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Marched to Amoy for empty fame

After Iquan’s negotiation with the Dutch commander, Gerrit Fredrikszoon de Wit, had broken down, he led his whole fleet consisting of about 1,000 vessels with 20,000 people on board northwards in a gradual approach on Amoy.¹ His purpose was to seek revenge for the abuses inflicted by the rice ban, his special targets were those he held personally responsible and therefore his sights were set in particular on the men he saw as the major culprits: Naval Commander Yü Tze-kao and his subordinate Hsü Hsin-su (Simsou [Dutch, hereafter D.]).

In January 1628, Iquan appeared off Amoy. The local troops, both land and sea forces, all took to their heels, leaving their war-junks, weapons and provisions behind them.² A report submitted to the Ch’ung-chên emperor says that the citizens of Amoy sent a messenger to beg for his mercy. Iquan

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² Ts‘ao, Ching-hai Chi-lāch, 15. ‘At the beginning of December, Cheng pirates visited Amoy again. Because the whole garrison had fled away, they seized all the war-junks and ammunition. Amoy city was in danger and the inhabitants of T’ung-an county succumbed to panic.’
CHAPTER THREE

not only acquiesced in their request but also prudently kept his men stationed outside the city walls. Commander Yü Tze-kao fled to Chang-chou city disguised in the clothes of a workman, but the local Amoy inhabitants laid the blame for their plight on his incompetence and fear of their retribution forced him to hide in a mansion at T’ung-an district, where far away from both Amoy and Chang-chou. He had his door sealed and pretended to be ill. Hsü Hsin-su’s house was burned down and Iquan confiscated his goods. The entire Chang-chou area including Amoy Harbour (with the exception of the city itself) and the city on the opposite shore of the bay, Hai-ch’êng, were plundered. Once they had completed this mission the pirates settled down as a permanent ‘force’ resident in Amoy.

During the retribution, the hometowns of these pirates remained untouched and secure. Upon hearing what had happened during the past few days, the gentry in Ch’üan-chou prefecture summoned a consultative committee to a meeting in a temple with the city elders on 15 January. They all agreed that Iquan’s case was a very particular one. They declared that they were willing to send a petition to the Ch’ung-chên Emperor and beseech him to forgive Iquan and those under his command, ‘since they were only refugees driven to extremes by the famine’. After contacting Iquan, both sides reached a consensus: the prefectural magistrate would send a petition to the Imperial court and Iquan submitted himself to the Coastal Defence Force on 22 February.

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4 Ts’ao, Ching-hai Chi-liêh, 14.
5 VOC 1094, Missive van Pieter Nuijts uijt het Fort Zeelandia aen den gouverneur generael, Taiwan, 15 Mar.1628, fo. 134⁴.
7 Su, ‘Wei ch’ên-hsiang fu-k’ou ch’ing-hsing ping-ch’ên shan-hou kuan-chien-shih’,
Peace was restored under this temporary arrangement. Although Iquan had broken the law, he was considered a man of high moral principles. On 30 March, the emperor gave the order for the arrest of Commander Yü Tze-kao and his second-in-command, Hsü Hsin-su, after one of Investigating Censors had accused Yü Tze-kao of being a 'stupid and corrupt' person and had reproached Hsü Hsin-su with having 'revealed classified information, participated in smuggling, and of having allowed the red-haired barbarians ashore.'\(^8\) The emperor awarded the death penalty but, perhaps even before the order arrived, Iquan had already been executed this verdict. This news was confirmed by two Japanese junks which arrived in Taiwan in June:

‘... He has not only arrested the great mandarin Hsü Hsin-su, but also seized his goods and those of some other people, burned his house down and killed him.’\(^9\)

The same source indicates that de facto Iquan controlled the Amoy area and several nearby small towns, and that the Grand Co-ordinator (Chün-mên[Chinese hereafter C.], Combon[D.]\(^10\)) Chu I-Fêng had made peace with him.

‘Although... this Iquan had cause such devastation in the country of China, the Grand Co-ordinator was obliged to sign agreement treaty with him, even to grant him a very high military rank, on condition he should desist from

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\(^8\) Chou, ‘Ping-pu t’i-hsing ping-k’ê ch’ao- ch’u ch’iang-his-tao yü-shih chou-ch’ang-chin t’i-kao’, 10.

\(^9\) VOC 1098, Resolutie genomen [bij gouverneur Pieter Nuijts c.s.][Resolution of Governor Pieter Nuijts], Taiwan, 5 Jun. 1628, fo. 404’.  

\(^10\) Chün-mên means 'Provincial Military Commander’. As mentioned in the previous chapter, during this period the Grand Co-ordinator was given the authority to take charge of a provincial military action, ‘Chün-mên’ became an additional title of the Grand Co-ordinator. Cf: Charles O Hucker., *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 202.
CHAPTER THREE

leading the pirates and wreaking havoc on this country.  

Iquan had even shown the official letter pertaining to this temporary settlement to some Dutch sailors he had captured. They described the letter as, ‘embellished with golden characters in an elegant style, and sealed with the emperor’s chop.’ They were wrong. The letter had not been issued by the emperor; it was probably only a written memorandum issued by Grand Co-ordinator Chu I-Fêng without any legally binding force. The emperor’s sanction was issued in Peking only on 21 July, and was probably taken with him by the new Grand Co-ordinator, Hsiung Wên-ts’an, when he commenced his journey south. Iquan received the sanction from the hands of the General Surveillance and Military Defence Circuit of Hsing-hua and Ch’üan-chou, T’sai Shan-chi, on 23 August. In accordance with the petition


12 VOC 1098, Resolutie genomen [bij gouverneur Pieter Nuijts c.s.], Taiwan, 5 Jun. 1628, fo. 404r

13 Chao Yin-ch’ang, ‘Wei cho-ts’ai yü-ch’ing chao-chiang chü-k’ou têng-shih [Suggestions Following Public Opinion about the Granting of a Royal Pardon] 12 July 1628’, in TWSL (ed.), Ming-ch’ing t’ai-wan tang-an hui-pien, I 1522-1644, 310. Grand Co-ordinator Chu I-Fêng mentioned he presented Iquan with a memorandum only after Iquan had kept the peace for about two months. Therefore Iquan only obtained this memorandum in April or May 1628.

14 Ku Ying-t’ai, ‘Appendix I: Cheng Chih-lung shou-fu [How Cheng Chih-lung Obtained a Royal Pardon]’, in P’êng Sun-i, Ching-hai chihi[Gazette of the Pacification Overseas], TW no.35, 100. ‘1628, in the ninth month (lunar calendar, that is the end of October or November), Cheng Chih-lung was made a subordinate of Grand Co-ordinator Hsiung Wên-ts’an.’

15 Wang Chi, ‘Appendix I: Ch’ung-chên ch’ang-pien hsiian-lu [ Selections from the
THE SURVIVAL GAME 1628-1631

approved by the emperor, the court exonerated Iquan of his alleged crime, on condition he pacify the waters off the coast of China in the following three years. If he succeeded, he would be granted a certain rank and be formally appointed a naval officer. In other words, he was on probation. As the local official commented:

‘Iquan was neither a subject nor a soldier. He has submitted to no superior and stationed anywhere… I can neither give him an order, nor summon him to present himself before me.’

Although Iquan did in fact have these areas under control, the title granted by the emperor offered him no substantial support as a genuine commander, because the court never paid his men any salaries nor granted them rations of rice throughout the following three years. Until they had successfully pacified the other pirates, the Grand Co-ordinator would not pay them the salaries and rice rations to which they were entitled. After having left the service of his former boss, the Dutch East India Company, Iquan now entered into a new contract with the Ming court and maintained his status as a semi-mercenary who would serve the court for the next three years. In reality he was essentially a mercenary captain employed by the gentry of Ch’üan-chou prefecture.

