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Manila, Macao and Chinese networks in South China Sea:
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Paulo Jorge de Sousa Pinto*

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Resumo

Manila constituía a base espanhola da conquista do arquipélago filipino e um ponto de apoio essencial para alcançar a China. A competição com Macau era inevitável e ocorreu de forma tensa e progressiva, vindo a atenuar-se no século xvii graças ao surgimento de ameaças comuns, como a chegada dos Holandeses, a queda dos Ming e o encerramento do Japão. Este artigo aborda alguns aspetos da relação entre Macau e Manila e das suas estratégias de adaptação, envolvendo o quadro geral da transição Ming-Qing e o impacto no papel transversal desempenhado pelas comunidades de chineses ultramarinos no Mar da China Meridional.

Palavras-chave: China, Chineses, Macau, Manila, Ming/Qing.

Abstract

Manila was the Spanish base for the *conquista* of the Philippines and a vital key point to reach China. Competition with the Portuguese Macao soon emerged, in a tense process that would fade in the seventeenth century, thanks to emergent mutual threats: the arrival of the Dutch, the fall of the Ming dynasty and the closure of Japan. This paper aims to study some aspects of the relations between Macao and Manila and their adapting strategies, focusing also on the Ming-Qing transition and its impact on the transversal role played by overseas Chinese communities in the South China Sea.

Keywords: China, overseas Chinese, Macao, Manila, Ming/Qing.

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Introduction

In a letter written to Manila in 1598, a hopeful Hernando de los Ríos Coronel described what he heard from the Chinese: the Portuguese “empezaron como nosotros, y primero ivan y venían, después se quedaron dos enfermos, y otro año hizieron quatro casas, y así se fueron aumentando.”¹ His words reported to the origins of Macao, the Portuguese informal settlement in the Pearl River Delta that was the exclusive gateway for the Europeans to access China at the time. Ríos Coronel wrote his letter in the nearby port of Pinhal, where the Spanish were experiencing their first successful settlement in mainland China, after more than twenty years of frustrating attempts. He strongly advised the authorities of Manila to act as the Portuguese did a few decades earlier. However, the adventure of Pinhal was destined to fail. Despite the authorization issued by the *haidaofushi* (superintendent of coastal defence) to settle in the Chinese coast, the Spanish faced sharp opposition from the Portuguese of Macao, in a sequence of events that led to their eviction from the port.²

The “Pinhal episode” marked the climax of a competition process between the Portuguese and the Spanish in the Far East scenario, since the settlement of the latter in the island of Luzón in 1571. At first glance, it was triggered by the Spanish intentions to get a foothold in China that collided with the privileged status of Macao. However, a deeper insight reveals what was behind the Manila-Macao conflict. In fact, it exposed the differences between the two cities, but also the contrast between two distinct perceptions of China and Asia, their opposite origins and separate “colonial” traditions. Above all, it disclosed two different roles to be played in the South China Sea scenario.

Macao and Manila crossed their paths throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in a mixed process of conflict and collaboration.

1 Letter by Hernando de los Ríos Coronel to Antonio de Morga, 23 Dec. 1598, Antonio de MORGÁ, *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas*, Madrid, Polifemo, 1997, p. 153

2 Paulo Jorge de Sousa PINTO, “Enemy at the Gates – Macao, Manila and the ‘Pinhal Episode’ (end of the 16th Century),” *Bulletin of Portuguese-Japanese Studies*, no. 16 (2008), pp. 11–43.

They both performed an intermediary function connecting China with the outside through its maritime southern border, in a time where the Middle Kingdom was still officially closed and the process of opening to the outer world took place in a rather slow and troubled way. Macao achieved this goal by means of a carefully outlined diplomatic strategy, while a more distant Manila had to rely on the Chinese maritime networks playing a somewhat identical role: to fulfil the needs of supply and demand from the Guangdong and Fujian markets. However, this aim required the ability to adapt to local conditions in order to survive and prosper, adjusting different strategies that would allow a better way to surpass barriers and crises. The new challenges that emerged in the seventeenth century in several dimensions—at a local, regional and worldwide scale—raised new ways of cooperation between Macao and Manila but would also generate new tensions.

Manila, conquistadores and Sangleys

In 1565, the Spanish finally managed to establish an irreversible presence in Asia, in the aftermath of the discovery of the sailing route back to the American continent by Andrés de Urdaneta. The return of the carrack *San Pablo* to Mexico in the following year proved the Augustinian friar was right and the link that crossed the Pacific Ocean could be established in a permanent basis, unlike what had occurred in the previous expeditions. Miguel López de Legazpi accomplished his mission with success, following the orders issued by the King Philip II to connect Mexico and Asia. However, the newcomers soon realized there were no precious metals or spices in Cebu and they moved to explore the surrounding islands looking for wealthier places. The hostile presence of a Portuguese fleet under the command of Gonçalo Pereira, who urged them to leave the region, was also a serious cause for disturbance. In 1570, Legazpi moved to Panay, but his definitive choice to settle and to erect the capital of the Spanish East Indies fell on the sultanate of Manila, in the neighbouring island of Luzón, the largest of the archipelago.

Manila was not an obscure place. The foundation of the city took place under the influence of the sultanate of Brunei and it played an important role in Southeast Asian trade routes in the late fifteenth century as an extension of a “northern link” of commerce between Melaka and Borneo.³ Still in Cebu, the Spanish gathered information about the city and the island, “de

3 Roderich PTAK, “The Northern Trade Route to the Spice Islands: South China Sea – Sulu Zone – North Moluccas, (14th to early 16th Century)”, *China’s Seaborne Trade with South and Southeast Asia (1200–1750)*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 1999, pp. 36–41.

toda la tierra rica la más que hay en estas que están descubiertas, porque son casi todos mercaderes y vienen chinos a tratar con ellos.”⁴ The submission of Manila definitely called the attention of the Spanish *conquistadores* about the proximity of China and the regular presence of a small Chinese-origin community.

