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THE ANXIETY OF THE SILENT TRADERS
*Dutch perception on the Portuguese
banishment from Japan*

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Introduction

In 1635, Manuel Ramos, a Portuguese crown official on duty as *Ouvidor* of Macao, in a letter addressed to the Vice Roy D. Miguel de Noronha, count of Linhares, expressed his concern about the future of the commercial relations between Macao and Nagasaki, and pointed out the main reasons for the difficulties faced by the Portuguese in Japan. In this missive, he stressed the secret entry of missionary priests into the country and the rivalry with the Dutch as the main obstacles for the preservation of the privileged position held by the Macanese in the Japanese trade. Manuel Ramos showed his concern about a possible Dutch attack on the city of Macao and warned the Vice Roy that such a powerful enemy, if not stopped, would be capable of harming the Portuguese and ousting them from their position in Asia. In fact, the Dutch East India Company in the 1630s thought about the possibility of seizing not only Macao but all the Iberian settlements in the Far East. Having in account the Portuguese restlessness regarding the VOC aggressive manoeuvres in the region, Charles Boxer, the scholar who translated Manuel Ramos' letter, reasonably considered the Luso-Dutch strife in the Far-East as a serious threat to the safety of Macao.¹

Nevertheless in 1635, the strength attributed by the Portuguese to the Dutch in the Far East was apparently not perceived with the same intensity by the men of the United East India Company. While an assault on Macao during the 1630s was considered, the VOC never felt fully prepared for such an adventure. Moreover, regarding their position in Japan, the Dutch were not

¹ Letter of Manuel Ramos, December 11, 1635, in Charles R. Boxer, "The Swan Song of the Portuguese in Japan, 1635-39", in *Transactions of the Japan Society of London*, London, vol. XXVII (1930), pp. 5-11.

less concerned about the future of their trade with the Japanese than the Macanese. It is interesting to note that the feeble position of the Portuguese in the Empire of the Rising Sun, apparently, did not seem to be fully grasped by the Company's officials. As late as December 1638, E. Koekebacker, Dutch factor at Hirado, while considering the imminent banishing of the Macanese traders from Japan still considered the support given by the Nagasaki Governors to the Portuguese harmful to Dutch affairs and important for the former to maintain their position in the country.²

Based on an analyses of mainly printed Dutch sources, the aim of this text is, through the comparison of the Luso-Dutch situation in Japan in the decade of 1630 and the VOC's activities in that country, to examine its perception on the Portuguese during the last years of their presence in Japan.

“Les menaces sont armes au menacé”

In the 1620s and 1630s the operations of the Dutch United East India Company were mainly concentrated in the Far East and its main interest in the region was then focussed on the control of the lucrative Sino-Japanese trade. The profits of this trade were derived from the handle of the most valuable Asian commodities, such as Chinese silk and Japanese silver, which were sought by the Dutch mainly in order to find enough revenues for financing the Company's Asian enterprise.³ The VOC directed its energies primarily towards two lines of action: trying to settle on the China Coast and eliminating competition in the Far Eastern waters. The main obstacle in fulfilling these plans was Macao, the Portuguese stronghold through which they had virtually controlled the Sino-Japanese trade since the mid 1500s. In the late 1620s the United East India Company's Asian eastward expansion revealed a limited success. In 1622 it not only saw the failure of their attempt to seize Macao and, hence, their failure to displace its enemies from the area, but also saw its wish to establish in China unfulfilled. Shortly after the Dutch expulsion by the Chinese from the Pescadores island in 1624, the authorities of the Celestial Empire tacitly conceded permission for the VOC to settle in Taiwan, alongside the China coast though out of its territorial waters. In spite of this achievement, the Company's

2 "t apparent , dat desen Fezo ende den Nangesacksen gouv. [Sabroy Seymondonne] de handen dapper gesalft ende soolange schenckagie aennemen, van haerlieden ten hove gefavoriseert worden ende vertrouwen, als met Fezo ende sijne adherenten communiceren, verkeerde absolutie becomen, want veel in de Portugeesen gehouden is.[...] Onaengesien dit ongewoon favorabeltractement ende 't credit, dat hun verleent is, vertrouwt men, den Portugees groote swarigheyt te naecken staet ende apparent Japan ontseyt sal werden " *Generale Missiven* p.741

3 Leonard Blussé and Jaap de Moor, *Nederlanders Overzee;the eerste vijftig jaar, 1600-1650*, 1983, Franeker, pp.208.

volume of trade was still considered unsatisfactory.⁴ In 1632, the Dutch situation in Far-Eastern waters was not living up to the VOC's expectations: "In summary, the trade with China is as bad as in the time of de Wit. However, considering Japan the situation is still not hopeless [...]".⁵

In the early 1630s the VOC did see the gradual improvement of their situation. Not only did the Taiwan trade with the Chinese increase but also at the same time its relations with the *bakufu* were shortly thereafter restored, following the temporary embargo on Dutch trade in 1628 motivated by the Japanese disagreement on Dutch pretensions of monopolising the Taiwan trade.⁶ Still, due to its inability to expel the Portuguese from the region, who still possessed the lion share of the Sino-Japanese trade, the biggest obstruction to the VOC's control of the valuable Far Eastern traffic had not yet been overcome.

In spite of their fruitless effort to conquer Macao in 1622 the Dutch did not give up very easily.⁷ Throughout the whole decade of the 1630s, the possibility of ousting the Portuguese from their position in China was considered. In 1632, due probably to the VOC's still limited resources for its Asian enterprise, the plan was postponed.⁸ As was reported: "Occupying Macao will yield no profit, we will remain engaged in trade until we receive the forces, not yet available, with which to do so".⁹ The conquering of Macao was not the only military adventure in Dutch minds. The seizing of other profitable Portuguese strongholds in Asia, such as Malacca in the Malay peninsula, was

4 See, Mark Vink and George Winius, "South India and the China Seas: How the VOC Shifted its Weight from China and Japan to India Around 1636" in *Actas do VI Seminário Internacional de História Indo-Portuguesa*, Macao-Lisbon, 1993, pp. 134-137; Leonard Blussé and Jaap de Moor, *op. cit.*, pp. 208-219.

5 "In somma den handel van China staet voor de Comp.ie soo slecht, als ten tijde van De Wit gedaen heeft. [...] Evenwel dewijle de saecke soo in respecte van Japan als van sich selven noch niet desperaet of buyten hoope van beetering is [...]" *GM*, Vol. I, p. 312. The de Wit mentioned is most probably Andries de Witt, elected Pensionary of Holland in 1618, after the fall of Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, he held this responsibility until January 1621.

6 Leonard Blussé and Jaap de Moor, *op. cit.*, pp. 225-7.

7 For a full account on the Dutch attempt to seize Macao cf. C. R. Boxer, "Midsummer Day in Macao, Anno 1622" in *Fidalgos In The Far East, 1550-1770*, The Hague, 1948, pp.72-92.