Hungry mercenaries need to be fed

Iquan and the other pirates knew that they were sitting on a time bomb.

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Court Gazette during the Reign of Emperor Ch’ung-chên’, in TWYH (ed.), Ming shih-lu min-hai kuan-hsi shih-liao [Historical Materials about Fu-chienese Waters Selected from the Veritable Records of the Ming], TW no. 296, 147; Cf: Charles O Hucker., A Dictionary of Official Titles, 211.


17 Ts’ao, Ching-hai Chi-lüeh, 27.
CHAPTER THREE

Twenty-thousand people had deserted their hometowns, pushed to this extreme by the starvation which was the inexorable corollary of the rice ban. Unless they did manage to survive, they would not be prepared to lay down their weapons for what seemed an empty promise. Therefore the first priority to ensure that the whole operation ran smoothly was to secure the regularity of the rice supply and, once this had been guaranteed, to create jobs which would allow the crews to earn their daily meals. The local gentry and the officials in the cities were perfectly aware that this was the only solution. Although foreign trade was prohibited by the imperial court, the coastal trade and local fishing conducted by small-sized junks was still permitted and was run under the supervision of the local officials. The first mission assigned to Iquan was to escort the rice-transport junks which were on their way to Ch’ao-chou, close to the border between Kuang-tung and Fu-chien provinces, and after he arrived there to purchase rice for the people of Amoy.18 Because it was harvested twice a year, in spring and autumn, Ch’ao-chou rice had to be transported to Amoy before the end of summer. The transportation of rice by sea had become a matter of routine in ensuring the supply to the Amoy market, as the Dutch witnessed in the following years:

‘In China every year, sometimes more and sometimes less, as the people are suffering from the piracy in the south and are ground down by starvation, they have to be fed by vessels of 25-50 last, laden with rice, from Amoy and areas nearby, bound for the food coast…… our cruising vessels have already witnessed that in one day alone in the months of June and July, some 40 to 50 junks sail by hugging the Chinese coast north of Nan-ao Island, each and every one loaded with rice and coarse wares.’19

18 Ibid. 22. ‘Nowadays Cheng Chih-lung escorts the rice-transport flotilla.’
19 VOC 1105, Missive van Hans Putmans uijt het jacht Der Goes aen de camer Amsterdam [Letter from Governor Hans Putmans on the yacht Der Goes to the Amsterdam Chamber], Chiu-lung River, 14 Oct.1632, fo. 198v. Each last equalled 1,250 kilograms, therefore 20-25 last would equal 25-31 tons. Cf. Judith
THE SURVIVAL GAME 1628-1631

Chinese sources mention that the rice-transportation fleet consisted of slightly over thirty junks in 1631, a figure which reveals the scale of this trans-provincial rice trade.20

Once the rice supply had been put back on a sound footing, most of the people were happy to return to their villages where they could be reunited with their families. By the end of the summer of 1628, only 4,000 to 5,000 jobless people still remained in Amoy.21 Iquan ignored these people. He might have hoped that the new Grand Co-ordinator, Hsiung Wên-ts’an, would be willing to pay salaries and sign these people up as citizen militia members. His ideas struck a chord with the majority of the gentry in Chang-chou and Ch’üan-chou prefectures. However, as mentioned earlier, since Iquan’s official title had been granted in name only, there was no way that these men could be paid from the public budget. The new Grand Co-ordinator, Hsiung Wên-ts’an, refused to acquiesce in Iquan’s demands and one of his contemporaries commented on this stalemate:

‘The gentry and the citizens in Chang-chou and Ch’üan-chou prefectures petitioned that salaries be paid to Iquan and his followers, but the Grand Co-ordinator[Hsiung Wên-ts’an] insisted that he would not pay these. I am afraid the Grand Co-ordinator might have already displeased quite a large number of people.’ 22

20 Ts’ao, Ching-hai Chi-lüeh, 41.’ Recently the thirty junks of rice merchants sailed in the pirate flotilla and the latter did not harass the former. This was proof that these pirates had been subjugated.’
21 Ibid. 29. ‘His gang still consisted of 4 to 5,000 people. He would have like to disband them but it seemed impossible.’
22 Tung, Ch’ung-hsiang-chi hsüan-lu, 71.
CHAPTER THREE

The report written by Grand Co-ordinator Hsiung Wên-ts’an mentions how urgently Iquan requested salaries as he cooled his heels waiting to receive the formal sanction by the emperor:

‘After Iquan had submitted himself to the imperial court, on the one hand on every single occasion he ignored the assignment of his superiors. Meanwhile, on the other hand whether day or night, he demanded salaries be paid to his people... fortunately I did not hand him a single penny.’

If the truth be told, Grand Co-ordinator Hsiung Wên-ts’an did not have enough money in the treasury to pay any salaries because his coffers had been drained by the cost of the military campaign mounted to expel the Dutch from the Pescadores in 1624. His hands were further tied because the new tax-revenue was earmarked to be spent on building new war-junks and on casting new cannons. There was no help for it, Iquan was going to have to solve his financial crisis by himself, because he was the one responsible for leading these people into this impasse. As the party accountable, it was up to him to find a way to keep a balance between rice consumption and silver supply among these vagrants, while simultaneously he had to try to persuade them to settle down and pick up the threads of their normal lives again. He almost failed to meet this challenge because everyone’s life was dispensable in such a harsh environment, but somehow, undeterred, Iquan managed to pull himself out of this hell with a little help from the local gentry. About two months after Iquan received the emperor’s sanction, his close comrade Li K’uei-ch’i (Quichii[D.]), chose to desert him and resume his piratical career. In view of the seemingly insurmountable problems facing him at


24 Ts’ao, Ching-hai Chi-lüeh, 29. ‘They cannot be disbanded because their neighbours insist on killing pirates. These neighbours had not been able to defeat the pirates when they were confronted with them earlier, but they would be able to kill
that time, most of Iquan’s followers chose to throw in their lot with this renegade. With envious and disapproving eyes they had seen how Iquan fawned on the officials and the gentry while he was less than generous to them who had been his faithful followers. In their eyes his behavior almost verged on the betrayal of his pirate brethren. While he was doing his best to set up a commercial network, he had no other choice as all other avenues were blocked. This task would have proved impossible without the help of the gentry, or more precisely, the investors and potential clients who were willing to back the trade for feeding those pirates who had surrendered. Therefore, as they were totally ignorant of the diplomatic niceties of this game, most of the members of his band chose to join Li K’uei-ch’i and deserted him in droves, taking all their vessels, goods, weapons and capital with them. Overcome by exhaustion, Iquan wept and railed to one of his close comrades but he did not betray his raw emotions to his newly won rich gentry-patrons. Li Kuei-ch’i had followed Iquan’s lead and remained in Taiwan, after all they shared some common past. In the end, even this old comrade lost his trust in him. Iquan was now playing for very high stakes.

disarmed pirates who had surrendered. No wonder they were still crowding into Amoy for they could not return to their hometowns.’

25 Hsiung, ‘Fu-chien hsün-fu hsiung ts’an-chieh-t’ieh’, 22. ‘Iquan stored several hundreds of thousands taels of cash without even sharing them with his followers’; Ts’ao, Ching-hai Chi-lüeh, 31. ‘Iquan is disposed to make friends with rich families, nobles, officials. He is very proud of his noble guests, and has spent large sums of money on entertaining them.’

26 Ibid. 32. ‘It is said that Brigade Commander Chang was Iquan’s best friend. After Li K’uei-ch’i had betrayed him and sailed off, Iquan did his best to appear normal and talked calmly with Provision-Master Wang. Only after he saw Brigade Commander Chang did he cry out and collapsed.’

