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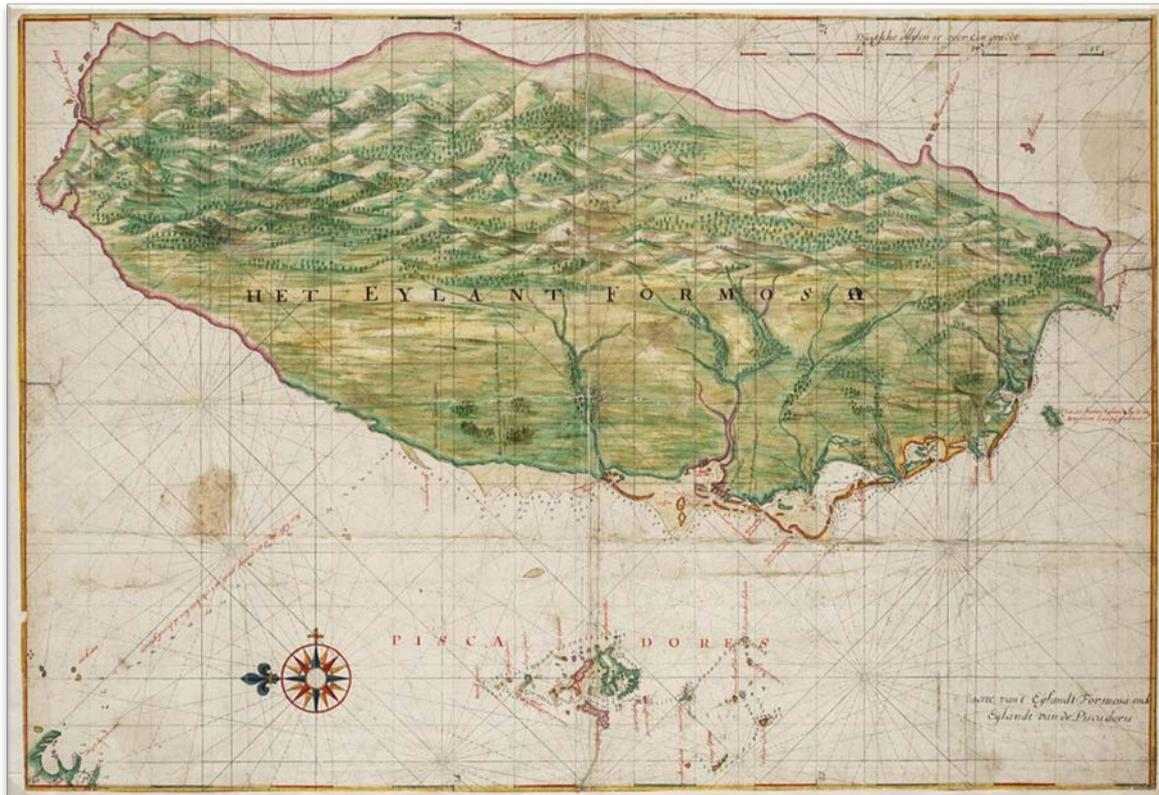
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Expanding Christianity or Safeguarding Trade? The Role of the Missionary for Dutch Colonial Expansion in 17th Century Formosa

Tessa Huing

Map of Formosa (Present-day Taiwan) by Johannes Vingboons, dated ca. 1640.



When in 1624, the Dutch East India Company (the *Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*, or *VOC*) secured a base on the sandbank of Tayouan, just off the southwest coast of Formosa, its initial goal was to utilize the island as a base to dominate trade with China and Japan. The Dutch Company was determined to break up Portuguese and Spanish commercial monopolies in the Far East in order to expand the Dutch seaborne empire.¹ In 1602, the Dutch had fused smaller competing Dutch pioneer companies into the all-encompassing *VOC* and had granted it a monopoly of trade and navigation in the East-Indies. In this way, the early capitalist joint-stock company aimed to enhance the position of the Dutch as a powerful trading nation within the competitive international market.²

¹ Laurence M. Hauptman and Ronald G. Knapp, "Dutch-Aboriginal Interaction in New Netherland and Formosa: A Historical Geography of Empire," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, (1977): 175.

² George Masselman, "Dutch Colonial Policy in the Seventeenth Century," *The Journal of Economic History*, Dec. (1961): 467.