8 "The VOC is synonymous with profit and successful management in the seventeenth century. But the results of company operations during 1613-40 (the earliest period for which reliable data survive) suggest that the VOC had not yet earned its reputation. The VOC actually sent more capital to Asia to support trade and other operations than it returned to the Netherlands in the form of pepper and spices." J. C. Boyajian, *Portuguese Trade in Asia under the Habsburgs, 1580-1640*, p. 112. To support his thesis Boyajian estimates that the capital sent by the directors to Asia in the period 1623-1640 averaged 16,220,831 cruzados while the returning capital from Asia, in the same period, picked 16,037,374 cruzados, see, *ibid.*, p. 113.

9 "Macao selver beset te houden can ons tot geen voordeel gedijen, [...] totdat ons van verscheyde quartieren de machten sullen toecomen, alsoo yegenwoordich geene schepen op de reede liggen, ofte sijn gedestineert om eerstdaechs ten dinste van de Comp. Te verseylen, soo de annotatien, op de lijst van de navale macht gestelt, sijn medebrengeende.", *GM*, Vol. I, p. 340.

also considered; although, as related by the Dutch in 1632, the Company still did not feel fully prepared for such an undertaking “The occupation of Malacca would demand garrisons and other expenses. True, it would damage the enemy, give the Company a great reputation, and have important consequences, mainly because it would make possible guaranteed trade with China and Japan and fortify the Company. But we lack the strength. Therefore, the benefits not outweighing the burdens, the Company will not take action”.¹⁰

In 1635, the VOC officials at Hirado sought Japan’s help for a combined Dutch-Japanese onslaught on Macao; at the time the Dutch were already well aware (especially after the incidents underlying their temporary banishment from Japan in 1628), that they could not act in the region without taking into account the Japanese interests and demands. Hence, the Company adopted a more prudent attitude towards the Japanese authorities: “In order to ensure that no new rows break out, E. Koekebaker was asked to find out if Japan would see a Dutch attack on Macao as an offense. More precisely, whether the Japanese Emperor¹¹ would agree to an offer in which the Dutch would compensate any of Japan’s interests and provide the same trade the Portuguese otherwise would have provided.”¹² In February 1635, the Dutch factor received a letter from the financial curator Streumondo advising him to think over the aggressive plans towards the Portuguese city, and informed him of the probable consequences of a Dutch attack on Macao: “As for the occupation of Macao, this can not hap-

10 “Mallacca soude niet alleen swaere besettinge van garnisoenen maer oock alsulcken vorderen onkosten te dragen hebben [...].t Is wel waer, dat het den vijandt een groot verlies, de Comp.ie een groote reputatie ende van importante consequentie sijn soude, principalijck als den handel van China ende Jappan voor de Comp.ie geoopent ende verseeckert waere. Maer wat is ’t? De macht gebreeckt ons [...], daerbij presentelijck ten minsten niet soovele voordeelen als lasten voor de Comp.ie connen verseeckert werden, waermede wij willen te verstaen geven, dat om geenige apparente aenstaende profittelijcke consequentie de Comp.ie tot voordere nieuwe lasten mach gebrackt werden.”, *GM*, Vol. I, p. 318.

11 The Dutch did not refer to the Emperor of Japan (*Keiser*) but to the Shogun who, although in theory exercising power delegated by the Emperor, held the real control on Japan, being, in fact, the absolute ruler of the country.

12 “Om geen redenen van nieuwe onlusten in Japan te geven hadden wij den E. Koekebacker belast discretelijcken te onderstaen, off het ons in Japan ten quaetsten soude werden affgenomen, dat wij bestonden Macao te besetten ende ter zee te belegeren, soo met Malaca doen, het welcke in ’t overdragen soo verre wiert geduyt, dat wij voornemens souden wesen Macao te conquereren, daerop ten hove naer veele debatten, dogh sonder conclusie aen den E. Coekebaker van den heere van Firando ende eenige andere des Keyzers raeden wiert gerapporteert, dat Sijne Maj.t hem die saecke niet begeerde aen te trecken ende indien wij genegen waeren om Macao te vermeesteren, dat wij volstaen souden connen met den Japanderen haeren intrest te vergoeden, midts dat wij dan oock Japan van soodanige quantiteyt Quantonse stoffen souden voorsien, als de Portuguysen doen [...]” *GM*, Vol. I, p. 514.

13 “Aengaende de besetting van Macuw sall mede niet sonder prejuditie en naedeel van de Comp.ie niet connen geschieden [...], ter contrarie in goede termine staan, denckt dat ghy lieden noch jonck ende verst uyt de moeyjten gecomen syt en door sulken doen well lichtelijcken weeder in swaerdicheyt geraecken soudet, derhaelue raade ick U noch iaer te wacten en siet wadt de uyt compste wesen sall daer nae condit wederom op nieuws resolveeren ende voortsvaeren”. *Dag Register*, 8 Februarij anno 1635, ARA, 1.04.21, Inv. 53, Fl. 61v-62.

pen without prejudice for the Company. To be on good terms, remember, that your people, who only recently have seen their problems solved, will get into troubles again by acting like this . That is why I advise you to wait another year and see what happens. After that you can to go on".¹³ In April 1635, at the Shogun court, the Dutch were asked how they intended to seize the city, how many ships they would need and if they would be able to hold Macao. Also a very pertinent question was raised by the Japanese; that is, whether the Chinese would be interested in trading with the VOC as they then did with the Portuguese.¹⁴ It is obvious that even though the Dutch offer was attractive in Japanese eyes,¹⁵ they were not completely sure about the VOC promises to replace the Macanese in the supplying of Chinese silk. In addition, regardless of the Dutch effort to accommodate national sensibilities, the Japanese were not totally convinced of their true intentions. The petition was discussed in the Japanese State Council but due to the divergent opinions of the five state councillors it did not proceed further.¹⁶

If the VOC did not fulfil its desire to subdue Macao, it was at least successful in intimidating the Portuguese. The Macanese were aware of the Company's aggressive plans and considered them a menace to the safety of the most important Lusitanian stronghold in the Far East, just as Manuel Ramos did in his letter to the Vice Roy. It is thus credible that the Portuguese may have tried to discover real intentions of the Dutch. In 1636, the presence of a Portuguese trader in Fort Zeelandia (considered by the Dutch a spy who went there to discover their purposes regarding Macao), can be perceived as a sign of concern and restlessness about the Company manoeuvres in the region. As reported by the Dutch, Philipo de Miranda, a Macanese merchant, on his way to Macassar, dropped by in fort Zeelandia allegedly to offer them his services

14 "Vorders vragende ende voorstellende op verscheijde wijze hoe deese belegeringe ende veroveringe van Maccauw int werck gestelende soude werden met hoeveel volcx ende schepeen, schoon bij ons verovert sijnde, wij t'selffde wel soude connen innehouden, ofte oock de Chineesen met ons gelijck nu met de Portugeesen doen alsoo omtrent 100 jaeren daer geresidert hebben soude willen handelen, ende Japan als de Portugijsen van schoone Cantonsche stoffen versien soude connen.". *Dag Register, Aprill, anno 1635*, ARA, 1.04.21, Inv. 53, Fl. 65.