The expedition to the *Islas del Poniente*, baptized as “Philippines” by Ruy López de Villalobos, the commander of the previous—and failed—initiative was basically a Mexican enterprise destined to fulfil the expectations of local elites to extend the Spanish *conquista* to Asia. From Manila, the Spanish tried to apply the model used in America: to submit local population through the imposition of tributes and compulsory labour, to explore economic resources, namely precious metals and spices, and to introduce the Catholic faith by means of an intensive missionary activity. Specific forms of land tenure and social ordering like the *encomienda* or the *repartimiento*, imported from Mexico, were introduced and adapted to local conditions.⁵

Yet the Spanish experience in the Philippines came to foil the initial expectations. The impact of the *conquista* was limited to some regions of Luzón and the Visayas, notably in the surrounding area of Manila, until a later period. The archipelago was too far, too poor and too unhealthy to enable the required allocation of resources to a full-scale *conquista*. The Spanish never succeeded in promoting the migration of colonists throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, except in a very limited lapse of time (in the final 1570s and in the initial years of the seventeenth century).⁶ The success of the Spanish control over the Philippines did not rely on the force of arms, but on the persistent missionary work carried out by several religious orders under the *Patronato Regio*. The diocese of Manila was created in 1579, and later elevated to the category of archdiocese with three new bishoprics emerging, in Luzón and Cebu. Following the previous

4 Letter from Martín de Rada to the Viceroy of New Spain, 8 July 1569, in Isacio RODRÍGUEZ RODRÍGUEZ (ed.), *Historia de la Provincia Agustiniense del Santísimo Nombre de Jesús de Filipinas*, Manila, 1978, Vol. XIV, p. 25.

5 Among the most important works on the Spanish colonization of the Philippines, see John Ledy PHELAN, *The Hispanization of the Philippines: Spanish Aims and Filipino Responses, 1565–1700*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1959; Nicholas P. CUSHNER, *Landed Estates in the Colonial Philippines*, New Haven, Yale University, 1976; Patricio HIDALGO NUCHERA, *Encomienda, tributo y trabajo en Filipinas (1570–1608)*, Madrid, Ed. Polifemo, 1995; and Linda A. NEWSON, *Conquest and Pestilence in the Early Spanish Philippines*, Honolulu, University of Hawai’i Press, 2009.

6 Antonio GARCÍA ABÁSULO, “El poblamiento de Filipinas (1571–1599)” in Lourdes Díaz Trechuelo, Antonio García Abásulo, et al. (eds.), *Estudios sobre Filipinas durante el Período Español*, Manila, Instituto Cervantes, 1998, p. 10.

indoctrination experience in Mexico, the Catholic missionaries came to consolidate a growing influence on local affairs and to convert large portions of the Filipino population, with impressive figures rising to the half-million baptisms in 1622.⁷

The range of action of the Spanish was not confined to the Philippine archipelago. Some governors, *arbitristas*, officers and clerics were enthusiastic supporters of the *conquista* and proposed a more active approach towards neighbouring regions of Asia beyond commercial affairs. This implied an assertive diplomacy and also military intervention on local kingdoms, taking advantage on the alleged superiority of Spanish warfare over Asian powers. One of the most active supporters of this line of expansion was the governor Francisco de Sande (1576–1580), who was the responsible of the first military expedition outside the Philippines: the intervention on Brunei in 1578. The list of demands sent to the Sultan when the Spanish fleet arrived in the city-port shows the double side of the *conquista*: the Sultan should open his kingdom to the Catholic missionaries, ban any proselytizing activity of Islam and deliver him and his men all taxes and tributes collected in the whole island of Borneo.⁸

Other projects to enlarge the scope of the *conquista* beyond the Philippines were later attempted in Cambodia and in the Moluccas, in a time when the crowns of Portugal and Castille were joined under the same king. Yet the most important focus that drew the attention of the Spanish was China. Its legendary wealth and magnificence had sparked the imagination of Europeans for a long time. The events following the settlement in Manila provided an unexpected opportunity, when the outlaw Lin Feng (called “Limahong” in European sources), who had his headquarters in Taiwan, attacked Spanish vessels and the city itself. Several contacts took place between Manila and an imperial fleet that was chasing the pirate. The Spanish hoped to establish friendly relations with the Chinese authorities and several diplomatic actions were put in motion. It is relevant to notice that the leading roles on these initiatives were played by two religious of different orders, the Augustinian Martín de Rada (to Canton) and the Jesuit Alonso Sánchez (to Macao).

At the same time, the idea of taking China by force was taking shape, a project that was presented to Philip II himself and was dropped only after

7 J. L. PHELAN, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

8 Letter from Francisco de Sande to the Sultan of Brunei, April 1578, in I. RODRÍGUEZ RODRÍGUEZ (ed.), *op. cit.*, Vol. XIV, pp. 506–8.

the failure of the “Invincible Armada” in 1588.⁹ What emerges from the chain of events was the hesitation to trace a clear strategy towards China, swinging between a peaceful, commercial approach and the dreams of conquest.

Manila came to play a significant role in China’s external affairs, but not in the way imagined by the Spanish *conquistadores*. The conquest of Manila was coincident with a partial lift of the trade restrictions imposed by Ming China since the fifteenth century. In 1567, following internal pressure to ease the strict policy of “sea ban” (*haijin*), the Governor of Fujian removed some of the existing barriers and allowed maritime trade to be carried out in some ports. The Fujianese trade communities that had worked in a semi-clandestine condition could now re-organize and reinforce their Southeast Asian connections, and Manila assumed a major role in this new framework.¹⁰ The migratory and commercial expansion of the Chinese networks to Manila was due to this partial opening of Fujianese ports, which ultimately was the responsible for the economic survival of the city.¹¹