Under the direction of Governor-General Coen, who had been the head of the Company from 1614 onwards, the VOC generally followed a policy of “non-interference” with the daily customs of the native people throughout the Dutch colonies.³ The VOC leaders were primarily interested in making money: nation-building, “civilizing,” and religious duties came second to business and enterprise. Perhaps this attitude was due to the kind of Calvinism embraced by most early modern Dutch merchants. C.R. Boxer, in his book *The Dutch Seaborne Empire*, confirms that the driving force behind Dutch expansion overseas was a combination of a “love of gain”, as well as the threat of unemployment and starvation for many of the seafaring community in the Netherlands. Boxer notes that with regards to the expansion of Christianity, the missionary spirit was not very marked in Calvinism. During the two centuries the VOC existed it sent fewer than 1000 clergymen to Asia. This stands in stark contrast to the many thousands of Catholic missionaries maintained in the Spanish and Portuguese colonies.⁴

Against this background, the case of Formosa (present-day Taiwan) seems exceptional. Despite the relatively small number of missionaries (32) who were sent to the island during the 38 years of Dutch control, over 7000 natives reportedly were baptized into the Christian faith.⁵ The Dutch Commissioner Nicolaas Couckebacker enthusiastically reported missionary success on his visit to Formosa on the 8th of December 1639, recording that the Christian faith had become very general and that “the natives devote themselves night and day to learning the true faith with an amount of zeal that puts many of us to shame.” According to Couckebacker, the inhabitants of the villages of Sinkan, Bakloan, Soulang and Mattau all strictly observed the Sabbath, attended catechetical meetings twice a week, repeated prayers and practiced Dutch characters daily in school, and piously recited Christian prayers before they commenced their work in the fields or left on hunts. Couckebacker recorded 2014 baptisms by 1639 and insisted that many more villages “show themselves disposed to rejecting their idolatry.”⁶ Couckebacker’s optimistic report was echoed by his successor, Governor Putmans, who similarly informed VOC Governor-General Brouwer that he believed “Nowhere else in India . . . a more promising place exists as regards the conversion of the heathen.”⁷ In a series of letters to the Councillors of India, Putmans as well as later Governor Van den Burg repeatedly testified to the extraordinary missionary success in this era.⁸ Although faith in the progress of the mission cooled over time as the initial pace of conversions reduced,⁹ it appears that the VOC intervened in the religious life in Formosa more aggressively than in any other area of Dutch control in the East-Indies.

³ Ibid., 465.

⁴ C.R. Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965), 115.

⁵ W.G. Goddard, *Formosa: A study in Chinese History* (West Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1966), 60.

⁶ Letter from Commissioner Nicolaas Couckebacker on his mission to Tonking and his visit to Formosa, Dec. 8, 1639, in *Formosa under the Dutch*, ed. W.M. Campbell, (Taipei: SMC Publishing Inc., 1992), 182.

⁷ Letter from Governor Putmans to Governor-general Brouwer, March 9, 1635, in ed. Wm. Campbell, 109.

⁸ Letter from Hans Putmans to the Governor-general and Councillors of India, Oct. 7, 1636, in ed. Wm. Campbell, 148.

⁹ John Robert Shepherd, *Statecraft and Political Economy on the Taiwan Frontier, 1600-1800* (Palo Alto, CA.: Stanford University Press, 1993), 68.

This essay will explore these extraordinary circumstances. What role did the clergy play in the Dutch colonial intervention on Formosa? How and for what purposes did the VOC employ missionaries? In order to answer these questions, I will especially look at the interaction between the ecclesiastical staff and the VOC-government. This paper will frame the interactions between the Formosan native populations, the Dutch clergymen and the colonial government as a complex political microcosm that was characterised by several conflicts of interest. It suggests that the dual function of the clergy, both as missionaries and civil servants, was a powerful stimulant to the development and expansion of Dutch control beyond the limits of trade alone. Despite continuous conflicts, the collaboration between the clergy and VOC leaders served the Dutch imperial mission as a whole. This mission, although focused primarily on trade, came to include more and more “civilizing” interventions as the missionaries gained more power – a process to which conversion into Christianity was central.

At the peak of the Dutch occupation, only 2,800 Europeans had established themselves on Formosa, more than 2,200 of whom were soldiers. The Dutch colony was small and the administration focused outward rather than on the creation of a colony. Formosa’s remoteness from Europe, its mountainous landscape and tropical climate hindered the building of large-scale Dutch settlements. Most Dutch men and women did not seem attracted to settling down on the island. Trade took place on the coasts: inland trade with the locals was minimal and was considered an unnecessary burden to the VOC.¹⁰ Since the Company initially had no interest in expanding control over the indigenous peoples, the fact that they did send missionaries to the island at all seems, at first glance, surprising.

There are several historical explanations for the Dutch missionary investment in Formosa. Possibly, the Dutch could not be safe without securing some toehold on the mainland of the island, fearing that a rival power might stir up the locals against them if no territorial control was exercised at all. Perhaps the missionaries functioned to sustain positive relations to the natives, promoting goodwill in them in order to safeguard commercial relations.¹¹ In extension to this, their work may have aided territorial dominion, which was increasingly necessary to sustain access to cheap and reliable resources. Another but less plausible reason for Dutch missionary action may have been the presence of Catholic converts on central Formosa. The Spanish had entered the island in 1626 with the aim of preventing the Dutch from interfering with their Japanese trade and of using the island as a stepping stone towards Catholic missions in China and Japan. The Spanish had sent a number of missionaries, who had converted an unknown number of Formosan natives.¹² Both the fear of Spanish influence and Dutch anti-Catholicism may have accounted for the assignment of the Protestant missionaries.

¹⁰ Hauptman and Knapp, “Dutch-Aboriginal Interaction in New Netherland and Formosa”, 176.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 180.