15 Especially in regards to the Dutch argument that by the destruction of the Portuguese, the entry of missionary priests and the spread of Catholicism in the country, which so must disgusted the Shogun, would have an end. In other words, the conquering of Macao would help the *bakufu* release Japan of its main cause of instability: "Der halven raade ick U in desen tyt ende gelegentheyt op U proffyt ende eere te willen letten eerstelyck U Extie ere want Synne Maytt ende raats heeren als lants heeren en coningen in Japan, hebbe alle een walch ende tegenheyt inder Portugijsen vermits sy niet naer en laeten christenen te verbrijden ende papen in te brengen waar door dagelycx veel onnoosel bloet gestort wert, dien volgende indien ghy deese luyden verdestrueert en uyt jaecht sult ghy Synne Maytt en Japan grooten dienste doen.". *Dag Register, Aprill, anno 1635*, ARA, 1.04.21, Inv. 53, Fl. 65.

16 C. R. Boxer, "The Swan Song of the Portuguese in Japan, 1635-39" in *Transactions of the Japan Society of London*, vol. XVII (1930), pp. 6-7.

and to incite the VOC to conquer the city. The Dutch doubted the Portuguese trader's real intentions and, wisely, declined his offer, hiding from him their ambitions regarding Macao.¹⁷

Although attractive, in the 1630s the plans to assault Macao were never carried out; however, other procedures were then used to harm the Portuguese. One of the strategies most used against the Lusitanian enterprise in the Far Eastern waters was privateering. In 1633, while considering the seizure of Macao from Taiwan, privateering actions and blockades against Macao shipping were thought of as eventual weapons to be used in case of a Dutch military debacle.¹⁸

If privateering can be viewed as a way of intimidating the VOC's trade rivals, the policy of preying upon the wealth of the Portuguese had a more immediate and practical purpose: the assault for potential prizes derived from the capture of Portuguese ships on road to Japan richly loaded with silk and silver. The importance of these prizes for the VOC's profits in the first two decades of its activities in the Far East was quite considerable and only saw a decrease in the 1630s, when the volume of trade increased.¹⁹ Although this practise had been prohibited by the shogun Hidetada in 1621, this conduct was still in usage as late as 1636. By this time the Company was seeking the policy of increasing its profits by less aggressive means in the area and, was trying to hold its participation in trade with Japan by adjusting to the *bakufu* demands. Still, the VOC officials showed their frustration, when, to avoid further contentions with the Japanese, they were urged not to assault the

17 "Seecker Portugees, Filippo de Mirando, eertijts in Nederlandt geweest, bij ons desen jare met een fregatedt, comende van Macao nae Macassar, nevens andere Portugesen aengehaelt, hier gecomen sijnde, heeft ons sijnen dienst gepresenteert ende door verscheyden inductien getracht t'animeren tot d'incorporatie van Macao; [...] gelieft nae te sien ende alsoo wij seeckerlijck gelooven, desen persoon express is uytgemaect om bij die gelegentheyt onse intentie te ontdekken, hebben hem tot antwoorde gediend, dat Macao voor ons inprennabel oordeelden [...]. Macaos incorporatie heeft sijn bedencken in vele respecten; alles dat gedacht wordt, dient niet geseyt: les menaces sont armes au menacé." *GM*, Vol. I, pp. 649-50.

18 "Dat hij Macao, dartoe Putmans groote hoope heeft, verovert hebbende, alle de forten ruineren ende tot onse naerder ordre alleenlijck een van de bequaemste sterckten sal besetten. Dat ingreviewle den tocht op de reviere van Quanton en Macao om eenige voorgreviewlen incidenten geen voortganck en mochte hebben, dat den gemelten Putmans twee à drie bequaeme jachten ende sooveel joncken meer, [...] in 't eerste van januarij 1634 tot afbreuck van onsen algemeenen viand naer de cust van Champa versenden sal omme omtrent Pulo Cambir of Pulo Cecijr de Mar ende Poulo Cecijr de terra te cruysen op de Chinese joncken, aldaer passerende, alsmede op de Portugeese navetten, die van Macao naer Malacca souden mogen vertrecken." *GM*, Vol. I, p. 377.

19 Leonard Blussé and Jaap de Moor, *op. cit.*, pp. 207.

20 "In 't resumeren [...], wat rescontre Sijn E. op de voyagie nae Tayouan voorgreviewlen is ende dat vier Portugeese galiotten, comende van Maccauw nae Japan, rijck gelaeden, onder schoot heeft gehad, die Sijn E., achtervolgende onse ordre omme geen nieuwe becommeringh in onsen Japansen handel te veroorsaecken, ongemolestereert heeft laten vaeren, dat echter een harde saecke is, soo treffelijcken buyt te moeten sien passerende ende wellicht in eenige jaeren soo schoon niet voorcomen sal." *GM*, Vol.

Macanese galliots on their way to Japan. For, by doing so, they wasted the possibility of winning precious booty.²⁰ But not only economical aspects were involved in the aggressive Asian expansion of the Dutch East India Company. The VOC was shaped not merely as a trade organism created exclusively for commercial ends, but also as a potent structure endowed with powers of a sovereign state such as the right to sign treaties, conduct war and build fortresses. Due to its dual and complex nature, the VOC tended to be used also as a military instrument in the weakening of the Spanish Habsburgs (with whom the Dutch Republic fought a war for independence) by depriving them of resources from their Asian empire.²¹

The foreign merchants and the Japanese trade in the 1630s: the inconvenient sharing of a gold mine

The Portuguese standing in Japan gradually became more precarious in the 1630s. In spite of the severe anti-Iberian policy of the Shogun (it became gradually more difficult to endure, mostly because of the incapacity of the Macao traders to stop the illegal entry of missionaries into Japan after the expulsion edict of 1614), the vitality of the Portuguese trade in the Empire of the Rising Sun was still impressive.²²

In 1633, the Dutch recorded the interception of Portuguese letters which gave an account of the decline on the prosperity of Macao, due to problems with the Chinese authorities, the suffering of shipwrecks and the VOC's aggressive actions against Lusitanian shipping in the straits of Malacca. Nevertheless, the Dutch pointed out that in spite of their complaints about their commercial decline, the Macanese traders were able to load eight ships, from which four were sent to Malacca, two to Ceylon and two to Manilla, which revealed their ability of resisting the emergent changes in the Far Eastern *status quo* around 1600 that so negatively affected them.²³

The VOC officials in Japan, throughout the entire decade of 1630, mentioned the precious cargo and the profits the Portuguese made with their

21 Femme Gaastra, *The Geschiedenis van de VOC*, Leiden, 1991, pp. 56-7; Map Meilink-Roelofs, "Aspects of Dutch Colonial Development in Asia in the Seventeenth Century" in *Britain and the Netherlands in Europe and Asia*, J. S. Bromley and E. H. Kossman, (ed.), 1968, pp. 61-62.

22 As Bryan de Souza pointed out "While the figures for Portuguese trade with Japan especially exports for 1636-37 and apparently were never equalled by the VOC, the continuation of this trade did not coincide with the *bakufu's* politics which were emerging as anti-Iberians and anti-Christians even prior to the Shimabara rebellion of 1637". See George Bryan de Souza, *The Survival of Empire: Portuguese Trade and Society in China and the South China Seas, 1630-1754*, Cambridge, 1986, pp. 62-3.

trading of their merchandise in Nagasaki. In the period of 1635-1638, the Macanese galliots visiting the Nagasaki harbour carried little white silk but, alternatively, were loaded with a huge cargo of silk piece goods. By exchanging other goods, the Macanese merchants found a way of escaping Japan's imposition on the selling of white silk by a preestablished price, considered too low by all the foreign traders dealing with Japan. This measure, called *pancada* by the Portuguese, eroded the extremely high profits reached by the selling of this coveted commodity in Japan market.