27 VOC 1093, Resolutie genomens bij den commandeur [Gerard. Frederiksz] de Wit ende den raet, Taiwan, 16 Oct. 1626, fos. 378°v. The Dutch in Taiwan decided to send soldiers to the village of Soulang slightly north of their settlement, in an attempt to capture Li K’uei-ch’i.
CHAPTER THREE

Iquan and the VOC engage in smuggling

Li K’uei-ch’i turned his back on Iquan when it gradually began to dawn on him that he no longer counted as his equal. After Iquan had been granted his imperial sanction, he thrice summoned Li K’uei-ch’i to have a meeting with the coastal defence official in Fu-chou but Li K’uei-ch’i refused and sailed away with all his fleet. Not long afterwards Iquan’s suspicions were aroused and, in a state of alarm, he rushed home to Amoy where he promptly stationed 600 of his soldiers as a guard. His action was justified when Li K’uei-ch’i’s people sailed into Amoy Harbour on 30 October and took the market place outside the city wall by storm, plundering all the goods they could lay their hands on in the process.28 Five days later, Iquan received help from the militia stationed in the environs of Ch’üan-chou prefecture, among them the naval militia men recruited from among the fishermen. On the sixth day, Li K’uei-ch’i withdrew with his fleet of 3,000 people.29 Now Iquan had to assume the sole responsibility of paying his troops because, if he did not have a permanent force at his disposal, he could not even guard himself against his former followers.30

If a person happened to be in possession of junks and sailors, the traditional way to increase his income was to participate in foreign trade. But in 1628, with everything awry as a consequence of the disturbances along the coast, the emperor had issued an edict forbidding any overseas trade.31 This edict extinguished the hope of these sailors at a loose end who were hoping to engage in regular foreign trade to make a living. Li K’uei-ch’i’s betrayal of

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28 Ts’ao, Ching-hai Chi-lüeh, 31.
29 Ibid. 28.
30 Ibid. 32.
31 Chu, ‘Ping-pu t’i-hsing ping-k’ê ch’ao-ch’u fu-chien hsûn-fu chu t’i-kao, not dated’, 5. This suggestion was approved by the emperor on 26 March 1628.
Iquan might have been a consequence of this calamitous edict. The order had originally been issued by the previous Grand Co-ordinator, Chu I-fêng, who proclaimed that ‘no merchants will be allowed to sail in this year (1628). Any merchant or official who violates this order will be treated as a criminal.’ 32 The order arrived in Fu-chien province around April 33 and, once it had been made public, merchants in Chang-chou and Ch’üan-chou had no alternative but to engage in smuggling. Generally speaking, only pirates traded in contraband and officials were expected to live on the salaries they were paid by the emperor. The fly in the ointment was that Iquan’s title was that of an official in spe, he had to prove himself before it was officially sanctioned. How could he possibly pay his soldiers if he was unable to conduct any trade (legal or otherwise)?

This catalogue of disasters made life difficult for Iquan. Between February and August, he had to come to terms with the way his life had changed in such a dramatic way. These sudden changes embarrassed his old comrades, the VOC merchants in Taiwan, Japan and Batavia even more than they did him.

As far as the Dutch were concerned, before the end of the year 1627 when Commander De Wit had answered the appeal of the previous Grand Co-ordinator, Chu I-fêng, to sweep the seas clean of all pirates as proclaimed in the edict of the Chinese emperor, Iquan was a dispensable pawn. Grand Co-ordinator Chu I-fêng and Commander Yü Tzu-kao had both promised the Dutch free trade as their reward if they made short shrift of Iquan. Entertaining these high hopes, Commander Cornelis de Wit advanced a sum

32 Ibid. ‘Now it has been decided that the 1628 oceanic trade will be forbidden at the suggestion of the Grand Co-ordinator. All vessels have been prevented from sailing.’
33 Kawaguchi Choji, T’ai-wan ké-chú chih[A History of Taiwan during Separation], TW no.1, 8. ‘In the third month (in lunar calendar, thus April of 1628), the imperial edict declared that the oceanic trade of Chang-chou and Chüan-chou inhabitants was prohibited.’
CHAPTER THREE

of money to Commander Yü Tzu-kao’s merchants and to Squadron Leader Hsü Hsin-su, expecting a huge amount of raw silk in return. On 29 October 1627, after the Dutch had handed over no less than 66,550 rials to Hsü Hsin-su, they received only 8,150 catties raw silk in return, because, they got cold feet because of Iquan’s threats and had been forced to beat a hasty retreat.  

On the 19 November, before he left for Batavia Commander Cornelis de Wit ordered three junks to sail to Amoy to pick up the remainder of the raw silk. Unfortunately they ran into pirates close to shore and were plundered. By January 1628, when Iquan’s fleet showed up in the roadstead of Amoy, Hsü Hsin-su was still trying to load the raw silk for which the Dutch had paid, because he was still expecting the three Dutch junks which were plundered by the pirates and would never arrive. Around about February, the Dutch in Taiwan sent another three junks. The first of these junks was accompanied by the junk of the Chinese official appointed to govern the Pescadores and she was loaded with a cargo of rice (perhaps for Hsü Hsin-su). All three were taken by Iquan’s people, and it seems the

34 VOC 1098, Missive van Pieter Nuijts naer Batavia aan gouverneur generael [Jan Pietersz.] Coen, Taiwan, 14 Aug. 1629, fos. 408v; Generale Missive, 6 Jan. 1628, in Cheng, De VOC en Formosa, 69-71. Because all Hsü Hsin-su’s raw silk was for sale at a fixed price of 142 taels per picul, equals to 194.5 rials (1 tael=3.5 F= 70 stuivers; 1 rial=51 stuivers), which should have been enough to pay for 34,200 catties raw silk. Here ‘rial’ refers to the Spanish silver coin piastra fuerte which is written ‘reaal van achtén’ or ‘reaal’ in Dutch but is called piece-of-eight by the English. Cf. Kristof Glamann, Dutch-Asiatic Trade 1620-1740, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1958), 50.


36 VOC 1094, Missive van gouverneur Pieter Nuijts naer Batavia aen gouverneur generael [Pieter de Carpentier], Taiwan, 28 Feb. 1628, fo. 130v.

37 Ibid.

38 VOC 1094, Missive van gouverneur Pieter Nuijts naer Batavia aen gouverneur generael [Pieter de Carpentier], Taiwan, 15 Mar. 1628, fo. 134v.
Dutch then despaired of collecting their goods. At the same time, Iquan also captured a Dutch yacht which was returning from Japan laden with silver. Hence the original plan so carefully devised by the Dutch was smashed to smithereens by Iquan and later the insult was heaped on injury when it was reported that the new Grand Co-ordinator, Hsiung Wên-ts’an, had been reconciled with Iquan. Still fairly uncertain about whether free trade would be granted under these new conditions, the Dutch prevented the Japanese merchants newly arrived in Taiwan from engaging in the silk trade in Amoy. This high-handed treatment flared up into a violent conflict. The furious Japanese took the governor of Taiwan, Pieter Nuijts, hostage and seized 120.5 piculs of silk goods from the VOC warehouse by force. This action has been called the ‘Hamada Yahei Incident’ by later historians.\(^{39}\) From March to August, both Iquan and the Dutch were keen to make some more money by conducting an informal trade, which meant in fact that they had to engage in smuggling without any word of this reaching the ears of the Grand Co-ordinator.

**Initiation of family business**

The news of the reconciliation was confirmed when some letters written by Dutch captives were delivered to Taiwan at the beginning of June 1628.\(^{40}\) Governor Pieter Nuijts decided to try his luck and dispatch four yachts to Amoy.\(^{41}\) Somewhat earlier he had sent a letter from Taiwan to Iquan, telling

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\(^{40}\) VOC 1098, Resolutie [bij gouverneur Pieter Nuijts c.s] genomen in Taijouan, Taiwan, 5 Jun. 1628, fo. 404r.