¹² Shepherd, *Statecraft and Political Economy*, 67.

Finally, the clergy also attended to the spiritual needs of the VOC personnel.¹³ However, considering the small number of Dutch people present on Formosa at the time, this is not likely to have been of major concern to the VOC. Nevertheless, it seems to have been company policy to employ clerics to assist the soldiers and to serve as all-round workers performing both ecclesiastical and civil duties. The Company never actually intended the clergy to dedicate themselves exclusively to missionary work. This becomes apparent when investigating the roles that missionaries fulfilled within the colony, where their function appears to have been threefold.

Firstly, the clergy acted as chaplains to Dutch officials, soldiers, and their families. Secondly, they were employed as interpreters and civil officers who collected taxes, sold hunting licenses, and exchanged deerskin and other produce. They also acted as negotiators between the Dutch, the Chinese, and the Formosan natives, sometimes serving as peacemakers. Only in the last instance did they serve as missionaries spreading the Christian gospel. The conversion of Formosans seems therefore to have been last on the agenda of the VOC government.

Rather, motivated clergymen were useful to the VOC as all-round workers because they constantly faced a lack of funds and suitable men. Unable to appoint trading agents familiar with the Formosan language or hire professional civil officers, they employed clergymen, who could perform all these tasks.¹⁴ This saved the Company a substantial amount of money. The VOC initially recognised in the clergy a considerable benefit to the trade, their religious motives driving them to learn the local language and interact with the natives on a more personal basis. The colonial administration was, however, not inclined to give much attention to the missionaries' desire to convert, which is illustrated by a letter written by Governor-General J. Specx to Hans Putmans, the governor of Tayouan, on the 31st of July, 1631. In this letter, Specx considered the work of a particular missionary, Candidius, to be praiseworthy but emphasized that he should show a substantial degree of temperance and moderation in his work. He admonished Putmans to continue the ecclesiastical work without it becoming a financial burden to the Company. In view of recent financial losses, Specx put priority on reducing the debt incurred by investors in the Netherlands. He rejected the missionaries' wish for a salary-raise and extra money grants for the villagers of Sinkan, as well as their request for three or four additional missionaries.¹⁵

The missionaries were apparently the only Dutch citizens on the island who were genuinely interested in converting "the heathen". The clergymen saw it as their special burden to spread the Gospel, a sentiment described by the Dutch clergyman C. Sibellius in a letter concerning the conversions made by his colleague Robert Junius:

And certainly, nothing is more honourable to God, nothing more acceptable to all good men, nothing more conducive to the appeasing of Consciences,

¹³Leonard Blussé, "Retribution and Remorse: The interaction between the Administration and the Protestant Mission in Early Colonial Formosa," in *After Colonialism: Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Displacements*, ed. Gyan Prakash (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 165.

¹⁴ Shepherd, *Statecraft and Political Economy*, 62.

¹⁵ Letter from Governor-General J. Specx to Putmans, Governor in Tayouan, July 31, 1631, in ed. William Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch*, 103.

nothing more salutiferous to the Heathen, that sit in darkness and idolatry, and errors, and woeful shadow of Death; than the sending forth of faithful, able and painful labourers into the Harvest; for opening the eyes of the blind, and turning them from Darkness to Light, and from the power of Satan unto God; that they may receive remission of sins, and an Inheritance amongst them that they are sanctified by Faith that is in Christ.¹⁶

The fact that the spreading of Christianity was not the Company's primary goal was a common cause of friction between the administration and the clergy. However, the missionaries knew how to interest the administration in their cause. They argued that besides spiritual blessings, the conversion of the natives would consolidate Dutch influence over the villages.¹⁷ By cleverly appealing to the desire for profit, the missionaries promoted their own work as being in the interest of the Company. In so doing, they increasingly pushed the Company into the direction of establishing a colony, even though it is unsure whether the development of a full-fledged colony was indeed what they desired. It seems more likely that they realized the only way to obtain VOC funding for their missionary cause was to appeal to profit and power motives. They provoked the colonial administration into extending its jurisdiction over local villages so that their missionary field might be expanded. They needed the Company to step up, since the lack of a central authority over the villages obstructed the conversion-process.¹⁸ The reluctance of the Company to do this attests to a conflict of interests between the colonial administration and the clergy, with each party using the other for its own benefits.

That the clergy succeeded, to some extent, to convince the Company of their cause, is suggested by the journals produced in the name of the Zeelandia castle from 1634 onwards. These journals reported a sudden wave of territorial expansion marked by a sharp increase of baptisms among the natives. This change of attitude is illustrated by Governor Hendrick Brouwer, who in 1636 expressed himself positively towards the establishment of a Dutch colony, believing Formosa to become "a possession to which Ceylon cannot bear comparison."¹⁹ He had been in touch with the missionary Candidius, who wanted the governor to enforce an administration directly upon the villagers. He and Junius, another missionary, had succeeded in manipulating the VOC administration by luring them into a playing field that they had earlier apprehended to enter: that of inter-village hostilities.