After the credit crises of 1633, when the Macanese merchants, forced by the accumulation of huge debts, were asked to liquidate their indebtedness, for the Japanese creditors had seemed to lose some of their confidence and were no longer so convinced of the significance of the Portuguese trade.²⁴ When confronted with these severe demands, the most important Macanese traders declared bankruptcy. To avoid a financial disaster, Lopo Sarmiento de Carvalho, the *Capitão-Mor* of the Macao-Nagasaki commercial trip, agreed with the Japanese creditors on the repaying of the outstanding capital in three parcels of 73,000 tayls each, to be satisfied in the following three years. The Portuguese seem to have been successful in their enterprise since, shortly thereafter, in 1635, they managed to liquidate two thirds of the total debt to the Japanese. That year they exported only 160 picol raw silk (when the total

23 "Naer wij uyt de...vier gequetste ende geberchde mesticen als verscheyde geintercipieerde brieven verstaen, soo was de stad van Maccauw in Handel, welvaeren, rijckdommen ende couragie seer afgenomen ende gedeclineert, het Malacse vaerwaeter door de menichte van onse cruyssende jachten gesloten ende qualijcke langer gebruyckelijck, de vextatien van de Chinese mandorijs onverdraechelijck ende de ongelucken, die haer van iaer op iaer treffen ende overcomen, excessijf groot sijnde. [...] Niettegenstaende alle voornoemde ongelucken ende quade resconters wierden echter bij die van Maccauw noch acht stuck navetten uytgerust ende toegemaect, waervan tegen februario aenstaende vier nae Malacca, twee nae Ceylon ende twee nae de Manilha souden vertrecken." *GM*, Vol. I, p. 396-97. Sanjay Subramanyam pointed out the importance of the changes in the Asian political context in the beginning of the seventeenth century, as much as the rivalry with the Dutch in Asia for the retreat of the Portuguese Asian Empire. Cf. Sanjay Subramanyam, *Portuguese Empire in Asia, 1500-1700*, London, 1993.

24 For a detailed description on the credit crises of 1633 cf., James C. Boyajian, *op. cit.*, p. 235; C. R. Boxer, *op. cit.*, pp. 116-19; Valdemar Coutinho, *O Fim da Presença Portuguesa no Japão*, Lisbon, 1999, pp. 133-37. The Dutch sources also give an account of the situation suffered by the Macanese traders in Nagasaki when they were forced to pay their debts to the Japanese creditors, see *GM*, Vol. I, pp. 441-442;

25 "Desen jaere sijn de Macaose Portuguysen met drie navetten gemant met 480 coppen in Nangesacque geweest, die om den pancado te ontgaen nu hun grootsten handel met stuckwerken drijven, hebbende daer gebraecht 110 000 witte pangsys, 3 000 stucx roode, 60 000 pelings, 50 000 witte gilems ende 50 000 rode; item maer 160 picol witte rouwe zijde, 200 picol bogij ofte geele dito ende 150 picol rouwe poolzijde; voorders goede quantiteyt quicksilver, roode zitcleeden, cangans, spiauter ende andere cleyngheyden, daarvoers weder uytgevoert souden hebben 1200 kisten gelt, yder van 3000 gulden, is 36 tonnen gouts, waeronder den Japanderen een vierde part souden herideren. Gemelte Portuguysen hadden het tweede derdepart van haere oude schulden, beragende 73 000 thaayl, in Japan betaelt ende sullen het aenstaende jaer 1636 het derde voldoen." *GM*, Vol. I, p. 514.

of this commodity exported to the Japanese market averaged 4.040 picol); however, by selling other goods in Nagasaki, they once again managed to elude the *pancada*.²⁵ One year later, the VOC sources reported once again the arrival of four Portuguese galliots loaded with an extremely valuable cargo, although bringing little raw silk.²⁶

In 1636, the foreign merchants achieved good profits in the Japanese market especially due to Shogun Iemitsu's decree which prohibited his subjects to trade abroad. This drastic measure put an end to the activity of the *goshuin-sen*, ships licensed to sail to Indo-China. Their activity had previously increased when the short-termed embargo on Portuguese and Dutch trade, in 1628-30, was imposed.²⁷ As the VOC registers relate, the imperial edict of 1636 forbidding the Japanese from trading abroad was also related to the *bakufu* desire to avoid direct contact between its subjects and the European

26 "Desen jaere sijn de Portuguesen met vier navetten uyt Maccauw in Japan geweest, seer rijk geladen, gelijk U Ed. bij de cargo, hiervengaende ende wat die gereendert heeft, gelieven te behooghen. Omme de pancado te ontgaen hebben niet meer als 250 picols 26 catty rouwe sijde uyt China gebracht [...]". *GM*, Vol. I, p. 588.

27 C. R. Boxer, *op. cit.*, p.115.

28 "Dat hij [the iemitsu] om versheyden consideratien alle Japanderen hadde verboden egeene vreemde vaerten meer bij der hant te mogen nemen, het waere dan naer Cochinchijna, tot Quinam, ofte Tonquyn, item naer Champa, Cambodja, Siam, Patane, Tayouan ofte andere plaetsen [...]. De redenen, die den Keyser hiertoe moveren, verhaelt den E. Koekebacker te wesen naer de gemeene gerughten de vijff naervolgende: [...] ten vierden, dat door de communicatie van den handel der Japanderen in Cochynchina de Spaenjaerden ende Portuguysen, soo daer mede comen negotieren, comoditeyt vinden om met de padres, soo in Japan sijn, te communiceren ende middel becomen om hun subsidien tot onderhout secreetelijck toe te brengen.[...]

Ten Ansien Japan door vreemdelingen, als Chijnesen, Portuguysen ende Neerlanderen becomen can, alles wat van buyten begeeren mogen ende gelijk hij dese can inlaeten ende buytenhouden nae sijn believen, soo can hij oock uyt hunne comercie de proffijten doen trecken, die hem welgreviewlen, sonder dat dese alsulcke heeleren in negotie hebben connen, als sijn natuyrlijcke onderdanen doen etc." *GM*, Vol. I, p. 513. "Op dato soude d'heer president uijt gemelte plaetse synne reijse gevordert hebbe doch dor dien esselijcke landts heeren dien dach volgens iaerlijcke gewoonte naer boven reysden waar door de herbergen besproocken en besett waeren als qualijken parden te huer becomen. conde genoot saeckt tot des sanderen daeghs te verblijven t geduerende onse aen weesen alhier en in Osacca verstonen uijt ver schijde cooplyuden hoe eenige daagen geleeden brieven (by de Raets Heeren Sossa Canqadonne Matsendeyro Insindonne en Abeno Bingodonne onderteijkent en gedateert negen dach van de eerste Japansche maene) aen cooplyuden ofte reeders van de Ionqi in Nangasacqi tot vertrock naer Touquijn en Couchenchina gereet leggende aldaer syn Firano Serodonne, Simonoera en Iaya uyt het hoff gecomen waeren waerjnne haer Hoogheeden ditto reders aenschrijven het miscontentemendt dat de keijseren Maytt heeft op die van Toncqijn omdat eenige iaren herwaerts het geweer by de varende personen uijt gewourdt niet weeder te rugge gekeert maer aldaer vercocht is, op die van Couchenchina ondatt in gemelte rijk die van Maccauw en Manilla laren handelen oock de Japaners van daer naer Maccauw vertrecken en door sulcke ofte diergelijcke middelen niet naerlaeten maer altijd trachten sullen japansche christenen te maecken en seeckere somme goets tot onder hout der paepen in Japan seereetelijcken connen gebracht werden, de ordre uyt hett hoff was soodanich datt soo Ionqi van Saya Soyserodonne naer Couchenchina en van Ange naer Camboya niet hadden vertroucken geweest niet tegenstaande pas van den reyser voorleeden jaer becommen hebben, soude mede van haere voyagie gerusteert syn geweest." *Dag Register, Maert, anno 1635*, ARA, 1.04.21, Inv. 53, Fls. 62v-63.