Known in Manila under the name of *Sangleys*, the number of these overseas Chinese increased dramatically in the following years and their relevance in the history of the city cannot be minimized, as abundant documental evidence clearly shows.¹² They came mostly from south Fujian, notably the prefectures of Quanzhou and Zhangzhou, and some families, as the ones from the town of Anhai, had a long merchant tradition prior to sailing to Manila.¹³ Unable to get authorization to settle in mainland China, the Spanish realized the intermediary function played by the *Sangleys*, exchanging American silver for Chinese silk and other textiles, was vital to the prosperity of Manila. However, tensions soon arose between the colonial masters and their commercial partners. Although their presence was considered necessary to ensure the basic and regular functioning of Manila, the *Sangleys* were labelled as hostile by the Spanish and looked under permanent suspicion of rebellion. Moreover, their economic strength made them

9 Manel OLLÉ, *La empresa de China: de la Armada Invencible al Galeón de Manila*, Barcelona, Quaderns Crema, 2002.

10 Paulo Jorge de Sousa PINTO, “*Chinchéus* and *Sangleys*: Ten Remarks on the Chinese Presence in Melaka and Manila (16th–17th centuries),” *Review of Culture*, no. 43 (2013), pp. 59–69.

11 Manel OLLÉ I RODRÍGUEZ, “A Inserção das Filipinas na Ásia Oriental (1565-1593)” *Review of Culture*, no. 7 (2003), pp. 12–13.

12 Juan GIL, *Los Chinos de Manila (siglos XVI y XVII)*, Lisboa, Centro Científico e Cultural de Macau, 2011.

13 James CHIN, “Junk Trade, Business Networks, and Sojourning Communities: Hokkien Merchants in Early Maritime Asia,” *Journal of Chinese Overseas*, no. 6 (2010), pp. 187–8.

an easy target to all sorts of extortion and tax pressure.¹⁴

One of the most interesting features of seventeenth century Manila was the inconsistency between the realities of a port-city destined to play a central role in a worldwide network that linked both sides of the Pacific, on one hand, and the difficulties felt by the Spanish to adapt themselves to this model and who were still stuck to a more traditional, territorial and tribute-demanding approach, on the other. In fact, the Spanish Philippines were under the jurisdiction of the Vice-Royalty of Mexico and the archipelago was seen as an Asian extension of America, where the core of the Habsburg overseas empire was located. The contrast with Portuguese Macao was tangible and denotes two distinctive ways of interaction with Asian realities and adaptation to the specific challenges posed by China.

Macao, informal settlement

In the early 1580s, the anonymous author of the *Livro das Cidades e Fortalezas* reported to the King that “todos os navios estrangeiros que vão a esta província de Cantão, hão-de surgir ao porto desta ilha de Macau, e dali fazem os seus comércios com os da terra firme, por os não consentirem passar mais adiante.”¹⁵ The sentence summarizes the essence of Macao, in a double sense: the strict control on foreign contact and maritime trade imposed by Ming China and the position of the city as a privileged, authorized hub that channelled these actions under the supervision of local authorities.

The origins of Macao and the motives behind its foundation have been extensively discussed by scholars through the confrontation of Portuguese and Chinese sources.¹⁶ In any case, it is known for sure that around 1557, and after several decades of living in a semi-clandestine condition in the maritime coasts of China, the Portuguese were finally allowed to settle in

14 Among the studies on the Spanish-Sangleys relations in the sixteenth-to-seventeenth centuries, the following ones may be suggested: Alfonso FELIX JR. (ed.), *The Chinese in the Philippines, 1570–1770*, Manila, Solidaridad Publishing House, 1966, Vol. I; Albert CHAN, “Chinese-Philippine Relations in the Late Sixteenth Century and to 1603,” *Philippine Studies*, Vol. 26, no. 1–2 (1978), pp. 51–82; Guillermo RUIZ-STOVEL, “Chinese Merchants, Silver Galleons, and Ethnic Violence in Spanish Manila, 1603-1686,” *Análisis*, Vol. 12, no. 36 (Sept. 2009), pp. 47–63, and Manel OLLÉ I RODRIGUEZ, “La proyección de Fujian en Manila: los sangleys del parián y el comercio de la Nao de China” in Salvador Bernabéu Albert and Carlos Martínez Shaw (eds.), *Um oceano de seda y plata: el universo económico del Galeón de Manila*, Madrid, CSIC, 2013, pp. 155–78.

15 Francisco Mendes da LUZ (ed.), *Livro das Cidades e Fortalezas que a Coroa de Portugal tem nas Partes da Índia* [...], Coimbra, Imprensa da Universidade, 1952, p. 105.

16 Roderich PTAK, “China’s Medieval *Fanfang*: Model for Macau under the Ming?”, *Anais de História de Além-Mar*, no. 2 (2001), pp. 47–71; JIN Guo Ping and WU Zhiliang, *Revisitar os Primórdios de Macau: para uma nova abordagem da História*, Macau, Instituto Português do Oriente/Fundação Oriente, 2007.

the Pearl River Delta in the aftermath of an agreement between the provincial authorities of Guangdong and a group of merchants led by Leonel de Sousa.¹⁷ To the Ming, it was a strategic, defensive option to put the Portuguese under supervision in a controlled area where their movements could be monitored and the economic benefits of their activities would be better availed. It was also destined to break the partnership between the Portuguese and the Chinese smuggling network that operated in the Fujian and Zhejiang coast, but the shift to Macao seems to have extended, rather than reduced, this informal collaboration.¹⁸ Intended to be an ingenious move to solve the virtual turbulence caused by the suspicious *Folangji* and their Chinese partners, the foundation of Macao would lead to the development of a real city-port enjoying exclusive privileges on the profitable commerce with Japan.

To the Portuguese, the Macao-Nagasaki route emerged as the most profitable line of trade in Asia, because they assumed an exclusive, intermediate role on the exchanges of Japanese silver vs. Chinese textiles, in an annual voyage carried on by a “Great Ship.”¹⁹ Like Manila, Macao was a vital point to obtain supplies of silver to the Chinese market, but similarities between the two were more apparent than real. Unlike Manila, Macao was an informal settlement on Chinese soil under the supervision of Ming officers. It was located at the far end of the Portuguese network that spread across the Indian Ocean, and where the official structures of the Estado da Índia exerted control in a rather tenuous way.