Before the colonial interference of the Dutch, inter-village violence had primarily been a socio-religious phenomenon that structured what the natives believed was an inherently chaotic universe, although the wars probably also served the purpose of managing power relations between the different villages. Competitions in deer hunting and headhunting, ceremonies which were guided by the Inibs (village priestesses who provided the bridge

¹⁶ Letter from Mr. C. Sibellius, October 25, 1649, in ed. Wm. Campbell, *An Account of Missionary Success in the Island of Formosa* (Taipei: SMC Publishing Inc., 1996), 31.

¹⁷ Shepherd, *Statecraft and Political Economy*, 62.

¹⁸ Letter from Rev. G. Candidius to Governor-general J.P Coen, August 20, 1628, in ed. Wm. Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch*, 95.

¹⁹ Leonard Blussé, "Dutch Protestant Missions as Protagonists of the Territorial Expansion of the VOC on Formosa" in Dick Kooiman ed., *Conversion, Competition, and Conflict: Essays on the Role of Religion in Asia* (Amsterdam: Free University Press, 1984), 157.

between the earthly and spiritual world), were some of the ways to bring structure and hierarchy into this world of disorder. Although ritualized violence had always been part of the wars, it did not turn into structural warfare until the interference of the Dutch. Their interventions between 1626 and 1636 aimed at solidifying Dutch authority through numerous expeditionary forces, resulting in the escalation of inter-village violence.²⁰

During this time, the Dutch colonial government seem to have exploited pre-existing inter-tribal rivalries in order to strengthen their foothold on the island.²¹ Their increasing control over the natives started with the decision to invade the village of Sinkan, the reason being the punishment of sixteen villagers who had aided the Japanese under the leadership of their headman Dika. The latter had been lured by the Japanese to visit the Shogun court in order to give sovereignty over the island. Fortunately for the Dutch, Dika's journey to Japan had no further implications and the Japanese did not manage to take over control.²²

Nevertheless, Governor Nuyts still bore a grudge and decided in January 1629 to invade Sinkan without the knowledge of missionary Candidius. Nuyts declared that if Dika was not delivered up to him within six days, there would be war between the Dutch and the Sinkan people. Receiving no response from Dika, Nuyts intended to set the village on fire. Upon arriving in Sinkan with his troops, however, he found the village nearly empty, the inhabitants having fled to the mountains. Nuyts thereupon changed his tactics, promising the few remaining villagers that he would be appeased if they handed over thirty swine as well as ten bundles of rice per household, and if they built another house for the Dutch. When the Sinkan people agreed to these terms, the Governor and his troops departed.

Candidius, who had previously settled in Sinkan to initiate missionary work, found his position in the village imperilled, having come to be viewed by the Sinkan people as a tool of the VOC government. In a letter to Coen, he explained how Nuyts' invasion had altered his situation. He wrote that the remaining villagers would not come to his house anymore and that they no longer trusted him. His missionary and civil duties would be harshly limited that month, he wrote.²³ This incident shows that Dutch colonial administration interfered with missionary business in complete disregard of missionary advice or plans. Their investment in securing their financial gains again proved higher than their interest in enforcing cultural changes in the natives.

This priority was again demonstrated on the 13th of July 1629, when governor Nuyts decided to send a small force of troops into the village of Mattau to capture some Chinese pirates. The Dutch did not manage to find any. During their return to Tayouan however, all soldiers except the Governor himself, who had left earlier, were ambushed and massacred by Mattau-warriors and their allies. These villagers subsequently overran the village of Sinkan and destroyed all Dutch possessions on the island. This undiplomatic move by Nuyts determined all political moves for the next two years and delivered a terrible blow to the

²⁰ Blussé, "Retribution and Remorse", 165.

²¹ Blussé, "Dutch Protestant Missionaries", 157.

²² *Ibid.*, 162.

²³ Letter from Rev. George Candidius to Governor-General Coen, Feb. 1, 1629, in ed. Wm. Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch*, 99.

missionaries. Their ties to the Dutch administration worsened their reputation in the eyes of native villagers, who lost all faith in missionary intentions.²⁴

Blown away by the attack, the colonial administration realized it would have to cooperate with the clergymen and involve them in policy-making if they expected to regain lost power on the island. The missionaries, in turn, took advantage of this sudden surge of attention to push through their own agendas. The minute-book of the Tayouan Council attests to the renewed influence of the clergy, reporting that Candidius and his co-worker Junius, who had joined him in 1629, had proposed to seize all the possessions of those who were involved in the recent murder with the aim to frighten the natives into submission. The Council's reports also show that the missionaries decided it would be good to attack Bacloan, a village in alliance with Mattau, which could, they thought, be easily overpowered due to its small population. This strategy shows that in view of continued native resistance to Dutch power, the missionaries increasingly turned to violent approaches in order to stay in control over the natives.²⁵

The Dutch were aided in their expedition against Bacloan by their allies from Sinkan. The intervention was carried out successfully despite the disappointment of the Sinkan villagers who were able to take only one enemy head. Yet, this one head was apparently enough to restore village pride, as they turned favorably towards the missionaries once more.²⁶ Although during this time, the missionaries were able to convert more natives than ever, the renewed docility of the villagers was supposedly economically induced. In face of bad harvests and widespread starvation, the Sinkan people had become dependent on the Dutch. Their desperation created favourable conditions for submission to Dutch rule, which now included more power for the missionaries to interfere in village life.