\(^{41}\) VOC 1103, Missive van Pieter Nuijts naer Amsterdam aen de Camer Amsterdam,
him that Commander Cornelis de Witt’s hostility had been a grievous error and apologized as follows:

'We are ignorant of what caused the dispute, and therefore [unable] to judge who is right or wrong. We cannot afford to allow complaints to be made and take root on either side. Therefore pray do not leave us in the dark about the actual conditions, so that we can ascertain a just punishment for those who have brought this about, and be reconciled with Your Honour.'

The letter seems to have been effective, because Iquan released all the Dutch captives, including the yacht complete with all the cash and goods she was carrying. As a consequence of this gesture, the tacit trade between Chinese merchants and the Dutch carried on for about two months, but it was not long before the balance was upset again. Iquan might have been given some prior warning that the emperor’s sanction would be arriving at the beginning of August. Apprehensive that the new Grand Co-ordinator, Hsiung Wên-ts’an, might find out about his illegal dealings, Iquan asked Pieter Nuijts to leave at once, threatening that if he did not do so he would take up arms against the Dutch after 4 August. Soon after Nuijts had returned to Batavia, 30 Sept. 1631. fos. 389v-390r.

42 VOC 1094, Missive [van Pieter Nuijts] aan Icquan te seinden, Zeelandia, not dated Mar. 1628, fo. 127v. It is an enclosure to a letter written by Senior Merchant Cornelis van Neijenroode in Japan to the Governor-General in Batavia. There is no trace of the main letter but it should have been written by Pieter Nuijts who in charge of the Taiwan factory at that moment.


44 Generale Missive, 10 Feb.1629, in Cheng, De VOC en Formosa, 79; VOC 1096, Missive van gouverneur Pieter Nuijtz naer Batavia aen gouverneur generael [Jan Pietersz. Coen], Taiwan, 26 Oct. 1628, fo. 203v. According to Governor Pieter Nuijts’ report, this hostile gesture was elicited by Iquan’s reluctance to allow some merchants sell their raw silks at a lower price. But since it is known that Iquan offered the silk at
Taiwan, a special delegate dispatched by Grand Co-ordinator Hsiung Wên-ts'æn came to visit Zeelandia Castle. The delegate demanded Nuijts confirm that the Dutch had signed a private contract with Iquan and admit whether they had concluded peace with him? Governor Pieter Nuijts and the Council of Taiwan answered as follows:

‘... Although in response to the two letters received from the Governor, he[Iquan] has released the captured yacht the Westcappel, its crew and 863 taels of silver and some ammunition, clearly no verbal, or written treaty has been concluded. Indeed, His Honour (the Governor of Taiwan) is and will remain a friend of Your Excellency (the Grand Co-ordinator) and the Emperor of China....’

The Dutch governor Pieter Nuijts must have begin to be aware of the risk he was running of losing the trust of Chinese authorities and he also believed that the free trade treaty might be nullified because of the smuggling trade which had been thriving during June and July.

On the horns of a dilemma, Governor Nuijts decided to direct all his ships to the Chinese coast and transport the Grand Co-ordinator’s delegate back to the Chiu-lung River estuary on 12 August. Several days later, the five Dutch yachts under Nuijts’ command ran into Iquan’s fleet, which was returning from the south, probably from another mission to escort the rice-transportation junks. Eight to ten days later Iquan returned and four more

a price of 130 taels per picul, which was not only a price lower than that Hsü Hsin-su offered (142 taels) but also lower than the price he had agreed with Pieter Nuijts on 1 October (140 taels), Nuijts’ explanation was shaky.

45 VOC 1096, Resolutie [bij gouverneur Pieter Nuijts c.s]getrokken in de rivier Chincheo, Chiu-lung River, 12 Aug. 1628, fo. 216v; cf. VOC 1103, Missive van Pieter Nuijts naar Amsterdam aan de Camer Amsterdam, met bijlage, Batavia, 28 Dec. 1631, fos. 413v-414v.
46 Ibid. Five yachts and four ships. It is also mentioned that Governor-General’s order, which required Governor Nuijts to conclude the free trade treaty, had just arrived.
Chapter Three

Powerful Dutch ships arrived in Amoy. Iquan received his imperial sanction on 23 August. Perhaps the same day Nuijts invited him aboard on the yacht the Texel, and took him hostage. Nuijts has left the following description of the incident:

‘... (Iquan) was told that he must remain with us until our captains no longer had to face any opposition, or that news had been received from the Grand Co-ordinator in Fu-chou saying that the free trade conducted by the Hollanders was permitted conditional on the various promises. Otherwise, ... he would be transported to yacht the Arnmuijden.’

Iquan was kept confined in the yacht the Texel for almost one month. Obviously no response had arrived from Grand Co-ordinator Hsiung Wên-ts’an, since Iquan’s official title did not necessarily mean that he could count on the support of the court. The real purpose of his appointment had been to eliminate the menace threatening the sea trade, from either Chinese pirates or the Dutch ‘Barbarians.’ Under intense Dutch pressure, Iquan had pretended that he had the authority to allow all Chinese merchants to trade freely with the Dutch and the smuggling trade picked up again smoothly during Iquan’s detention. Iquan’s mother was the only person to take steps to rescue her son. She insisted that Nuijts should adapt/foster her youngest

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47 VOC 1096, Missive van Pieter Nuijts naer Batavia aen gouverneur generael [Jan Pietersz. Coen], Taiwan, 26 Oct. 1628, fos. 203’-204’.
48 VOC 1103, Missive van Pieter Nuijts naer Amsterdam aen de Camer Amsterdam, met bijlage, Batavia, 30 Sept.1631, fo. 390’.
49 VOC 1096, Missive van Pieter Nuijts uijt Zeelandia aen den gouverneur generaal [Jan Pietersz. Coen], Taiwan, 26 Oct. 1628, fo. 204’. The silence in Chinese sources about this incident implies that either the authorities were impotent to rescue Iquan or they were glad of the opportunity to get rid of him.
50 Iquan’s father married two wives. The first four sons were born to his first wife, Shu, and the fifth son was that of his second wife, Huang. It is not certain to whom Pieter Nuijts was referring. Iquan’s family members are recorded in ‘The Genealogical Chart of the Cheng Family’, cf : Cheng Chih-lung(comp.), Chêng-shih.
son as a guarantee of the commercial partnership between the Cheng family and the VOC. This hostage would be a pledge that Iquan would co-operate with the Dutch. It would be a commercial contract without formal written articles.

The truth about Iquan’s detention by the Dutch had to be concealed. His family must have spread the false rumour that he was being entertained by the Dutch. They would have feared that a treacherous follower might seize this opportunity to snatch his command. The ‘adoption show’ was played out with appropriate celebrations but the Dutch discovered that so-called ‘delegate of the Grand Co-ordinator’ whom they had dispatched to deliver their ultimate letter turned out to be a ‘recognized’ friend of Hsü Hsin-su. Therefore it was dubious whether the latter would have tried to help Iquan or was just attempting to string him along. In the meantime, Grand Co-ordinator Hsiung Wên-ts'an forwarded the formal documents confirming the emperor’s imperial sanction to Iquan’s house in Amoy.

Realizing that he was not achieving anything in terms of a ‘free trade treaty’ from the Chinese court, Governor Pieter Nuijts did a volte-face and took Iquan’s mother’s suggestion. He accepted Iquan’s younger brother as a security, and signed a tentative contract with Iquan on 1 October.

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51 VOC 1103, Resolutie over het accoord met Iquan [Resolution pertaining to the Contract Concluded with Iquan], Chiu-lung River, 1 Oct. 1628, fo. 415r.
52 Ibid.
53 VOC 1096, Het accoordt getrocken tusschen Pieter Nuijts ende Iquan, overste Mandorijn van Aijmoij op Taijouan [Contract Concluded in Taiwan between Pieter Nuijts and Iquan, Chief Mandarin of Amoy], Chiu-lung River, 1 Oct. 1628, fos. 124-125; VOC 1103, Missive van Pieter Nuijts naer Amsterdam aen de Camer Amsterdam, met bijlage, Batavia, 30 Sept. 1631. fos. 390r-391r.
CHAPTER THREE

commercial whirlpool. Within a fortnight of the Dutch departure from Amoy, Iquan’s old comrade Li K’uei-ch’i abandoned Iquan, taking with him all valuable resources which remained.