The Portuguese focused their military and naval resources on the west coast of India, the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea, while the Gulf of Bengal, the Malay-Indonesian archipelago or the South China Sea areas were left to private initiative with a minimum official control. Besides some small forts in the Moluccas, Melaka was the only major position, with a Captain and a regular administration staff. Located in the remote parts of China and far from Melaka and even more distant from the capital of the Portuguese Estado da Índia, Macao was internally ruled by the local elite of merchants and Jesuit missionaries. Official interference in local affairs was limited to

17 Letter from Leonel de Sousa, 15 Jan. 1556, in *As Gavetas da Torre do Tombo*, Lisboa, 1960, Vol. I, p. 910; Roderich PTAK, “Early Sino-Portuguese relations up to the Foundation of Macao,” *Mare Liberum*, no. 4 (Dec. 1992), pp. 289–97.

18 James CHIN, “The Portuguese on the Zhejiang and Fujian Coast prior to 1550 as seen from Contemporary Chinese Private Records” in L. F. Barreto (ed.), *Macau During the Ming Dynasty*, Lisboa, Centro Científico e Cultural de Macau, 2009, pp. 119–37.

19 Charles Ralph BOXER, *The Great Ship from Amacon*, Macao, Instituto Cultural de Macau, 1988, pp. 21–171.

the temporary stay of the Captain of the annual voyage to Nagasaki. Only in 1623, in a different political scenario and under a considerable pressure by the Dutch threat, the city council accepted the appointment of a Governor by the authorities of Goa or Lisbon.²⁰ Therefore, Macao was basically an informal trade centre rather than a colonial capital, where any pretensions of territorial control were absent.

Even the profiles of the Catholic missionary activities in Macao and Manila were different, despite being considered from both Portuguese and Spanish authorities as vital to their respective missionary efforts. Because China was not an easy ground to Catholic missions, Macao was mostly a Jesuit base to the work that was being developed in Japan, where the activities of the Society of Jesus achieved remarkable success. However, this was due to the peculiar internal conditions of the country and the political unification set in motion by Oda Nobunaga. In the Philippines, on the contrary, the missions—namely Augustinians—in Luzón and in the Visayas were successful thanks to the *encomienda* and other precepts of the *conquista* that imposed the Catholic faith to local population by force of arms.

From a different perspective, Macao and Manila were also the extreme points of two overseas empires that were in contact in the South China Sea, according to the imaginary line accorded by Portugal and Castille in the Treaty of Tordesillas. Tensions were thus inevitable. The Spanish presence in the Philippines was disputed by the Portuguese and even after an informal acceptance there were regular complaints about the risks involving the “line crossing” by the Spanish. The military attack on Brunei in 1576 and the claims by the Governor of Manila that “es cosa cierta y clara que los malucos y todo lo demás que hay desde Malaca para acá [Manila], en que entran Brunei y toda la costa de China, lequios e japoneses y Nueva Guinea, están en demarcación de Vuestra Majestad”²¹ caused friction and suspicion on the Portuguese side.

Under the same king

Despite different views of China from Macao and Manila and distinct traditions of colonial experience by the Portuguese and the Spanish, the dynastic union by Philip II caused some detente on both sides of the line.

20 Manuela Blanco VELEZ, “A Primeira Capitania Geral de Macau, 1623–1626” in Artur Teodoro de Matos and Luís Filipe F. Reis Thomaz (eds.), *As Relações entre a Índia Portuguesa, a Ásia do Sueste e o Extremo Oriente*, Macau/Lisboa, 1993, pp. 7–20.

21 Letter from Francisco de Sande to the Sultan of Brunei, 7 June 1576, in I. RODRÍGUEZ RODRÍGUEZ (ed.), *op. cit.*, Vol. XIV, p. 417.

However, while in the Moluccas the new political scenario was welcomed because the proximity of Manila paved the way to an effective support to the Portuguese fortress, in Macao the reaction was much less friendly.

In 1582, the Governor of Manila Gonzalo Ronquillo de Peñalosa sent the Jesuit Alonso Sánchez to Macao, to inform the Portuguese about the acclamation of Philip II as King of Portugal. The odyssey of the Jesuit priest in China was troubled. Arrested by the Chinese authorities and detained in Zhaoqing to be questioned about his origins and intentions, the unexpected visitor forced the Senate of Macao to send a diplomatic delegation pleading for his release.²² The Portuguese feared that the Guangdong officers could get detailed information about the new political situation in Portugal and assume that the Portuguese and the Spanish were subjects of the same king. Being Sánchez an enthusiastic supporter of the projects and dreams to conquer China, which he considered as a pre-condition to the success of missionary work, one may guess the tension raised by this episode in Macao. In a letter addressed to the Governor of the Philippines, a Portuguese nobleman expressed the city's apprehension about the recent events: "muito receio da gente que está nos Luções, ainda que desejamos grandemente que haja entre V. S. e nós contínuo comércio, pelo muito proveito temporal e espiritual que nos pode vir a todos."²³

In the following years, tension climbed as the Spanish increased their attempts to bypass Macao and to establish direct contacts with China. The Portuguese protested, claiming that these actions could spark the hostility of the Guangdong authorities that would ultimately lead to the ruin of Macao and the expulsion of the Iberians. This strategy took advantage of the higher level of knowledge about Chinese affairs by the Portuguese. It was outlined to keep the Spanish interference away and to ensure that the city would remain as the exclusive channel of access to China.

Yet the Portuguese had other reasons to worry about. One of the most disturbing was an unprecedented order issued by Philip II that put the *status quo* of separate jurisdictions in Asia in danger. In 1583, the founding document of the *Audiencia* of Manila conceded the jurisdiction over "Luzón and the other Filipinas islands of the archipelago of China, and the main-

22 Horacio de la COSTA, *The Jesuits in the Philippines, 1581–1758*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, pp. 37–57; José de ARCILLA, "Alonso Sánchez: Jesuit diplomat to the Portuguese in Macao" in Alan Norman Baxter et al. (eds.), *Conference Proceedings of Macao-Philippines Historical Relations*, Macao, University of Macau, 2005, pp. 156–76.