The baptism of the first 50 Sinkan villagers gave increasing confidence to Candidius, who now dared to take more initiative and personally vowed to the people of Sinkan, whose village had been destroyed by Mattau troops, that the Dutch would avenge them. He transmitted this proposal to Governor Putmans, who felt forced to execute this campaign against the distant village in order to win secure the loyalty of the Sinkan people. Because he did not dare to initiate the campaign over land, he initiated a sea-expedition that ultimately attacked the village of Tamsuy, an ally of the enemy village of Mattau. Although Mattau itself was not conquered, the expedition was enough to restore the trust of the Sinkan people in their alliance with the Dutch.²⁷

The collaboration between the Dutch and the village of Sinkan persisted after Candidius left the island in 1631.²⁸ His successor, reverend Junius, continued the missionary strategy to play out village violence, drawing the Governor's attention to every possible situation that could endanger the position of the VOC. Repeatedly, Junius persuaded the VOC government to interfere in inter-village disputes, which led to the conquest of Southwest

²⁴ Blussé, "Retribution and Remorse", 172.

²⁵ "The Minutes of the Tayouan Council" in ed. Wm. Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch*, 100.

²⁶ Letter from Governor Putmans to Governor-General J. Specx, Feb. 22, 1631, in ed. Wm. Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch*, 102.

²⁷ Blussé, "Retribution and Remorse", 174.

²⁸ "A General Description of Formosa" in ed. Wm. Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch*, 86.

Formosa between 1633 and 1636. From horseback, Junius himself commanded large expeditions of allied Formosan troops against hostile villages.²⁹ Apart from being a missionary, Junius was also, and perhaps even primarily, a soldier.

In a letter from Chief Factor Paulus Traudenius to Governor-General Hendrick Brouwer, dated October 1633, the missionaries' involvement in the process of Dutch expansion is clear. Traudenius described the opposition of the people of Mattau who he said were inciting other villages against the Christian religion. Fearing that the villagers would "hatch some evil plot against us," the Factor argued that Mattau must be chastised. The last phrase of his letter illuminates the role of the missionary clerics: "We refer you to missionary Junius, who, without a doubt, will be able to give you all the information you need for your guidance."³⁰

When Mattau villagers murdered several Dutchmen in 1629, Junius convinced Governor Putmans to carry out a retributive strike against the village. He emphasized that the indecision of the governor to punish Mattau would cover the Dutch with ridicule in the eyes of aboriginal allies.³¹ Joined by a force from Sinkan, Dutch soldiers set fire to Mattau in November 1635. This action brought immediate results: the village sent representatives to sue for peace within a couple of days.

At the end of 1635, the Dutch sent an expedition south, to Takareiang, to avenge the murders of several Dutchmen and their Sinkan dependents. In early 1636, the Dutch marched again, this time to chastise the hostile village of Soulang. The latter village capitulated quickly in the face of superior Dutch weaponry. The resulting Dutch triumph is celebrated in a letter by Governor Putmans to Governor-General Brouwer: "We have now seen how, by the blessing of God, we have obtained complete victory over all our foes, over both open enemies at Takareiang, and false friends at Mattau and Soulang."³² The Dutch offered their new allies military support in inter-tribal rivalries, thus drawing more and more villages to their side. Journal entries dated just after the expeditions against Takareiang and Soulang already mention several villages seeking peace with the Dutch out of fear.³³ This number steadily increased until by 1650 over 300 villages were under Dutch control, 37 of them located on the far side of the central mountain range in Southeast Formosa.³⁴

Once the Formosan villages submitted to the VOC, the transmission of sovereignty was formalized in a treaty signed by both the Dutch representative and the village-elder. The missionaries were always present at these rituals. The treaty was displayed in public so that all the villagers would see and understand its meaning:

²⁹ Blussé, "Retribution and Remorse", 175.

³⁰ Letter from Paulus Traudenius, Chief Factor, to Governor-general Hendrick Brouwer, Oct. 24, 1633, in ed. Wm. Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch*, 107.

³¹ Blussé, "Retribution and Remorse", 176.

³² Letter from Governor Putmans to Governor-general Brouwer, Feb. 21, 1636, in ed. Wm. Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch*, 112.

³³ "From the Day-journal of the Tayouan Council," March 31, 1636, in ed. Wm. Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch*, 113.

³⁴ Hauptman and Knapp, "Dutch-Aboriginal Interaction in New Netherland and Formosa", 178.

