo da Costa, Capitão Governador General da Índia nos annos de 1686, 1687, 1688», existente no IAN/TT, *Convento da Graça de Lisboa*, T. III E, fls. 228-276 e do "Livro das Avaliações dos Officios do Ultramar", IAN/TT, *Chancelaria-mor da Corte e Reino,* Livro 5, fl. 2. Agradecemos ao Doutor João Paulo Salvado a prestimosa ajuda na elaboração deste e dos demais organigramas.