catholic priests largely Spanish and Portuguese. However, because of the elimination of an important competitor in the Japanese market, the decree was, after all, favourable to both Portuguese and for Dutch commerce in Japan.²⁸ Although the Macanese had to face increasingly dynamic competition from the Dutch, who visited Hirado annually, and from the Chinese, who came to trade in Nagasaki, the Japanese trade thus continued to be a very advantageous enterprise and, in spite of its vicissitudes, was still worth over one million *cruzados* to the city of Macao in 1639.²⁹

In 1637, the volume of the Dutch trade was still behind expectations, which engendered bitter complaints about the restrictions imposed by the Japanese on business. It was stressed that “if the legislation is not mitigated, it will become not only unbearable in the future, but also damaging to the continuation of the trade”.³⁰ The ‘unbearable restrictions’ the Dutch had in mind were certainly linked to the imposition of selling its silk for a fixed price, to the retention of their ships by the Japanese authorities after the trade season had ended, considered very damaging to the VOC business (*schadelijck ende prejudicable*), and to the interdiction on the import of Japanese copper coins (*Sen*). As late as 1638 the Dutch believed that the Portuguese might be able to hold an advantage over the Company’s trade and reported the arrival of two Macanese galliots making good profits at Nagasaki.³¹ All of this in spite of the disadvantageous Portuguese position in the country after the Shimabara rebellion of 1637-38, a tragic peasants uproar against heavy taxation levied by the lord of Arima. Though, because of the strong influence of Christianity in this area, the Japanese considered it a Christian riot supported by the Portuguese, an event that worsened their already unsteady situation in the country.³²

In the late 1630s the Japanese trade continued to be seen as a gold

29 C. R. Boxer, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

30 “Soo bleeff alles gelijk voorleden jaer in staete, de negotie gelimiteert sonder eenige verlichtingh, de vervolginge der Roomse Christenen continueert als voren ende wort ons hope gegeven, den Portugees d’een off d’ander tijt uyt Japan wel mocht geseyt worden, dat qualijck connen aennemmen, ten ansien dat noch al in faueur van de Portugesen onse schepen 15 ende 20 dagen naer ‘t vertreck der galliotten ophouden, dat voor de Comp.a in dese gelegentheyt een onlijdelijcke verachteringh causeert. Soo sijn oock de Japanse humeuren soo teer dat te beduchten staet, d’een off d’ander tijt metten anderen overhoop sullen raecken ende bijaldien hunne mandaten ende wetten niet mitigeren, sal het in toecomende voor ons in Japan niet alleen onverdraechelijck, maer schadelijck vallen de negotie te continueren ende daer sal op andere middelen moeten worden gedacht.” *GM*, Vol. I, p. 660.

31 “Desen jaere sijn de Portugesen van Macao met twee galiotten rijckelijck geladen tot Nangesacke verschenen, alwaer in den handel beter als voor desen getracteert sijn geworden ende goede proffijten hebben bevaeren. [...] Voor deselve haere coopmanschappen hebben uytgevoert 1259 kisten silver van 1000 tayl ijder ende daerbovenn credit bij de Japanders becomen van 400 000 thayl, dat op bodemerije tegen 25, 26 ende 27 per cento nae Macao gevoert hebben. Dese goede bejegeningh veroorsaecte vele bedenckingh ende werde g’opinieert, dat nimmer over ‘t gepasseerde in Arima ende ‘t niet brengen van de resterende voor dese g’eytschte ses cooplyuden uyt Macao souden werden aengesproken.” *GM*, Vol. I, p. 741.

mine to by both Portuguese and the Dutch which was enough to raise competition for the control of such a valuable trade route. The VOC had strengthened its position in Japan, especially after 1635, mainly because of the increase of Japanese confidence in its intentions,³³ but it is worth mentioning that the East India Company never equalled the volume of the Portuguese trade in the Japanese market. “Dutch exports from Japan peaked at some 900.000 cruzados in 1637, but Portuguese trade meanwhile had swollen to 2.1 million *cruzados*. As long as the Portuguese galliots frequented Nagasaki, VOC trade in Japan was never more than a fraction of *casados* trade.”³⁴

The Portuguese and Dutch diplomatic endeavour at the Shogun court

In the 1630s the Portuguese were confronted with the deterioration of their relations with the Japanese authorities. At the time, the VOC, through its efforts to accommodate Japanese customs and demands and, by a vigorous diplomatic endeavour, had apparently gained the confidence of the *bakufu* authorities. In 1636, the Dutch efforts at the court in Edo were crowned with their first great success. The presents brought by François Caron for the annual court journey (*hofreis*) were then highly appreciated by the Shogun. To show his contentment he released Piet Nuyts, the former governor of Taiwan, imprisoned in 1632 as an aftermath of the Dutch-Japanese quarrel about Formosa in 1628.³⁵ It seemed that the VOC's situation improved at the same rate as the one held by the Portuguese deteriorated. The imbalance of power between the Portuguese and the Dutch in the country was already notorious in 1635, when the former were confined to the artificial island of Deshima and their movements were strictly watched by the Japanese.³⁶ If the VOC, through its insolent attitude in the Far East, had earned a distasteful reputation, it seems that the Japanese considered the Dutch at least more controllable than the Portuguese, whose missionary priests and Catholic Christianity were seen as a menace to Japan's traditional social order.

32 Over the Shimabara rebellion and its consequences for the Portuguese expulsion from Japan, cf. Charles Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan, 1549-1650*, Manchester, 1993, pp. 375-384 ; George Elison, *Deus Destroyed, the Image of Christianity in Early Modern Japan*, Cambridge-Massachusetts, 1973, pp. 217-221 ; Valdemar Coutinho, *op. cit.*, pp. 50-56.

33 “Eenige jaaren voor en ontrent dien tyd [1635-36] groeide onzen handel in dat Ryk zeer aan, waar by de Iapanders ondervonden, dat wij met zilver handelden, en niet meer met buit, gelyck wel bevorens, hier aan de markt quamen, waar door wy in dieper gunst by hen geraackten [...]”, François Valentinjn, *Beschryvinge van Japan in Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indien*, Vijfde Deel, Tweede Stuck, 1724-1726, p. 34.