1. That they were to surrender their country and their possessions to the States of Holland; in token whereof “they bring some small Pinang and cocoa-nut trees, planted in the soil of the place” to the Castle.
2. That they “should no more turn arms” against the Dutch.
3. That on the day when all “friends and allies appear” before the Dutch representatives, “they too should appear”.
4. That in the future they should not molest the Chinese.
5. That at the desire of the Dutch they should join in their wars.
6. That “if the staff of the Prince is sent to them they should appear before them.”³⁵

The Dutch administration over the Formosan natives was indirect and diffused. They had officially divided Formosa into seven administrative districts but the administrators ignored this in practice. Each village under Dutch control was required to choose one headman, although large villages often appointed up to four village representatives. Each headman received a rattan staff with the silver emblem of the VOC, symbolic of their subjugation to the Company’s sovereignty. Because the Dutch wanted to co-opt rather than displace native leaders, the missionaries directed local matters in collaboration with a native council, which consisted of several village representatives.³⁶ Nevertheless, this council, of which the missionaries were also part, attested to the increasing influence the Dutch overtook in juridical and religious matters of the towns – slowly replacing native understandings of justice with Dutch ones.

During the annual “Landdag,” which was first established in 1644, all aboriginal village representatives gathered together with the Dutch clergy and administrative staff.³⁷ The goal of the “Landdag” was to solve conflicts amongst the aborigines, to symbolically reinstate the alliance between the villages and the Company and to reaffirm the latter’s rule and authority. It was a meeting where local headmen could speak out their concerns and where Dutch authorities were able to correct, confirm, or increase their knowledge of local conditions in the various villages. Central to the “Landdag” were ritualized ceremonies that celebrated the economic and cultural bonds between the Dutch and the villages.³⁸

The company kept a close eye on their terrain by regular expeditions and visits to the villages. The missionaries, in collaboration with VOC leaders, assessed not only the well-being of the natives but also inspected the work of the VOC employees, including the progress of the missionary work. During these visits, the Company agents met with the village chiefs to admonish their obedience to the Netherlands and to stress the importance of adopting and living in line with the Christian faith. Presents were sometimes engaged in order to please the natives: the Tayouan Day-Journal of October, 1639, recorded that at one such meeting, the

³⁵ Letter from Robertus Junius to the Directors of the Amsterdam Chamber of Commerce of the East India Company, Sept.5, 1636, in ed. Wm. Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch*, 129.

³⁶ Hsin-hui Chiu, *The Colonial Civilizing Process in Dutch Formosa: 1624-1662*, (PhD diss. Leiden University, 2008), 120.

³⁷ The direct translation of “Landdag” is “Land-day”.

³⁸ Chiu, *The Colonial Civilizing Process*, 116.

village elders of Mattau were presented with a small ring in order to remind them of their commitment to the Dutch.³⁹

Missionaries on Formosa held a special position within the system of colonial governance. Eventually this position generated much dissatisfaction among both the clergy and the secular Company agents, attesting to the inherent incompatibility between VOC trade interests and the project of Christian conversion at the time. Many missionaries resented the civil and judicial duties the Governors assigned to them, wishing to use their energies more fully upon the Christianization of the aborigines. In several letters to the Governor-General of Tayouan, Junius and Candidius asked to be released from their civil duties, but to no avail. In a letter to the Consistory at Batavia, the ecclesiastical body to which Formosan missionaries were attached, clerics Junius and Hogensteyn complained that political service was an unwelcome burden from which they hoped to be discharged as soon as possible.

The missionaries suggested the appointment of Lieutenant Johann Jurieansen as a special interpreter to take over the political duties but the VOC administration regarded such a division of labor an unnecessary expense. They were apprehensive to give the missionaries more freedom, seeing no direct financial benefit for the Company in missionary work alone.⁴⁰ As revealed in the minute-book of the Castle of Zeelandia, only in 1644 did the Company experiment with a division of labor that increased the capacities of the missionaries. They were aided in their work by native schoolmasters, who could do cultural translation work vital to the conversion-process. On top of that, the process would go quicker and reach a larger population. These schoolmasters stayed under close supervision of the Dutch and would frequently be tested on the quality of their education.⁴¹

At the same time, the Company government feared that the missionaries' double bind to ecclesiastical and village civil services would weaken their commitment and efficiency.⁴² Therefore, they were reluctant to lessen their "civil burden" and did not leave them much time for them to strengthen the Christian cause. They continued to hold judicial office, which left most administrative duties in the hands of the clergymen.⁴³ The Company believed that combining religious and civil roles in the villages was the easiest and least expensive way to advance the interests of the company.⁴⁴ As a result of this, the structure of competing interests between the VOC leaders and the missionaries was maintained.

Nevertheless, despite continuous conflicts, the clergy had become indispensable to the Company because of their knowledge of the Sinkan language. The missionaries were keen to exploit this position, incited by it to keep negotiating with the Company government for more

³⁹ Letter from Ex-Governor Putmans to the Directors of the Amsterdam Chamber, Aug.2, 1637, in ed. Wm. Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch*, 157.

⁴⁰ Letter from Robertus Junius and Assuerus Hogensteyn to the Consistory at Batavia, Oct.27, 1636, in ed. Wm. Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch*, 149.

⁴¹ Letter from Ex-Governor Putmans to the Directors of the Amsterdam Chamber, in ed. Wm. Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch*, 157.