23 Letter from D. João de Almada to the Governor of Manila, 24 June 1582, in Francisco COLÍN, *Labor Evangélica, Ministerios Apostolicos de los Obreros de la Compañía de Jesús, Fundación y Progresos de Su Provincia en las Islas Filipinas*, Barcelona, Henrich y C^a, 1904, Vol. I, p. 294.

land of the same, whether discovered or yet to be discovered” to this court.²⁴ In Macao, it caused considerable concern about the possibility of being submitted to Manila in a nearby future. However, this never happened and Philip II and his successors never yielded to the proposals that advocated reforms on the jurisdictions of Portugal and Castille in the East.

The new state of affairs was exploited by both the Spanish and the powerful commercial elite of Macao. Some merchants took advantage of the indefinite status of the initial years after 1581 to establish profitable partnerships with Manila. The first was the wealthy Bartolomeu Vaz Landeiro, who supplied Manila with provisions after the fire that destroyed an important part of the city and set up a regular connection with Macao, even after the prohibition of contacts has been re-established by the King.²⁵ Also Sebastião Jorge de Moxar, the greatest Portuguese ship-owner of Macao, established an agreement with the ruling class of Manila, providing loads of Chinese and Indian textiles to the city.²⁶

Other private initiatives—also illegal—took place in the following years, being important examples the attempts to establish direct contacts between Mexico, Peru and Macao, carried out from both sides of the Pacific. In 1583, the galleon *San Martín* left Acapulco and proceeded towards Macao instead of Manila²⁷ and six years later, the former captain of Melaka D. João da Gama made the journey in the opposite direction. Finally, in 1590 the Marquis of Cañete, Viceroy of Peru, sent a ship to Macao but after the arrival, as a chronicler says, “fue embargada con todas las haciendas por cédulas y provisiones apretadas del Rey Católico, en que vedava el comercio de Peru con China y Filipinas, sob gravisimas penas.”²⁸

From the point of view of Ming China, the risk of turbulence caused by the rivalry between the Portuguese and the Spanish was taken seriously, but it could be minimized through a careful supervision and management of rules. On the other side, it was considered that the competition between the restless Spanish newcomers and the Portuguese of Macao would weaken both contenders and lower the level of threat to the territorial integrity of the realm.²⁹

24 “Foundation of the Audiencia of Manila” in Emma Helen BLAIR and James ROBERTSON (eds.), *The Philippine Islands*, Cleveland, Arthur H. Clark, 1903, Vol. V, p. 275.

25 F. COLÍN, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 286–7.

26 Lúcio de SOUSA, *The Early European Presence in China, Japan, the Philippines and Southeast Asia (1555–1590) – The Life of Bartolomeu Landeiro*, Macao, Macao Foundation, 2010, pp. 75–80.

27 F. COLÍN, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 363.

28 *Idem, ibidem*, Vol. II, p. 198. See Fernando IWASAKI CAUTI, *Extremo Oriente y Perú en el siglo XVI*, Madrid, Mapfre, 1992, pp. 182–98.

29 JIN Guo Ping and WU Zhiliang, “Os 3 mosqueteiros marítimos vistos pelos chineses,” *Review of Culture*, no. 11 (2004), pp. 154–73.

Anyway, throughout the years, the Spanish seemed more determined to settle in China by means of bypassing Macao. The Portuguese obtained huge profits in the Macao-Nagasaki trade and the possibility of getting a share was too tempting to be left behind. The Spanish recorded the movements and the financial details of the commerce, namely the commodities exported and imported to and from Japan and the taxes paid to the Chinese officers, not only in the port of Macao but also in Canton; despite the high taxes, the investment provided high returns, as a memorial remarks: “Dizen los Portugueses que no quieren sino hazer su dinero principal bueno en la China para emplear en la China, que en el empleo esta la ganancia.”³⁰

In 1591, the debate in Manila revolved around the best step to be taken: to create a regular link with Macao or to contact directly the Guangdong authorities, asking permission to create a trade outpost on the coast? The first hypothesis was against the Royal orders, while the second was risky and contradicted all advice given by the Jesuits and the Portuguese of Macao. Several participants testified the goodwill of the Chinese, both Ming officers and private merchants, to accept a Spanish settlement. One of them reported that a Chinese officer in Macao was upset when he realized that the Spanish did not trade in China because the Portuguese did not permit it. The same officer allegedly invited them to do so and he assured that he would intercede with the viceroy of Canton in order to issue the required safe-conduct.³¹

The Governor of the Philippines and the *Audiencia* authorized an expedition under the command of D. Juan Zamudio, in 1598, to settle in an uncertain place in the Pearl River Delta called “Pinhal.” However, the initiative was criticized even among Spanish authorities. The Bishop of Nueva Segovia was one of the fiercest opponents. He agreed with the Portuguese arguments, saying that a successful Spanish settlement in China could be ruinous to the trade line between Macao and Nagasaki. Therefore, it would lead to the decline of the city and the destruction of the missionary work in Japan. A long war between the Portuguese and the Spanish would follow, causing considerable damages on both sides. Finally, he argued that Manila could also be affected, because the commerce carried out by the *Sangleys* would be destroyed with terrible consequences to them and to the *vecinos*

30 “Valor de las Mercancías que se han de exportar de China al Japón” in F. COLÍN, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 220; J. GIL, op. cit., pp. 50–1.

31 “Investigations of Manila concerning trade with Macan, 1591” in E. H. BLAIR and J. ROBERTSON, op. cit., Vol. VIII, pp. 183–4.

of Manila.³² Yet the “Pinhal episode” was a failure that marked the end of a period of severe tension between Manila and Macao. The turn of the century and the formidable challenge posed by the Dutch presence in the South China Sea changed the Portuguese-Spanish relations in a considerable way and opened the path to a more cooperative mood between both sides.