An-hai Harbour and the fishermen militia

From an emotional point of view it must have been acutely depressing for Iquan to be deserted by his old comrades but, from an economic point of view this incident served the purpose of reducing the expense of having to feed followers. Iquan now maintained his troops at the basic level of 600 soldiers. On land, whenever the situation necessitated it, he added some militia from the countryside of Ch’üan-chou, up to a total of 1,000 men. At sea he depended on a militia force composed of fishermen. He was not obliged to pay any expenses from his private purse for either of these forces. Li K’uei-ch’i and his fleet invaded Amoy on 2 January 1629 but he was defeated by Iquan’s troops including his hometown militia after a nine-days struggle. On 7 February, Iquan’s force pursued them to the coast of the province of Kuang-tung and in the course of this pursuit managed to persuade some of the vagrants to go home. A little later peace was restored and the rice trade between Amoy and Ch’ao-chou could be resumed without any more danger of assaults by Li K’uei-ch’i. It was rumoured that this pirate chief had decided to remain in Macao but, all of a sudden in July, Li

54 Ts’ao, Ching-hai Chi-lüeh, 36; 39.
55 Ibid, 39; Chang Yen-têng, ‘Ping-k’ê ch’ao-ch’u chê-chiang hsün-fu chang yen-têng t’i-pên[ Report from the Grand Co-ordinator of Chê-chiang, Chang Yen-têng, Copy preserved in the Ministry of War], 16 May. 1629’, in TWYH (ed.), Chêng-shih shih-liao ch’u-pien, 14. ‘ After Li K’uei-chi betrayed and deserted Iquan, his gangs sailed to the border area between Fu-chien and Kuang-tung, including Ch’ên Ch’êng-yü (which was written Zansingouw in Dutch) in approximately 600 junks …’
56 Ts’ao, Ching-hai Chi-lüeh, 41.
57 VOC 1098, Missive van gouverneur Hans Putmans uijt ’t Casteel Zeelandia aen de
K’uei-ch’i sailed back to Amoy with several big junks of the Kuang-tung type and ambushed Iquan.58

‘(We) have heard that the pirate Li K’uei-c’hi (Quechi[D.]) has destroyed all Iquan’s junks and has made himself master of the Chiu-lung River area.’59

After Amoy had been under siege for about forty days, the Ch’üan-chou gentry sent the Grand Co-ordinator petitions begging him to dispatch some junks from Fu-chou, because the size of these vessels was comparable to that of the big Kuang-tung junks.60 When Li K’uei-ch’i heard the news that the Grand Co-ordinator was planning to dispatch 100 Fu-chou junks southwards to assist Iquan, he decided to steal a march on 12 August. He attacked the Grand Co-ordinator’s fleet in Fu-chou before Iquan had had the chance join it. According to the news received in Taiwan on 25 September 1629:

‘… a wancan has arrived which brought us the news that the Grand Co-ordinator (who had fitted out an armada about 300 junks in Fu-chou) had summoned Iquan from Amoy to put him in command of these junks as an ‘Admiral of the Sea’ and expel Li K’uei-ch’i. When Li K’uei-ch’i was informed of this, he suddenly moved his fleet there (before Iquan and his

Ed. heren bewinthebberen [in Amsterdam], Taiwan, 15 Sept. 1629, fo 32v.
58 Ts’ai, Ch’ing-pai t’ang gao, II, 861. ‘These rebellious pirates including Li K’uei-ch’i and others like him, invaded again. Their junks were constructed in Kuang-tung and therefore larger than the Fu-chienese junks of Cheng Chih-lung and Cheng Chih-hu. Because of their smaller size, the latter were not able to compete with the former.’ Ts’a’o, Ching-hai Chi-lüeh, 48. These Kuang-tung-made large junks were called ‘Wu-wei ta-ch’uan [big junk with a black stern]’.
59 VOC 1098, Missive van gouverneur Hans Putmans uijt ’t Casteel Zeelandia aen de Ed. heren bewinthebberen [in Amsterdam], Taiwan, 15 Sept. 1629, fo. 32v.
60 Ts’ai, Ch’ing-pa- t’ang gao, II, 861. ‘The junks constructed in Fu-chou and fishing boats built in Chi-liao (coast of Hsin-hua county) are as large and as steady as the Kuang-tung junks…’
CHAPTER THREE

people approached) and attacked the above-mentioned armada. He took the biggest and strongest junks with him, and set the others on fire...\(^{61}\)

It was just the same old story, Grand Co-ordinator Hsiung Wên-ts’an had to appease Li K’uei-ch’i in the same way as Grand Co-ordinator Chu had done previously in the case of Iquan. Accordingly the Grand Co-ordinator sent a petition to the emperor asking that Li K’uei-ch’i be treated in the same manner as Iquan had been and signed a cease fire with this pirate during the autumn.\(^{62}\) During the truce, Iquan and his troops remained inside the city walls of Amoy with Li K’uei-ch’i’s followers stationed outside.

Since the Li K’uei-ch’i had now stepped into Iquan’s shoes as it were, another pirate by the name of Ch’u Ts’ai-lao secretly contacted the Grand Co-ordinator to solicit better conditions than those granted Li K’uei-c’hi.\(^{63}\) This request instigated a conspiracy against Li K’uei-ch’i. Local officials secretly set about fitting out a fleet of junks in the Ch’üan-chou region and offered them to Iquan. On 9 February 1630, Iquan and Ch’u Ts’ai-lao launched a surprise attack on Li K’uei-ch’i and were able to capture him that same day.\(^{64}\)

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\(^{61}\) VOC 1098, Missive van Hans Putmans uit ’t Casteel Zeelandia aan d’Ed. heer gouverneur generaal Jan Pietersz. Coen, Taiwan, 28 Sept. 1629, fo. 41v.

\(^{62}\) Ku, ‘Appendix I: Cheng Chih-lung shou-fu’, 150. ‘The Fu-chienese pirate Li K’uei-ch’i surrendered to the officials with Cheng Chih-lung. Later he fell out with Cheng Chih-lung and reverted to piracy. Thereafter Li K’uei-ch’i announced he would surrender to Grand Co-ordinator Hsiung Wên-ts’an. Hsiung Wên-ts’an reported this case to the emperor and the emperor allowed Hsiung Wên-ts’an to handle it at his own discretion.’

\(^{63}\) ‘Ch’u Ts’ai-lao’ is noted in formal Chinese sources most likely as ‘Chung Pin’. However, since he is mostly referred to in Dutch archives as Ch’u Ts’ai-lao, I shall use this name. Cf. Shên Yün, T’ai-wan Chêng-shih shih-mo [The begin and end of the Cheng regime in Taiwan], TW no. 15, 5.

\(^{64}\) Ts’ao, Ching-hai Chi-lüeh, 56.
THE SURVIVAL GAME 1628-1631

As Iquan had been absent from Amoy since the end of September, a new Regional Commander, Chao T’ing, was put in charge of the coastal defence. Regional Commander Chao had sedulously flattered Ch’u Ts’ai-lao and urged him on to betray Li K’uei-ch’i. The upshot was that Ch’u Ts’ai-lao did succeed in usurping Li K’uei-ch’i’s position. On 9 March, the emperor assented to Li K’uei-ch’i being accorded the same treatment as Iquan had received. Once this matter had been settled, it was decided that Iquan would be based along the coast north of Ch’üan-chou, while Li K’uei-ch’i would be stationed along south of Ch’üan-chou. Since Ch’u Ts’ai-lao had already taken Li K’uei-ch’i’s place, he sent a letter informing the Dutch in Taiwan of his new position:

‘The Grand Co-ordinator has ordered me to accompany Iquan to Amoy, so that I might join Iquan there to serve the emperor properly.’