34 J. C. Boyajin, *op.cit.*, p. 234; G. Bryan de Souza, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-63.

35 Leonard Blussé and Jaap de Moor, *op. cit.*, pp. 224-25; N. Mac Leod, *De Oost-Indische Compagnie als Zeemogendheid in Azie*, deel 2, 1927, pp. 297-98.

36 Valdemar Coutinho, *O Fim da Presença Portuguesa no Japão*, Lisbon, 1999, p.142; C. R. Boxer, *op. cit.*, pp. 114-15; Leonard Blussé and Jaap de Moor, *op. cit.*, p. 227.

Despite the improvement of the Dutch standing in the Empire of the Rising Sun, the Lusitanian still had enough influence in persuading the Shogun to impose severe measures on the Company. In 1634 it was decided by the State Council, the *Roju*, that the Company's ships were only allowed to leave Japan after the trade season had ended, only 15 to 20 days after the Macao galliots had departed. This measure was implemented by the *bakufu* to prevent VOC attacks on Macanese shipping. This friendly gesture, very positive for the Macanese business, was not based on the Shogun Iemitsu's compassion for the Portuguese cause. It is worth remembering that, since the Japanese were important creditors of the Portuguese traders, they had a direct interest in protecting the Macao galliots (loaded with Japanese silver), in order to safeguard their capital involved in this commercial journey.³⁷

The next year again the Shogun received both the Dutch and the Portuguese ambassadors in audience. The primacy given to the Lusitanian delegation disappointed the Dutch who expressed their dissatisfaction in bitter words: "the Portuguese have already an established "route" to his majesty while the Dutch are still fighting their way through an underbrush".³⁸ The Dutch demands at the court were not fulfilled by the Shogun Iemitsu. Their main claim was against the retainment of the Company's ships after the departure of the Macanese, which was considered a severe limitation of the VOC's affairs. In 1636, the Dutch were informed by the Shogun that they were free to leave Japan whenever they wanted as long as the Portuguese ships were not molested.³⁹ In 1637, the VOC shipping was still detained after the departure of the Macanese. An incident which was harshly reported by the VOC's servants who related that the Japanese humour was then so delicate that they expected

37 "het versoek der gemelte Portugijsen aen Sijne May.t, bestaende in vier poincten, was als volcht: [...] ende ten laetsten, dat Sijne May.t. gellieffde te ordonneeren, de Hollanders haere galjotten, die meest met Japans capitael gelaeden waeren, niet en souden neemen [...] Niettegenstaende den coopman Caron bij den heere van Firando, in Jedosijn de, alle bedenckelijcke middelen hadde aengewent omme de schadelijcke gestelde ordren ende restrictienop het vercopen van onse aenbrengende waeren, uytvoeren van zeenes ende prejudiciabel vertrecken van onse schepen uyt Japan, soo hadde denselven evenwel niets van allen connen verwerven [...]" *GM*, Vol. I, pp. 484-85.

38 "Tenselven dage, dat gemelten Caron bij de May.t audientie bequam, soo waeren de Portugijsen aldaermede om reverentie te doen verscheenen, die door gunst en toedoen van den voornoemden Oyedonne, wesende tweeden raetsheer, om voor Sijne May.t te verschijnen voor d'onse wierden geprefereert, omdat de Portugijsen, soo men voorgaff, eenen gebaenden wech tot Sijne May.t jaerlijck hadden ende de Hollanders uyt eenn creupel bosch, die noch eerst moesten prepareeren." *GM*, Vol. I, p. 484.

39 "Dat alle naerder limitatie in Comp..ies handel ende het versoek van de hoffden der vijff kijserlijck steden in ons regard uyt Keyzers name door den raetsheer Sannickedonne, met scherpe reproches was affgeslagen. [...] Dat onse schepen uyt Japan sullen mogen vertrecken, so spoedich als vaerdich sijn, onder acte de galiotten van Macao niet sullen beschadigen. Echter is ons schip Wassenaer noch 15 dagen nae dato opgehouden, dat in toecomende niet meer geschieden sal." *GM*, Vol. I, p. 586.

their interests to be negatively affected by it.⁴⁰ In 1638, E. Koekebacker, believed that as long as the Portuguese had permission to trade in Japan the retention of the Company's shipping would proceed. Indeed, this measure was not suspended as long as the Portuguese were allowed to stay in Japan.

The Macanese traders apparently had supporters who lobbied for their interests in the *bakufu* court. Only through this support could the Portuguese persuade the Shogun to undertake restrictive measures against the Dutch commercial affairs even in a period when their footing in the territory was already very fragile. The Lusitanian claims and the aggressive VOC actions in the Far East provoked, amid the Japanese, considerable doubts about the Dutch real ambitions.

The Portuguese and the Dutch in Japan: two branches of the same tree?

The differences between the two European peoples in seventeenth century Japan, however, may not have been sharply perceived by the Japanese, particularly in what regards to the distinctions between their hostile forms of Christianity. For the Japanese, the two European religious beliefs only differed from each other as "two branches of the same tree". This remark gains importance if one considers the Shogun's large dissatisfaction with the Christian religion, thought to be subversive and dangerous for the maintenance of the social and political order sought by the Tokugawa rulers in a period of centralization of power.⁴¹ The Japanese were also aware of the Dutch religious indoctrination efforts in Taiwan, a phenomenon equivalent to the pattern of action

40 "Dat qualijck connen aennemen, ten aensien dat noch al in faveur van de Portugesen onse schepen 15 ende 20 dagen naer 't vertreck van der gallioten ophouden, dat voor de Comp.a in dese gelegentheyte een onlijdelijck verachteringh causeert. Soo zijn oock de Japanse humeuren soo teer, dat te beduchten staet, d'een off d'ander tijt metten anderen overhoop sullen raecken ende bijaldien hunne mandaten ende weten niet mitigeren, sal het in toecomende voor ons in Japan nie alleen onverdraechelijck, maer schadelijck vallen de negotie te continueren ende daer sal op andere middelen moeten worden gedacht." *GM*, Vol. I, p. 660.

41 On the political and ethical principals of the Tokugawa régime in its formative period cf. G. B. Sanson, *The Western World and Japan. A study on the Interaction of European and Asiatic Cultures*, New York, 1944, pp. 167-196; *ibid.*, *Japan. A short Cultural Story*, New York, 1943, pp. 455-463.

"Noch vraechde hy off de Hollanders Christenen waren ende off sy oock in den Naeme van des Vaders, des Soons ende des Heyligen Geest gelloffen. Caron antwoorde iae. Dat stinckt ende dat maeckt U vuyl, syde Phesodonne, met noch meer Godts lasterlijck worden daer by vougende dat het schrikelijck om te hooren was [...]". *Dag Register, November, anno 1635*, ARA, 1.04.21, INV. 53, Fls. 86-86v.