The Dutch in Taiwan

In 1601, a Dutch ship came in sight of Macao. Coeval reports testify that the Portuguese imprisoned the crew after using a trick to convince them to go ashore. Most of them were later executed in public on charges of piracy.³³ Later, this episode was used by the Dutch propaganda as proof of the alleged cruel and tyrannical character of the Portuguese. It was the first incident that affected Macao in a direct way, five years after the first Dutch ship had arrived in Asia through the Cape of Good Hope. In 1603, the carrack *Santa Catarina*, carrying a rich load of Chinese commodities, was captured in the Johor River, close to Melaka. The precious booty was later carried to Amsterdam and the cargo was sold in public auction.³⁴

The Dutch pressure increased in the following years, with direct strikes on Portuguese fortresses and positions, in a global offensive strategy destined to erect a new Asian empire at the expenses of the Estado da Índia. The first target of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) was the Moluccas and Banda islands in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago, but China and Japan would soon follow. The Dutch Governor Jan Pieterzoon Coen outlined a global strategy that included the complete suppression of the Portuguese presence in the coasts of China and the takeover of the rich trade with Japan. Their first move was to demand access to the ports of Fujian and the eviction of the Portuguese from Macao. The refusal from the Chinese authorities to cooperate led to the attack on the city in 1622. Despite the lack of significant defensive structures or a military garrison, Macao was able to resist and repel the attackers.³⁵ As a direct consequence of the attack, the Macao Senate asked Goa for a military Governor that could ensure the

32 Letter from the Bishop of Nueva Segovia to the King, 17 May 1599, in E. H. BLAIR and J. ROBERTSON, op. cit., Vol. X, pp. 190–7.

33 Martinus APIUS, “Incidente em Macau, 1601,” *Review of Culture*, no. 12 (2004), pp. 61–7.

34 Peter BORSCHBERG, “The Seizure of the Sta. Catarina Revisited: The Portuguese Empire in Asia, VOC Politics and the Origins of the Dutch-Johor Alliance (1602–c. 1616),” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, no. 33.1 (Feb. 2002), pp. 31–62.

35 Rui LOUREIRO, “Macao and the Dutch Threat” in L. F. Barreto (ed.), op. cit., pp. 68–86.

defence of the city, but the relations between the local elite and D. Francisco de Mascarenhas, the new Captain-General who arrived in 1623, were very tense.

The offensive of the VOC was not limited to the assault on the Portuguese navigation and positions. The Spanish interests in Asia—i.e., Manila and the Acapulco Galleon—were also targeted. The first clash took place in 1600, between a Dutch fleet under the command of Oliver van Noort, who had left Amsterdam in 1598 following the route of Magalhães, and the Spanish defenders under the leadership of Antonio de Morga.³⁶ The Far East became another warfront for the Iberian “Unión de Armas en Oriente” that was informally established despite the separate jurisdictions between the Portuguese Estado da Índia and the Spanish East Indies.³⁷ In the aftermath of an attempt by Melaka and Manila to prepare a joint armada against the VOC in the Southeast Asian waters, a new attack on Manila took place in 1617, this time involving a powerful Dutch fleet of ten ships that attacked Mindoro and Ilocos and finally made a blockade on Manila. It had departed from Ternate to intensify the war against the Spanish and the Portuguese, in a destructive, predatory mission to cause as much damage as possible that could have changed the destiny of Manila. The naval battle with the Spanish armada occurred on April 16th and the outcome was favourable to the defenders, who were able to destroy most of the enemy vessels.³⁸

Unable to suppress Manila and Macao and at war with the Chinese coastal fleets, the Dutch shifted their strategy. After a brief stay in the Penghu (Pescadores) Islands, the VOC settled in Taiwan in order to use the island as headquarters to engage in Chinese trade and to strike both Portuguese and Spanish navigation. The settlement was a common threat to Manila and Macao, so the Spanish would soon make plans to give an adequate defensive reply.

In April 1626, a Catholic Chinese from Macao named Salvador Dias wrote a detailed report describing the Dutch settlement in Taiwan and the disruptive effects it would cause in the Portuguese activities in the

36 Pedro ORTIZ ARMENGOL, “La Incursión Naval Holandesa en Aguas de Filipinas” in Antonio García Abasolo, (ed.), *España y el Pacífico*, Cordoba, Asociación Española de Estudios del Pacífico, 1997, pp. 73–84.

37 Rafael VALLADARES, *Castilla y Portugal en Asia (1580-1680): Declive Imperial y Adaptación*, Leuven University Press, 2001, pp. 35–64; José Eugenio BORAÑO, “‘Intelligence-gathering’ episodes in the ‘Manila-Macao-Taiwan Triangle’ during the Dutch Wars” in A. N. Baxter, op. cit., pp. 226–47.

38 Tien-Tse CHANG, “The Spanish-Dutch Naval battle of 1617 outside Manila Bay,” *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, Vol. 7, no. 1 (Mar. 1966), pp. 120–1.

area. He even assured that it would soon control the whole Chinese external trade for the benefit of the Dutch, the Japanese and the Fujianese, if nothing was done to destroy the fortress.³⁹ Dias' report eventually came to the knowledge of the Spanish authorities in Manila, who were preparing a first expedition to the northern side of the island. A reinforcement *armada* under the command of the Governor of the Philippines arrived in Taiwan in the following year and Juan Niño de Tabora asked the Portuguese to send him the "mestizo Salvador Díaz," possibly to act as a scout thanks to his knowledge of the terrain.⁴⁰ After three years of consecutive attempts, from 1626 to 1629, a fort was finally built and the Spanish managed to complete the strategic move to control the movements of the enemy and to protect the Iberian navigation to China and Japan.⁴¹