After Li K’uei-ch’i had been arrested, Iquan returned to Amoy. In March, Governor Hans Putmans of Taiwan dispatched some Chinese

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65 He was appointed the successor of Regional Commander Yü Tzu-kao not long after Grand Co-ordinator Hsiung Wên-ts’an arrived. Although his was a formal court appointment, the garrison in Amoy had long been unmanned. The new garrison under his command should have been equal in size to the number of Iquan’s newly recruited soldiers. Hsiung, ‘Fu-chien hsûn-fu hsiung ts’an-chieh-t’ieh’, 23. cf. The Minister of War, Yen Ming-t’ai, ‘Wei min-chiang pu-k’ê pu-ch’u, min-fu pu-k’ê pu-liu têng shih on 13 Mar. 1628 [Suggest to Remove the Military Commanders of Fu-chien while Keep the Grand Co-ordinator of Fu-chien at Station ’], in: Ch’ên Yün-lin, Ming-ch’ing Kung-ts’ang t’ai-wan tang-an hui-pien, Vol. 3, 81-115 at 113-5. Chao T’ing was ordered to take this position by Emperor’s order on 13 March 1628.

66 Ts’a’o, Ching-hai Chi-lüeh, 47. ‘Chao Ting got on well with pirates.’

67 Ku, ‘Appendix I: Cheng Chih-lung shou-fu’, 150. ‘The Fu-chien waters in the south of Chang-chou have been put under Li K’uei-ch’i’s control and the Fu-chien waters to the north of Chang-chou are under Cheng Chih-lung’s control.’

68 VOC 1101, Missive van Tousialack [Ch’u Ts’ai-lao] naer Taijouan aen Hans Putmans, [received in]Taiwan, 8 April 1630, fo. 474v.
CHAPTER THREE

merchants who were living in Batavia with instructions to sail to Amoy and Hai-ch’êng city to sell the Company pepper.\(^\text{69}\) Iquan lost no time in sending a message to the Dutch factory in Taiwan ordering 200 piculs of pepper at approximately the same price as the Batavian Chinese merchants had asked.\(^\text{70}\) When the Dutch junk arrived in Amoy, its crew were witness to the fact that Grand Co-ordinator Hsiung Wên-ts’an sent a mandarin to pay the salaries of Iquan and Ch’u Ts’ai-lao, as their reward for defeating Li K’uei-ch’i. As neutral parties, the Dutch had also taken part in this brave action and hence Grand Co-ordinator Hsiung Wên-ts’an was also acknowledging the friendship and amenability of the Dutch, an intimation that to some degree at least free trade would granted:

‘This mandarin praised us extravagantly on behalf of the Grand Co-ordinator and because our endeavours [implied] that there is no doubt that we shall be granted free trade. All kinds of goods will be able to be brought in abundance to us in Taiwan. Some merchants have asked us to procure six or seven licences from the Grand Co-ordinator, intimating that if the licences were granted to them, they would be able to trade with us freely.’\(^\text{71}\)

Iquan began to distribute the pepper he had bought from the Dutch, as Ch’u Ts’ai-lao mentions in above-mentioned letter:

‘The merchants have concluded a contract with Iquan, for which he went to

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\(^{69}\) VOC 1101, Resolutie des Comptoirs Taiwan [genomen bij Hans Putmans], Taiwan, 27 Feb. 1630. fo. 424\(^4\).

\(^{70}\) VOC 1101, Resolutie des Comptoirs Taiwan [genomen bij Hans Putmans], Taiwan, 6 Mar. 1630. fo. 425\(^5\).

see the Grand Co-ordinator so that the trade would be conducted in the proper fashion'.72

Since Ch’u Ts’ai-lao was absent from Amoy Harbour, he was excluded from the luxury trade and therefore unable to build a proper source of income for his troops. Therefore, he had no other recourse than to squeeze this out of trade by violence.

‘On the 10th of this month (April), about 20 small junks of his (Ch’u Ts’ai-lao) returned to the harbour (of Amoy). The crews of these vessels came ashore and behaved brutally, smashing some houses to pieces… hardly a person was to be seen in the suburbs, and no resistance was offered.’73

The same scene was witnessed by a Chinese official in the vicinity.74 Ch’u Ts’ai-lao intended to redirect the proceeds he stole from Iquan’s trade into his own pocket. He therefore positioned his main force at the entrance of Amoy Bay and sent some of his small junks into Amoy Harbour to harass those merchants who did business with either the Dutch or Iquan. Their special targets were those merchants who associated with Iquan. Because his base had been weakened and he was deprived of his own vessels, Iquan’s only option was to retreat from Amoy to An-hai.75 Later, Iquan’s merchants from An-hai came directly to the Dutch ships anchored at Wu-yü

72 VOC 1101, Missive van Tousailack [Ch’u Ts’ai-lao] naer Taijouan aen Hans Putmans, [received in]Taiwan, 8 Apr.1630, fos. 473'-474'.
73 VOC 1101, Missive van Paulus Traudenius naer Taijouan aen Hans Putmans, Chiulung River, 11 Apr. 1630, fo. 475r.
74 Ts’ao, Ching-hai Chi-lueh, 50. ‘The pirates have become extremely reckless. They sail around capturing people from all around Amoy. …The residential command positioned on the city wall, [although] seeing such mayhem, ordered his soldiers to fire not a single bullet and kept his soldiers within the city, resisting any action which would attack the pirates.’
75 VOC 1101, Missive van Hans Putmans naer Batavia aen den gouverneur generael Jacques Specx, Taiwan, 5 Oct. 1630. fo. 412'.
CHAPTER THREE

Island. Unlike the town of Amoy which is built on a deep water bay, An-hai is located well within a shallow estuary. Big ships and junks had to anchor near the island of Quemoy in Wei-t’ou Bay (in Dutch records ‘Erasmus’ Bay) outside the river mouth. It was said:

‘This is a very narrow, shallow river, which almost always runs dry at low water level,... with the exception of the mouth.’

As a consequence of its location, An-hai city was perfectly sheltered from the threat of a barrage of heavy cannon because of its shallow water. Its geographical position also made it the perfect headquarters for the fishermen militia and the rice-transportation junks. Hence, supported by a relatively small number of very well-disciplined soldiers, Iquan’s mercenary company had no great difficulty holding out at An-hai. Because the foreign trade in luxury items was the most important pillar of his enterprise, Iquan was zealous in his efforts to have it legalized, but before Iquan had been able to arrange the legal licences for the Dutch, Ch’u Ts’ai-lao captured a Dutch yacht on 23 June and later took another three Dutch junks after he returned from his mission to Nan-ao Island. Later he realized Iquan was residing in An-hai, so he decided to blockade Wei-t’ou Bay, using as his excuse that Iquan was a traitor. Iquan sent a letter to the Dutch authorities in Taiwan asking for help and declaring that the chance of setting up a legal trade was at stake:

‘I shall do my best here. I have proposed free trade to the Grand

76 VOC 1101, Missive van Nicolaas Kouckebacker naer Taijouan aen Hans Putmans, Chiu-lung River, 2 Jun. 1630, fo. 484’.

77 VOC 1101, Missive van Hans Putmans naer Batavia aen den gouverneur generael Jacques Specx, Taiwan, 5 Oct. 1630, fo. 412’.