⁴² "From the Minute-book of the Castle of Zeelandia" March 29, 1644, in ed. Wm. Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch*, 197.

⁴³ Shepherd, *Statecraft and Political Economy*, 69.

⁴⁴ Shepherd, *Statecraft and Political Economy*, 68.

time, more manpower and more money to be devoted to the expansion of Christianity.⁴⁵ From the beginning, the clergy had pushed the administration to invest in the conversion of the indigenous population, and Dutch intervention in the inter-village wars had resulted in the expansion of their missionary playing field. In addition, their role in the juridical Council of the Tackakusach gave them the power to intervene in village life and culture and to force through desired reforms. These reforms were sometimes quite harsh. In one instance, the Tackakusach council forbade those inhabitants of the village of Siraya who had not yet converted to Christianity to remain living amongst them. And, as mentioned before, they also expelled the Inibs (village priestesses) from performing their “heathen rituals”.⁴⁶ Traditionally, the Formosans had depended on the divinations of these women for success in war.⁴⁷ Now, the missionaries tried to convince the natives of the superiority of their Western God, utilizing military successes as proof of his power.⁴⁸

The missionaries employed manipulative tactics to induce native acceptance of the Christian faith. One of them was the ritualized abandonment of native spirituality: the missionaries forced the villagers to “cast away their idols” before they could do their “religious duties” for the Dutch. The principal duty was baptism. The ritual of abandonment literally encompassed the piling of all devotional objects and torching them. After the mass-destruction of their idols in the presence of the Dutch governor, the village elders addressed all the village- inhabitants in the following words:

The governor has now personally appeared before us as an everlasting memorial to our children and grandchildren, that on this day we have cast away our idols as a sure end certain sign that, in the presence of His Excellency, we have sworn to forsake our gods and declared the ourselves willing to be instructed by these venerable clergymen in the true doctrine of Jesus Christ; which doctrine we promise to implant in the hearts of our children, whom we pledge to send regularly to school. This we promise and perform, in all sincerity and without dissimulation, in the presence of the before-mentioned Governor.

After this pledge the elders renewed the oath of fidelity they had sworn to the state of the Netherlands to re-emphasize the authority of the Dutch administration.⁴⁹

Once the village had officially declared its “wish” to be instructed in the Christian religion, the missionaries could get to work. In a letter to Governor Nuyts, Candidius explained that all the Formosans should be instructed by faithful and orthodox teachers who would all teach the fundamentals of the religion in the same manner, so that no division in understanding would occur and confusion amongst the natives would be prevented. He also emphasized the importance of teaching the inhabitants to learn to read and write, so that the contents of the religious system could concisely be written down. In the schools that were built especially for the purposes of Christianity, the natives were taught the

⁴⁵ Letter of Mr. C. Sibellius, Oct. 25, 1649, in ed. Wm. Campbell, *An Account of Missionary Success in the Island of Formosa*, 29.

⁴⁶ Chiu, *The Colonial Civilizing Process*, 191.

⁴⁷ Blussé, “Retribution and Remorse”, 175.

⁴⁸ Shepherd, *Statecraft and Political Economy*, 64.

⁴⁹ Letter from Governor van den Burg to the Governor-general and the Councillers of India, Dec.12, 1637, in ed. Wm. Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch*, 165.

fundamentals of the Christian doctrine, catechisms and prayers. Children would also be taught Dutch, whereas the adults would receive instruction in their native languages.⁵⁰

The education would take place in cycles: all women of the village would receive instruction for two hours every afternoon, while the children would be instructed every day from 9 to 12 in the morning.⁵¹ Adult men also received instruction, although their education was less systematic. By 1648 1,364 men, women and children of several villages were attending schools.⁵² To reach this number, the native population seems to have needed a little push though. In 1639, the missionaries decided to give those attending the schools at Soulang, Mattau, Bakloan, Tavakan and Sinkan one-eighth of a *real* (the local currency) monthly, as a stimulant for the children's parents to send them to school.⁵³

Candidius stressed that the villagers should be treated with kindness and civility and that proper laws should be established to punish all those acts that the Dutch considered sinful. "Proper Western jurisdiction" was considered necessary to teach the Formosans in moral matters as their understandings of good and evil differing substantially from those of the Dutch, which were based primarily on the idea of original sin.⁵⁴ Despite their ideals, the Dutch could be ruthless when disobedience occurred. Villagers had to pay small fines when they broke the laws and persistence in idolatry was punished by whipping and other punishments.⁵⁵ The Governor and Council of Formosa reported that in 1642, three villagers of Soulang, who had murdered some young children, were to be strangled to death. Their bodies were left bound to a post at the entrance of the village. This caused such great terror amongst the people that negative rumours were spread about the Dutch and several families fled into the mountains. Afterwards they were all called back by Junius. This account shows the force the Dutch exercised in their attempt to sustain civil deference amongst the native peoples.⁵⁶ Jacobus Valentyn, who acted as a historian for the Dutch colonial government, even called the cruelties performed by the administration "a disgrace to Christianity."⁵⁷

During the 1650s, as conflicts between them multiplied and as the pace of Christian conversions dropped, the Company administrators increasingly insisted upon the pursuit of commercial interests alone, continuing to provide less and less resources for the mission.⁵⁸ In 1657 the VOC leadership even considered eliminating all clerical posts in the Southern region due to financial and personnel-shortages, leaving only civilian officers and schoolmasters in charge of "making the natives good citizens." This was a step away from the missionary goal,

⁵⁰ Shepherd, *Statecraft and Political Economy*, 67.