The Dutch settlement in Taiwan was a serious challenge to the Iberian presence, not only because of its proximity to Macao and Manila, but also due to the informal alliance they have established with powerful Chinese private networks in the South China Sea. The cooperation between the Fujianese trade clans and the VOC was not new. In fact, the capital Batavia was erected thanks to massive Chinese labour and made full use of the expertise on Asian business by the Chinese communities, a scenario extended throughout the whole Far East.⁴² In Taiwan, the Dutch settlement was not a conquest enterprise or a simple military, anti-Iberian adventure. On the contrary, it was a "hybrid colony" of Chinese settlers ruled by the VOC, where each side depended on the other to survive and prosper, not only against the European rivals, but also regarding the relations with the local, non-Chinese population.⁴³

The role played by the Chinese networks in the South China region, particularly in this conjuncture, was generally underestimated by European sources and chroniclers, who tended to focus their attention on the Dutch vs. Iberians conflict. Salvador Dias, however, is clear in his statement on

39 Report by Salvador Dias, 26 April 1626, in *Documentação Ultramarina Portuguesa*, Lisboa, Centro de Estudos Históricos e Ultramarinos, 1960, vol. I, pp. 153–160; also published in José Eugenio BORAÑO MATEO (ed.), *The Spaniards in Taiwan*, Taipei, SMC Publishing, 2001, Vol. I, pp. 62–9.

40 Extract of a Jesuit annual report, 1626, in J. E. BORAÑO MATEO (ed.), op. cit., p. 88.

41 José Eugenio BORAÑO, "The 'Justification' of the Spanish Intrusion in Taiwan in 1626," *Humanitas Taiwanica*, no. 60, 2004, pp. 338–72.

42 Leonard BLUSSÉ, *Strange Company – Chinese Settlers, Mestizo Women and the Dutch in VOC Batavia*, Dordrecht, Foris, 1988; Pin-Tsun CHANG, "The Rise of Chinese Mercantile Power in VOC Dutch East Indies," *Chinese Southern Diaspora Studies*, no. 3 (2009), pp. 3–21.

43 Tonio ANDRADE, "Pirates, Pelts, and Promises: The Sino-Dutch Colony of Seventeenth-Century Taiwan and the Aboriginal Village of Favorolang," *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 64, no. 2 (May 2005), pp. 295–321.

how the Portuguese and the Spanish should fear the Fujianese networks and their alliance with the Dutch, saying that “*não há no Oriente quasi parte onde não haya chincheos,*” whom he calls “*gente atrevida.*”⁴⁴

In fact, the Europeans’ moves were strongly conditioned by the evolution of the Chinese maritime networks in the region and the political struggle that was taking place inside China. The surrender of the “pirate” leader Zheng Zhilong to the Chinese authorities in 1628 marked an important shift in the South China Sea region. The powerful maritime confederacy was now at the service of the Ming and Zheng Zhilong managed to control the Dutch activities in Taiwan and inflict an important defeat to the VOC forces in 1633, off the coast of Fujian.⁴⁵ The Zheng confederacy was later able to expel the Dutch from the island, under the leadership of Zheng Chenggong, Zhilong’s son.

Cooperation and survival

The engagement in a global war against the Dutch *rebeldes* lowered the tensions between Macao and Manila. However, it did not prevent uneasy relations and misunderstandings from both sides. Generally speaking, the Spanish considered the Portuguese too weak and disorganized, lacking proper discipline and resources, to confront the Dutch with success. Some people, like the Dominican Fr. Diego Aduarte, denounced the fragile status of Macao, whose inhabitants were submitted and paid tribute to the King of China and were extorted by Chinese officers. The proposed solution would be the removal of all people from there and the transference of their trading activities to Manila.⁴⁶

Besides the military alliance against the common enemy, the collaboration between the Portuguese and the Spanish in the context of the early seventeenth century also took the shape of a more relaxed relationship concerning the prohibition of contacts between Manila and Macao. Although renewed on a regular basis in the official correspondence, the prohibitions issued by the King were more a formality than a strict command. In 1621,

44 Report by Salvador Dias, 26 April 1626, in *op. cit.*, p. 158.

45 Patrizia CARIOTI, “The International Setting of Far Eastern Seas During the First Half of the 17th Century: A New Balance of Power” in Jorge dos Santos Alves (ed.), *Portugal e a China: Conferências no III Curso Livre de História das Relações entre Portugal e a China (séculos XVI–XIX)*, Lisboa, Fundação Oriente, 2000, pp. 48–9; Leonard BLUSSÉ, “Minnan-Jen or Cosmopolitan? The Rise of Cheng Chih-Lung alias Nicolas Iquan” in E. B. Vermeer (ed.), *Development and Decline of Fukien Province in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, Leiden, Brill, 1990, pp. 245–64.

46 Memorial by Fr. Diego Aduarte, 1619, in E. H. BLAIR and J. ROBERTSON, *op. cit.*, Vol. XVIII, pp. 194 ff.

the merchant elites of Macao testified that the prohibitions were harmful to both the city and the Royal Treasury, because the Fujianese carried loads of Chinese silk to Manila, where it was purchased by Japanese traders. At the same time, the old trade routes from Macao to Sunda, Siam, Timor, Patani and Vietnam were now inactive, and due to the increasing difficulties the Portuguese felt in Japan, the former profit of about 60 to 70% in the Macao-Nagasaki trade have dropped to below 20%.⁴⁷

The viceroys of Goa eventually authorized that official trade could be made under certain conditions.⁴⁸ The Viceroy Conde de Linhares (1629–1635) decided to create an official voyage, to be made under specific conditions, after admitting that the prohibitions were ineffective, “como nunca haviam de deixar de se mandar à formiga alguns chós dos casados da China, em que só a Fazenda de Sua Majestade ficava perdendo.”⁴⁹

At this point, the increasing affluence of Portuguese ships going from Macao to Cavite, the port of Manila, was a source of local discontent. This occurred not only thanks to the official authorizations issued by the viceroy of Goa, but also because private commerce had increased. Until the late 1630s, it became dominant in Manila, while the Chinese activities decreased due to the disturbance caused by Dutch policies on the Fujian coast.⁵⁰ In 1636, the representative of Manila Juan Grau y Monfalcón complained to the King that the *vecinos* of Manila had received great losses in the recent years, since the Portuguese of Macao came to gain control over the most important trade from China. He described the situation in the following terms: the Portuguese sold their Chinese commodities at high prices in Manila and also controlled their shipping to Mexico, unlike the previous scenario when the *Sangleys* supplied the city and the Spanish were able to get profits from the transport to the New World.⁵¹

As a matter of fact, the situation of Macao was far from being prosperous. Beside the disruptive effects of Dutch activities and the first worrying signs of decline of trade with Japan, the Portuguese were also confronted

47 Appointments by several merchants of Macao, 1621, in Elsa PENALVA and Miguel Rodrigues LOURENÇO (eds.), *Fontes para a História de Macau no Século XVII*, Lisboa, Centro Científico e Cultural de Macau, 2009, pp. 99–100.