78 VOC 1101, Missive van Tousailack naer Taijouan aen Hans Putmans, [received in]Taiwan, 18 May 1630, fo. 480’. His new mission was to eliminate the pirate Yeh Wo-chên written as ‘Nooting’ (in Dutch) who had occupied places in the vicinity of Nan-ao Island.
THE SURVIVAL GAME 1628-1631

**Co-ordinator through the Regional Commander, Chao T’ing (Tingia[D.]) and he has consented to it. Several merchants have contacted the Grand Co-ordinator personally about this matter, saying that he will grant a licence to them.** 79

Meanwhile, Ch’u Ts’ai-lao had not remained inactive and had made further moves. He prepared to intercept the Amoy junks homeward bound from Manila in the hope of accumulating enough capital to build up his own foreign trade. On the 22nd, somewhere in the vicinity of Wei-t’ou Bay he captured around a Ch’üan-chou junk returning from Manila with a cargo valued at about 28,000 rials. 80 He also plundered fishing-boats and rice-transporters. 81 Ch’u Ts’ai-lao even dared to send several small-sized war junks into the An-hai River, where they set fire to Iquan’s junks. 82 While he was carrying out these depredations, the fishermen militia, on whom Iquan depended, had all sailed to the Kuang-tung coast to fish, depriving Iquan of any means to fight back, so he prudently stayed put in An-hai, 83 where he busied himself purchasing goods there to meet the Dutch orders. Now the only possible threat to Ch’u Ts’ai-lao were the new war-junks which were under construction in some shipyards around Fuchou. 84 In a letter to the Governor of Taiwan dated 26 August, Iquan informed the former that he was leaving to sail to Fu-ch’ing (a district near Fu-chou). 85 Obviously this move was a reaction to Ch’u Ts’ai-lao’s movements. Ch’u actually sailed out with a

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79 VOC 1101, Missive van Iquan naer Taijouan aen Hans Putmans, [received in] Taiwan, 22 Jun. 1630, fo. 486v.
80 VOC 1101, Missive van Hans Putmans naer Batavia aen den gouverneur generael Jacques Speex, Taiwan, 5 Oct. 1630, fos. 413r-v; fo. 421v.
81 Ts’ao, *Ching-hai Chi-lüeh*, 58-59.
82 Ibid, 46.
83 Ibid, 58.
84 Ibid.
85 VOC 1101, Missive van Iquan naer Taijouan aen Hans Putmans, [received in] Taiwan, 26 Aug. 1630, fos. 497v.
CHAPTER THREE

fleet of fifty junks bound for Hsiao-ch’êng (Tsioïia[D.]), a place near Fu-chou. His absence gave Iquan’s business partners the opportunity remove their stores from Amoy to An-hai:

‘…. upon seeing that Ch’u Ts’ai-lao leaving, Iquan’s people and the inhabitants of Amoy city grabbed everything which was his and on which he relied. They also killed (according to what we have heard) some of his followers. Thereupon, fearing that Ch’u Ts’ai-lao might come back, they returned to An-hai.’

In September, Ch’u Ts’ai-lao’s fleet ran into a severe typhoon and fifty to sixty of his junks foundered. It was only then that Iquan’s lucky star rose again because his losses meant that Ch’u Ts’ai-lao was no longer able to blockade Wei-t’ou Bay. On 15 October, before Ch’u Ts’ai-lao had returned to Amoy, the Mobile Crops Commander of Ch’üan-nan (Ch’üan-nan You-chi[C.], Jouckicq[D.]) and the Mobile Crops Commander of Wu-t’ung (Wu-t’ung You-Chi[C.], Gotoncquio[D.]) of the Amoy residential troops promulgated a placard forbidding anyone to trade with Dutch vessels which happened to be in the vicinity of Amoy, but by this time Iquan had already assembled all the merchandise Dutch needed in An-hai:

‘…The Chinese merchant Jancon has informed His Honour Governor Putmans, that various commodities such as gold, silk, candied sugar and other sorts of sugar etc. can be obtained free from interference by anyone in

86 VOC 1101, Missive van Hans Putmans naer Batavia aen den gouverneur generael Jacques Specx, Taiwan, 5 Oct. 1630. fo. 413³.
87 Ibid., fo. 414³.
88 Ibid., fo. 423³.
THE SURVIVAL GAME 1628-1631

An-hai…"90

But Ch’u Ts’an-lao was not finished yet. Within a very brief space of
time, he reappeared in Amoy in the name of the new Regional Commander,
Chao T’ing, and dispatched some messengers to Governor Hans Putmans
whose ship was anchored in the Chiulung River estuary. He demanded that
every commodity the Dutch shipped to Amoy be traded through his agency
only.91 Such a condition was unacceptable to Putmans because it
contravened the Governor-General’s instructions to him.92 Both sides never
fully reached an agreement on trade. While they were haggling about
conditions, Iquan was gradually building up his naval force in An-hai. At the
beginning of December, Ch’u Ts’ai-lao again led his full force away from
Amoy with the plan to secure some advantageous anchorages which, he
thought, would obviate his being encircled by Iquan.93 Notwithstanding
Iquan attacked Ch’u Ts’ai-lao on 16 December:

‘…Iquan attacked Ch’u Ts’ai-lao, burned his brother’s junk and drove him
off while he was scuttling away in a northerly direction with a few junks.
Several days later, Ch’u Ts’ai-lao’s vice-admiral deserted him and
surrendered to Iquan with four large and six small junks. …The pirate chief
himself escaped.’94

90 Ibidem.
91 VOC 1102, Resolutie in de rivier Chincheo gearresteert [door Hans Putmans ende
raedt int Jacht Bommel ter reede voor Aijimoij inde rivier Chincheo], Chiu-lung River,
28 Nov. 1630, fo. 515v.
92 Ibid., fo. 517v.
93 VOC 1102, Resolutie in Taijouan gearresteert[door Hans Putmans ende raedt],
Taiwan, 21 Dec. 1630, fo. 521v.
‘Chung Liu (alias Chung Pin or Ch’u Ts’ai-lao) was defeated in the sea battle of
P’ing-lin Bay on 16 December 1630. He was killed and his followers fled…. On 28th
the remainder of pirates arrived in P’ing-hai. They were approached by Cheng’s
CHAPTER THREE

When he was apprised of the news, the Dutch governor was excited about the potential trading opportunities this opened up and decided to transport 80,000 silver rials and 2,100 piculs of pepper and some other tropical commodities to the Chiu-lung River estuary. The Dutch were able to enjoy selling their merchandise without interference until 27 January, when the official Chinese New Year began and all shops closed as everyone went home to celebrate the spring festival. The Dutch merchants decided to send Senior Merchant Paulus Traudenius to An-hai:

‘His honour Governor Putmans and the Council decided to dispatch Senior Merchant Traudenius to An-hai on the junk the Tancoya with 4,000 rials, in order to purchase rice and to use this as a pretext to see whether he would be able to get hold of some gold and silk, and also[to spy out] what kinds of commodities the merchants there have, so as to spur them on to bring these goods [for trade], because the sale of pepper has been disappointing and hence it has to be stored with the Company. Therefore we should get rid of it. The junk should be loaded with 50 piculs of pepper and 15 piculs of Elephant tusks to be exchanged by the said Traudenius for some gold, silk, or porcelain. In order to facilitate Traudenius’ access to the house of Theyma [the mother of Iquan] and her son Cheng Hung-K’wei (Zija[D], Iquan’s younger brother), each one of them should be offered six bags of pepper and six yards of tusk.’

Because almost no one came to the Dutch yachts for pepper during Chinese New Year, the Governor and Council decided to offer Iquan more soldiers. Faced with such a menacing threat, they abandoned their war-junks and ammunition, and fled to Kuang-tung in small boats.’

VOC 1102, Resolutie in Taijouan gearreest[door Hans Putmans ende raedt], Taiwan, 4 Jan. 1631, fo. 523v.