"Deze zaak quam de Japanders in 't eerst zeer vreemd voor, gelyk zy die ook zoo niet ten eersten gelooven konden, ter tyd toe dat zy met ons zelf daar over gesproken hadden, al 't welke, na hunne bevatting, dan daar op uit quam, dat wy, en de Portugeesen, een van de zelve boom des geloofs hadden, en dat wy maar als zekere takken van dien van malkanderen verschilden, waar uit zy daan voor ons ook gansch geen voordeelige gedagten behielden." F. Valentinjn, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

of the Iberian missionaries. However, the Dutch were clever enough to give a political explanation for the most significant difference between the two antagonistic forms of Christianity. They stressed the fact that if the Portuguese, as subjects, were physically subordinated to their king, they were therefore, spiritually dependent on the chief of their Church. By permitting his subjects to devote their obedience to the Pope, the Portuguese king lost thus jurisdiction over his subjects. This fact, according to the Dutch, engendered a lack of power leading to the fragility of civil authority. In turn, the Dutch, by not observing the Pope authority, addressed their total obedience to the secular powers. This argument underlined the subversive nature of the Catholic Church and its threat for the maintenance of the political order.⁴²

In the late 1630s, even taking into account the rigid constraints suffered in Japan, the Dutch judged their situation more favourably than the position held by the Portuguese. The Company was then well aware of its rivals' feeble condition and was informed of their eventual expulsion from the country. In 1634, when the VOC claims at the court were not satisfied by the Shogun, the *daimyô* of Hirado asked François Caron to be patient and, secretly informed him that the Portuguese would soon be cast out. In 1635, the financial curator Streumondo, a Company friend, advised the Dutch to reconsider their project of attacking Macao in order to avoid further quarrels with the Shogun. He argued that the Portuguese cause, because of their insistence in supporting the missionary priests in Japan, was so precarious that the Company should await further developments before taking action.⁴³ In 1637

42 "Men voegde daer by, dat het verschil tusschen het Christengelove der Portugesen, en dat van ons, v^rdesen handtastelijck was aangewesen, en verschil, dat niet alleen in de uytterlycke cerimoniën en godsdienstigheden bestaet, maer dat voorall mede het innerlycke raeckt, te weten het gemoet; dat sy onder anderen mede als hooft van haer kerck en gelove hebben den paus van Romen, aen denwelcken sy in het geestelijck, en sulcx voor sooveel haer siel belangt, alle gehoorsaemheyt bewysen, en gevolglijck deselve aan haren koninck en politicque overheyt, het essensieelste deel van alle subjectie sijnde, niet alleen ontrocken, maer deselve t'eenemaal onder het bedwang van den paus overgeven. Invoegen dat, gelijk de koningen over de lichamen, hy over de zielen der menschen heerschende, een gelove, dat voor den keyser seer bedenckelijck en sorgelijck moet wesen, en waerom het oock te geloven is, dat deselve sodanige religie in sijn lant niet kan dulden, maar deselve t'eenemaal tragt uyt te roeyen; daer wy ter contrarie verstaan, niet alleen in het reguarde van de lichamelycke, maer selfs mede in 't geestelycke, alle gehoorsaemheyt, aen die over ons in het politijcq sijn gestelt, schuldig te wesen.", W. Stapel, *Pieter van Dam's Bescryvinge van de Oost-Indische Compagnie*, Boek II, Deel I, 1927, p. 375.

43 "Aengaende de besettinge van Maccauw sall mede niet sonder prejuditie en naedeel van de Comp.^{ie} niet connen geschieden want vl. is kennelijck het mandaet van de Hooge Overicheyt waer bij gelast werdt sonder consideratie ofte aensien van uwe schaade dat de scheepen 20 daagen naer degallioten vertrecken moeten dat alleenlijckom het Japans capitaell daer mede versonden ende wech gevourdt werdt, soo datt bij het binnen houden der gallioten de cooplyuden en alle die daer geïnteresseerd sijn haar garant op de Comp.^{ie} sullen souchen te haelen en niet weijnich met clachten te houe vlieden te beswaeren. Doch dit alles aen syde gestelt weet ghy niet well der Portugesche haar saacke om stuck der Christenen willen vrij slecht en wanckelbaer om t'eeniger tyt uyt Japan gestooten te werden [...], derhalve raad ik U noch een jaar te wachten en siet wadt de uyt compste wesen sall daer nae condit wederom op nieuws resolyeren ende voortvaeren". *Dag Register, february, anno 1635*, ARA, 1.04.21, INV. 53, Fl. 62.

the VOC was as well informed so as to know that the Japanese were provoking the Portuguese in order to make their situation unbearable and thus to force them to leave the country.⁴⁴ Indeed the VOC officials reported that the Portuguese provoked negative feelings amid the Japanese.⁴⁵ In 1638, the Dutch were again told of an eventual expulsion of the Macanese merchants. The state councillor Taeckemondonne informed the Dutch that the Portuguese had been responsible for much evil and for the killing of many people in Japan, an offense for which they should be cast out.⁴⁶ However, they also knew that the Shogun's distastefulness regarding the Portuguese also comprised the VOC to a certain extent. When in May of 1635 Koekebacker landed at Edo for an audience with his majesty, he was not given one, which was said to be due to the Shogun's illness, an event that troubled Koekebacker greatly. The Dutch believed, though, that considering the fluctuating esteem in which the Japanese held the Company, this incident would soon blow over.⁴⁷

44 "Hoe dat de regenten curieus waeren geweest te vernemen wat der Portugeesen om den handel op Japan al verdragen ende over soude willen comen, ende hadden tot dien eynde haere renegados en spions als tolquen verraders etc. op dese maniere uyt gemaect, dat sy luiden by de principaele Portugeesen soudon gaen uytstroyen en haer denpols voelen met dese woorden, Srs. ende vanden uwen saet en persoonen werden hoe langer hoe meer gedrucht en benauw wy syn uwent wegen bedroust en weten haest niet watter noch al meer voor tegenheite voorkomen wil, wy hebben seeretelycken verstaen dat de regenten met haeren Raet van meninge zijn, U alle die die int Japan comen into encomende te belasten dat ghy uwen baert ende hair sult moeten aff ende naer de Japansche wyse scheeren niet te mogen dragen als Iapans gewaet te weeten somers, catabers, swinteren rocken met eenen bandt om de naeckte huyt, met den blooten hoofde sonder hoet sonder hembt sonder coussen noch shoenen noch yets dat u dracht gelyck is, ende wat gaet vls aen hoe sult ghy dat connen waere het niet better Japan verlaten off soudet ghy lieve dit alles over comende in Japan willen continueren de Portugeesen waeren om dese nieuwe tydinge bedroust ende antwoorden met opgetrocken schouderen al suchtende, wat sullen wy doen, verlaten wy Japan soo trecken wy het broodt uyt ons ende onser kinderen mont, noch willen wy dat liever verdragen (soo wy daer maer vry mede mogen zyn) als uyt Japan te blyven, siet (seyde Fesen), hoe men haer vexceert ende wat men haer te last lecht noch willen sy niet wech blyven, daer syn voorgelagen geschiet van haer te belasten ende seggen dat al die in Japan comen renegeeren ende affvallen sullen moeten [...]". *Dag Register, November, anno 1635*, ARA, 1.04.21, INV. 53, Fls. 86 - 86v.