48 ARQUIVO NACIONAL DA TORRE DO TOMBO [ANTT], *Livros das Monções*, Liv. 22, fl. 80 (Letter from the Viceroy Count of Vidigueira to the King, Goa, 10 Dec. 1625).

49 António BOCARRO, *O Livro das Plantas de Todas as Fortalezas, Cidades e Povoações da Índia Oriental*, Isabel Cid (ed.), Lisboa, Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, 1992, Vol. II, p. 270.

50 George Brian SOUZA, *The Survival of the Empire: Portuguese Trade and Society in China and the South China Sea, 1630–1754*, Cambridge University Press, 1986, pp. 78–9.

51 ARCHIVO GENERAL DE INDIAS [AGI], *Filipinas*, 41, no. 16 (Memorial by Juan Grau y Monfalcón).

with the instability in mainland China and the waning of the Ming dynasty, whose echoes affected Macao throughout the early seventeenth century. The safety of Macao relied traditionally on Chinese official endorsement of the Portuguese presence. At this time, however, the decline of the Ming state apparatus meant that it was no longer able to provide effective military support in case of external—say, Dutch—attack, and an intervention of the Chinese imperial fleet to protect Macao was more than doubtful. The Portuguese reacted by tightening their ties with the Ming, increasing the dispatch of diplomatic missions to the authorities of Guangdong and offering military support in the war efforts against the Manchus.⁵²

The years 1638–40 were marked by a general crisis for both the Portuguese and the Spanish in Asia. The definitive closure of Japan and the fall of Melaka were two severe blows to Macao, which became deprived of its main source of profit and isolated from the rest of the *Estado da Índia*. Still more important was the evolution in mainland China, with the collapse of the Ming and the rise of a new dynasty in Beijing in 1644. This event had a double damaging effect on Macao: on one hand, the Ming loyalists under the command of Zheng Chenggong struggled in the maritime southern regions against the new power for another two decades, causing considerable unrest in trade activities. Secondly, the new Qing dynasty imposed a strict closure of the coast a few years later, and orders were issued to deport all people to the interior, an extreme measure that Macao barely escaped.

Manila also suffered a series of important setbacks. The first one was the revolt of the *Sangleys* in 1639, in a chain of tumultuous, bloody events that led to the massacre of thousands of Chinese, repeating the previous episode of 1603.⁵³ It is possible that the uprising, whose motives are not fully explained on Spanish sources, may have been promoted and organized by Zheng Zhilong's men under his direct orders.⁵⁴ The last defenders of the Spanish positions in Taiwan surrendered to the Dutch in 1642, bringing the pretensions of Manila to ensure a point of support to its trading activities in the South China Sea to an end. Finally, the official closure of the Chinese coast

52 Patrizia CARIOTI, "Il Declinio del Portogallo nei Mari Estremo-Orientali nel Secolo XVII: Alcune Considerazioni Sulla Superstite Postazione di Macao" in Maria Luisa Cusati (ed.), *Il Portogallo e I Mari: Un Incontro Tra Culture*, Napoli, Liguore Editore, 1997, Vol. II, pp. 395–7; Charles Ralph BOXER, "Expedições militares portuguesas em auxílio dos Ming contra os Manchus, 1621–1647," *Estudos para a História de Macau, Séculos XVI a XVIII*, Lisboa, Fundação Oriente, 1991, pp. 119–33.

53 Juan GIL, *op. cit.*, pp. 491–513.

54 Patrizia CARIOTI, "The International Setting of Far Eastern Seas During the First Half of the 17th Century: A New Balance of Power" in Jorge dos Santos Alves (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 50.

and the state of war also caused damaging effects in the city, for its survival depended on the commercial connections with Fujian and Guangdong

Finally, 1641 was the year of Portugal's separation from the Habsburg Monarchy. In Macao, fears of imminent hostilities from the former allies emerged, but beside some unpleasant diplomatic details, nothing happened. On the contrary, the echoes in Asia of the political breakup in Europe and the war that followed and lasted for more than two decades were minimal. Macao and Manila depended too much on each other and both on Chinese trade to be affected by such distant events. Either by direct trade or in indirect ways, using Makassar as intermediary, the commerce between Macao and Manila proceeded with no significant breaks.⁵⁵ Still in 1682, the Portuguese acted as brokers of the Chinese merchants of Canton in their business in Manila, a strategy that caused damages to the Spanish interests and was motive of complaints to the Governor of the Philippines.⁵⁶

The definitive control of the southern regions by the Qing and the abolition of the *haijin* policy by the Emperor Kangxi in 1685 posed important challenges to the survival of Macao. The opening of the ports of Fujian, namely Amoy, to European powers, marked the end of an era in which the city played a prominent role as exclusive point of access to China. Therefore, the most important feature of the late seventeenth century was the move to find alternative markets and lines of trade, being Makassar, Timor and Vietnam the most important ones.

55 Manel OLLÉ I RODRÍGUEZ, "Macao-Manila Interactions in Ming Dynasty" in L. F. Barreto, op. cit., p. 172.

56 AGI, *Filipinas*, 24, o. 27 (letter from fr. Buenaventura Ibañez to the Governor of the Philippines, Canton, 21 Feb. 1682).

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