VOC 1102, Resolutie in de rivier Chincheo gearreest[door Hans Putmans ende raedt int Jacht Wieringen ter reede Aijmoij inde riviere Chincheo], Chiu-lung River, 27 Jan. 1631, fo. 524v.
THE SURVIVAL GAME 1628-1631

pepper if he paid the last consignment of commodities off. Therefore, although the Dutch yachts moored by preference in the Chiu-lung River estuary or in the Amoy roadstead, they sent one or two junks to An-hai. On March 17, Iquan, who had been busily fitting out more his armada in An-hai, eventually managed to destroy the whole of Ch’u Ts’ai-lao’s force. This victory marked the last act of the game of survival played out by the pirates. Although the Dutch did not take part in it, they did begin to play a co-operative role soon after they stepped on the stage. They stopped cruising and let the junks from Manila return to their home ports in exchange for being allowed to enter the Chiu-lung River area by the Chinese Coastal Defence Force. On 12 June 1631, the triumph over the pirates was reported to the emperor’s court in Peking. Iquan might have felt encouraged by some promises from the Grand Co-ordinator of Fu-chien, Hsiung Wên-ts’an, according to a message received by the Dutch in Taiwan:

‘...Because Iquan will shortly be stationed in Amoy as Mobile Crops Commander [of Ch’üan-nan(C)] and his brother, Cheng Hung-k’uei [Sicia(D)], as Mobile Crops Commander of Wu-t’ung, our trade will depend greatly on him. Iquan requires 2,000 taels (he does not specify what for in his letter)....’

97 VOC 1102, Resolutie in de rivier Chincheo gearresteert[door Hans Putmans ende raedt int Jacht Wieringen ter reede voor Aijoij inde riviere Chincheo ], Chiu-lung River, 8 Feb. 1631, fos. 524'-525'.
98 VOC 1102, Resolutie in de rivier Chincheo gearresteert[door Hans Putmans ende raedt in t jacht Wieringhen liggende ter reede voor Aijoij], Chiu-lung River, 1 Mar. 1631, fos. 525'; Dagregister Zeelandia, 1:1629-1641, 45. 5 Apr. 1631.
99 VOC 1102, Resolutie in Taijouan gearresteert[door Hans Putmans ende raedt], Taiwan, 29 May. 1631. fos. 532''; fo.533'.
100 Wang, ‘Appendix 1: Ch ’ung-chên ch ’ang-pien hsüan-lu[Selections]’, 158.
101 VOC 1102, Resolutie in Taijouan gearresteert[door Hans Putmans ende raedt], Taiwan, 4 Jul. 1631, fo. 533'. According to a letter written by Grand Co-ordinator Tsou Wei-lien to Iquan, he tried to encourage him by recommending him for the
CHAPTER THREE

Later it was revealed that the 2,000 taels might have been restitution claimed for a certain Chinese junk returning from Manila which had been intercepted by a Dutch yacht. Governor Hans Putmans investigated this case immediately, and found it was possible that some of his subordinates had indeed committed the crime. Very probably the owner of that junk was paid compensation through the mediation of Iquan. After Ch’u Ts’ai-lao had been defeated, fifty-three junks departed from China bound for Manila. They were all involved in the smuggling trade. Were they sailing out under the cover of Iquan’s armada? Reviewing their overall tonnage it would seem that only one-quarter of the usual merchant junks visited Manilla and thus they might have been mixed among Iquan’s ships. This smuggling trade


102 VOC 1102, Resolutie in Taijouan gearresteert[door Hans Putmans ende raedt], Taiwan, 30 Jul. 1631, fo. 534v. The claimed price was 1,900 rials.

103 VOC 1102, Resolutie in Taijouan gearresteert[door Hans Putmans ende raedt], Taiwan, 6 Aug. 1631, fos. 534v -535v.

104 Daghegister gehouden int Casteel Batavia van passerende daer ter plaetse als over geheel Nederlands India[ Diary Kept in Batavia Castle about What Has Happened All Over the East Indian Area], 31 vols, eds Jacobus Anne van der Chijs, H. T.Colenbrander, J. de Hullu, F. de Haan and W. Fruin-Mees (Batavia and The Hague: Ministerie van Koloniën, 1888-1931), 1631-1634, 51. 20 Nov. 1631. (here after cited as ‘Daghegister Batavia’)

105 VOC 1102, In het Comptoir Tijouan den 10en Augusteo 1631 Joctee Chinesen weever met eenige Coopmanschap jongst uijt China alhier g’arriveert zijnde ende van dit tegenwoordige zuijder musson in Manilha geweest hebbende, is door last van D Hr Gouverneur Putmans onder vraecht vande gelegenheitij derselver plaatse ende heeft
THE SURVIVAL GAME 1628-1631

will have provided enough income to pay the salaries of Iquan’s troops and of
the fishermen militia as well. After everything had been settled, Iquan was
dispatched by Grand Co-ordinator Hsiung Wên-ts’an to eliminate a group of
bandits hiding in the hills. This assignment was a confirmation that he had
been accepted by the Chinese government after the pirate’s game of survival
had been played out. The comment of one of his contemporaries reveals what
the gentry thought:

‘Although Ch’u Ts’ai-lao drowned, the rest of his people have fled away.
Now that Iquan has removed his rival, we shall have to handle him with kid
gloves. We cannot disband his followers too rapidly. We also cannot reduce
their salaries too soon. Furthermore, as his revenue comes from the Dutch
trade, so we cannot take that away and hand it over to public tender. ....In the
Grand Co-ordinator’s report of victory to the emperor, he has implied that
Iquan and his brother should be appointed Frontier Defence Officers. I think
this is very wise.’ ¹⁰⁶

Although foreign trade was still officially forbidden, Iquan’s people
had to be fed. Grand Co-ordinator Hsiung Wên-ts’an might therefore have
tolerated Iquan’s smuggling trade in An-hai. As guardians and supervisors of
the official foreign trade, under the emperor’s edict the Amoy authorities
should not have allowed any foreign trade. Mindful of their official duties,
after all the junks had returned from Manila, and only after that, the Amoy

¹⁰⁶ Tung, Ch’ung-hsiang-chi hsüan-lu, 84.
officials again issued a placard re-iterating the maritime prohibition. The
order decreed that no Dutch vessel would be allowed to sail into Chiu-lung
River estuary or its vicinity or the Amoy roadstead. Consequently, the An-hai
trade was the only avenue open to the Dutch even though they were very
reluctant to share the Chinese trade with their foe: the Spaniards in Manila.

Picture 2. Embouchure de la Riviere de Chincheo à La Chine [The Estuary of
Changchou River in China]

Source: René Auguste Constantin de Renneville (ed.), Recueil des voyages qui ont servi a

107 VOC 1102, Missive van de Chinese mandarijn Soutongiou naer Aijmoeij aen
Hollanders [Letter to the Dutch in Amoy from the Chinese Mandarin Mobile Corps
Commander of Wu-t’ung (Wu-yü and T’ung-shan) ], Chiu-lung River, 8 Sept.1631, fo.
556'.
THE SURVIVAL GAME 1628-1631


Original explanations following the letters:

A is the City Amoy, where the Coastal Defense Circuit is holding residence. It is harbouring lots of ships fully laden with merchants.

B is the great city An-hai, away from Amoy for 6 to 7 dutch miles. It is also very active in business and trade.

C is a stone bridge stands over the river, which is 350 pace long and is made on the arches of steady hard lime stones.

D Erasmus Bay

E The eiland Quemoy is also very populated, and fisery is prosperous.

F The island Lieh-yü, where our [VOC] ships frequently anchored and traded with the coming merchants.

G The island Ta-tan, which usually laid at starboard side when we went up stream.

H The eiland Wu-yü or the temple, where our ships frequently moored behind and traded.

I the Island Kulang-yü, laid opposite Amoy at the distance of one shoot of an iron canon. It is inhabited by lots of fishermans.

K the island of tower (Kuei-yü), laid in the first narrowness of the Chiu-lung River.

L The Mount T’ai-wu, a very useful sign of the Chiu-lung River, where stands a square stone in a form as a tower.