45 "Den heere van Firando hadde d'onse mede onder den duym secreete verstaen gegeven, dat de Portugijsen Japan wellicht sal werden ontseyt ende geweygert langer aldaer te handelen, omdaet niet naer en laeten de papen in te voeren. Nietegenstaende den coopman Françoys Caron bij den heere van Firando, in Jedo sijnde, [...] soo hadde denselven evenwel niets van allen connen verwerven nochte oock in geenderhande manieren geraden gevonden hebben tselve alrede aen den raetsheeren te versoecken, seggende, dattet noch te vroeck was, tselve qualijck soudon neemen ende wij niet te veel tefens moeten bij der hant neemen [...]". *GM*, Vol. I, p. 485.

46 "Gemelte heere[raedsheere Taeckemomdonne] verde [...] dat de Portugesen veel quaets in Japan veroorsaecten ende schuldigh waren, veel menschen jaerlijck gedoot wierden, derhalven 't landt van Japan wel mochten ontseyt worden, doch daer was alsnoch gheen conclusie op genomen." *GM*, Vol. I, p.740.

47 "Persoonelijck is den President Kouckebacker primo mey passato in Jedo aengelandt omme de ordinarie reverentie te doen, maer heeft geen audientie bij de May:t becomen, twelck op debiliteyt des keyzers g'excuseert wort [...]; twelck den President veel bedenckens gaff [...]. Maer onse opinie is, gelijk den Japander van tijt tot tijt moediger wort ende de vreemdelingen (soo men ons noempt) dienvolgende in minder estime, dat nae desen ter presentie des keyzers niet meer verschijnen sullen, gelijk bij 't gepasserde wel aff te nemen is." *GM*, Vol. I, p. 739.

In fact, the Dutch were allowed to stay in the territory after the Portuguese expulsion from the country in 1639, but the situation did not improve as much as the VOC had desired. As van Dam pointed out, if until 1639 the Portuguese had been the major suppliers of Chinese silk in the Japanese market, afterwards it was the Chinese merchants who replaced the Macanese.⁴⁸ Moreover, the grievances suffered by the Company in Japan shortly after 1639, related by François Caron in 1641 to the Governor General and Council from India in Batavia, clearly suggests that the Dutch position in Japan was still very delicate. After 1639, the Company was ordered to move to Deshima, the same island where the Portuguese had dwelled during the final period of their stay. This happened under many restrictions which, according to Caron, were thought to create a Dutch dislike of the country and thus compel them to leave on their own volition. This did not happen and the Dutch tried to bear the Japanese mistreatment and suspicion. As Valentijn wrote in his *Bescryvinge van Japan*: “All these terrible sufferings we had to endure in order to achieve our goal regarding the increase of trade and to make us so tolerated by the Emperor and this nation that they would accept us at least as silent traders”.⁴⁹

Conclusion

The Dutch footing in the Empire of the Rising Sun had, indeed, experienced a concrete improvement around 1635 due to the increase of their trade and to the amelioration of their unsteady relations with the *bakufu*. At the same time, the Dutch were confronted with a resilient suspicion, regardless of their attempts to engage the trust of the Japanese. The Dutch reputation as pirates and their resemblance to the Portuguese and Spanish in matters of religion offered the Japanese good reasons to doubt their real intentions. Notwithstanding the increasingly feeble Portuguese situation, the volume of its trade, its long experience in and knowledge of Japan, as well as its contacts

48 “De Portugesen dan, als gesegt is, daer uytgeseth zijnde, raeckten de Chinesen seer in daet vaerwater, en besaten ten principalen in den handel aldaer [Japan]”, W. Stapel, *op. cit.*, p. 376.

49 “Egter hield de Keizer dit nog eenigen tyd in beraad, oordeelende het beter te zyn, dat hy ons Japan moede maakte, en ons dus dwingen mogt, daar een walg van te krygen, en zoo van zelf ons afscheidt te verzoeken. Dog eindelyk ziende, dat dit niet volgde, vond hy goed ons te belasten, met al ons omslag van Firando op te breken, en na Decima te verhuisen. [...] Alle deze onlydelyke quellingen en mishandelingen, hoe ondragelyk ook in zich zelve, hebben wy moeten verduren, om ons oogwit ontrent den aanwasch van den handel daar te bereiken, en om ons by den Keizer, en deze Natie, zoo aangenaam te maken, dat zy ons ten minsten als stilte kooplieden zouden willen dulden.” F. Valentyn, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

with the Tokugawa court, distress was engendered among the VOC officials at Hirado. This, combined with their own difficulties experienced in the country, led them to overestimate the strength of the Portuguese, failing utterly to see the fragility of their enemies. Even if they were well informed of an eventual expulsion of their Iberian rivals from the territory, it seems that they were not certain of this drastic move until the last moment.

It is relevant to stress that the Company was persuasive enough in showing that its interest in the country solely concerned trade. That may have been the most significant Dutch achievement and probably the main reason for them to be allowed to stay in Japan in the turbulent late 1630s. In order to keep engaged in the Japanese trade, the VOC officials were able to convince the Shogun that in Japan they were determined to obey promptly his laws without defying his wishes, existing there merely as silent traders, which so distinguished them from the Portuguese merchants.

Abstract

Around 1635 the VOC situation in Japan have seen a positive shifting due to the increase of its trade and the ameliorating of their relations with the *bakufu*; however the Dutch have been then confronted with a resilient distrust regardless their attempts to conquer the Japanese acceptance. The Dutch reputation as pirates and the resemblance with the Portuguese and Spanish in matters of religion offered the Japanese good reasons of suspicion on their purposes. Notwithstanding the increasing feeble situation of the Portuguese at the time, the volume of trade, their long experience and acquaintance in Japan, as well as their contacts kept in the Tokugawa court, combined with their own difficulties in the country, prevented them to utterly predict the fragility of their enemies, overestimating hence their strength. Even if they were well informed of an eventual expelling of their Macanese rivals from the territory, it seems that they have been unsure of this drastic move till the last moment. Based on the analyses of Dutch sources, mainly printed material, the aim of this text, through the comparison of the Luso-Dutch standing in Japan in the decade of 1630, is to examine the VOC's weight in the country at the time and its perception on the Portuguese banishment from in Japan in 1639.

Resumo

A vitalidade do comércio português com o Japão na década de trinta do século XVII contrastava claramente com a política anti-ibérica e anti-cristã levada a cabo pelo xogum Iemitsu, política essa que culminaria com a sua expulsão em 1639. Paralelamente à deterioração das relações luso-nipónicas, os contactos dos Holandeses com as autoridades japonesas, sobretudo a partir de 1635, sofreram uma gradual consolidação. Todavia a associação dos Holandeses a actos de pirataria, assim como as semelhanças com os Portugueses em assuntos de religião, criaram uma desconfiança entre os Japoneses que fragilizou a situação da Companhia no país. As vicissitudes sofridas pela VOC, combinadas com a vitalidade do comércio português ao longo da década de 30 de século XVII, assim como a percepção da longa experiência dos mercadores lusos no território e dos contactos mantidos na corte dos Tokugawa, parece ter provocado alguma insegurança nos funcionários da VOC, impedindo-os de perceberem a fraqueza dos seus rivais, sobrestimando-os, pelo que não conseguiram antever a expulsão dos mercadores portugueses do Império do Sol Nascente.