⁵¹ Letter from Rev. G. Candidius to Governor-General J.P. Coen, Aug. 20, 1628, in ed. Wm. Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch*, 93.

⁵² Shepherd, *Statecraft and Political Economy*, 67.

⁵³ "From the Tayouan Account-Book" in ed. Wm. Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch*, 167.

⁵⁴ "Memorandum from Rev. G. Candidius to Governor Nuyts" in ed. Wm. Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch*, 91.

⁵⁵ Letter from Hans Putmans to the Governor-general and the Councillors of India, Oct. 7, 1636, in ed. Wm. Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch*, 148; Hauptman and Knapp, "Dutch-Aboriginal Interaction", 179.

⁵⁶ Letter from the Governor and Council of Formosa to the Governor-general and Council of India, Oct. 5, 1642, in ed. Wm. Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch*, 189.

⁵⁷ Yu-Shan Han, "Formosa under Three Rules", *The Pacific Historical Review*, November (1950): 401.

⁵⁸ Shepherd, *Statecraft and Political Economy*, 68.

which was to “make the natives good Christians.” This was due to an escalated conflict between Gravius, a detractor of Junius, and the VOC Governor Verburg.

Gravius had laid “slanderous” charges against a company Factor, whereupon Governor Verburg took personal offense at Junius and the Protestant mission in general. Verburg made a life out of attacking the clergy on all kinds of matters and especially criticized the clergy’s continuous requests for higher salaries. He grew increasingly annoyed by the missionaries’ “greediness” and expressed that he was not inclined to increase the number of clergymen on Formosa in the future.⁵⁹ This hostility between the clergy and the VOC government is likely to have substantially decreased the effectivity of the Christian conversions.

To what extent did the Dutch missionary project have a lasting influence upon the native population of Formosa? The Dutch adventure on the island ended swiftly and completely when they were defeated by the Chinese general Koxinga and driven out of Formosa in 1662.⁶⁰ Despite claims of 7000 converts during Dutch rule, the correspondence of the clergy after 1654 increasingly admits that most Formosans were Christians in name only: “they pronounce the sentences without understanding them, and like magpies, merely try to utter such sounds as have been repeated to them.”⁶¹ Not surprisingly, once the Dutch had disappeared from the island, the native converts seem to have let go of the foreign religion, language, and other cultural habits quickly.⁶²

Despite the seeming exceptionality of the Formosan case with regards to missionary influence, it seems thus that the missionary results were and remained subordinate to the VOC’s commercial goals. As the Dutch engagement on Formosa progressed, the Christian mission simply became too much of a burden to the Company for them to continue investing in it. In this light however, the relative achievement of the Dutch missionaries seems remarkable. In terms of long-lasting Christian influence on the island, not that much was achieved. Nevertheless, with the little resources, time and manpower they had, the missionaries seem to have pushed considerable changes in the lives of natives in the conquered villages – pushing through “civilizing” reforms that went far beyond what the VOC government had initially intended. Although the Dutch had not been aiming for a colony, the extent of the cultural transmission on Formosa (not only in matters of religion, but also in law, warfare, economy and language) seems to have been considerable. Despite the fact that only very few Formosan natives seem to have acquired more than a rudimentary grasp of the missionary teachings, their lives in their villages were profoundly altered during the years of Dutch occupation on the island. The missionaries played a vital role in these colonial shifts.

Frictions between the clergy and the colonial administration determined the character of the Dutch conquest of Formosa as a whole. Interestingly, the enduring conflict of interest between the missionaries and the VOC government seems to have been *both* the condition for

⁵⁹ Ibid., 72.

⁶⁰ Denny Roy, *Taiwan, a Political History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 17.

⁶¹ Letter from the Council of Formosa to the President and Councillors of the government of India, Oct. 25, 1645, in ed. Wm. Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch*, 211.

⁶² Han, “Formosa under Three Rules”, 400.

the missionary project *and* major hindrance to it. The all-round employment of the missionaries, their sometimes war-like intentions as well as their intrinsic motivation to spread the Word, the resistance of the locals as well as the VOC administrative staff: all of these point to a complex web of relations between culturally various, economic, religious and imperial interests. These interests were played out on various levels simultaneously, including the personal, village, nation and global levels. The island of Formosa was a playing field for micro-political power struggles that was immanently connected to global colonial relations. Differences were not only played out between the native populations and the Dutch colonial newcomers, but also between different villages, different neighbouring countries, between different colonial powers and, last but not least, within the Dutch colonial administration itself.

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