

ABOUT AN ATTEMPT BY THE NETHERLANDERS
TO OCCUPY IBIZA IN 1629

FUKUYA KURIHARA

I

The Balearic Islands, Majorca, Ibiza and Menorca, to the east of the Iberian Peninsula, were conquered by Hyme I, King of Aragon, and were thereafter under the rule of the United Kingdom of Aragon. Of course, these islands had been much influenced by the Moors, who had occupied them for over five centuries. In the 14th century, the United Kingdom of Aragon had exercised dominion over Sicily and Sardinia, and wielded power throughout the western Mediterranean. Palma de Majorca flourished, being as good a trading port as Barcelona. When one looks at the map, one sees that the Balearic Islands are situated in the center of the western Mediterranean, where there are many fewer islands than in the eastern Mediterranean. It is, therefore, natural that the islands are at a good position for overseas commerce. Majorca lies on the points between Western Europe and Northwest Africa, and between Sicily and Sardinia and Catalonia. Moreover, Majorca lies between France, Provence and Italy (especially Genoa), on the other hand, and Andalucia, Gibraltar and the coast of the Atlantic on the other. Ibiza (on Ibiza) and Mahon (on Menorca) also shared in the trading prosperity. Indeed Ibiza produced the most salt and had the biggest market for it. Merchants of Genoa brought wine to Majorca, while on their return they took back a lot of salt from Ibiza.¹⁾

By the beginning of the 15th century, though, the most prosperous days of Palma had ended. Isabella of Castilla married Ferdinand of Aragon. After the establishment of the Kingdom of Spain thus effected, Castilla became the center of the kingdom. Therefore, there are a few studies of the commercial history of Barcelona and Palma in the 16th and 17th centuries. From the end of the 16th century the business men of Northern Europe – especially England, the Netherlands, and Germany, ventured into the Mediterranean and dominated its overseas trade.

What position did the Balearic Islands have in the Mediterranean trade of that time? Were these islands of strategic importance for Northern Europeans? I tried to look for relevant historical documents and records about them. Unfortunately, I could not succeed. However, I did come across a short essay of interest. It was entitled “The Attempt by the Netherlanders to Occupy the Island of Ibiza in 1629”, written by Enrique Fajarnes y Tur.²⁾ Enrique Fajarnes y Tur was a

historian of Ibiza. This essay was written on the basis of the King's letters to the Governor-General of Ibiza (*Carta del Rey al Gobernador de Ibiza*). The letters belong to the archives in the city hall of Ibiza. Fajarnes y Tur studied about the defence of Ibiza, the export of salt, and the import of wheat during the war against the Netherlands which broke out in 1621.

Let me summarize the essay by Fajarnes y Tur. The reign of Philip IV began in 1621. In this year, the period of truce between Spain and the Netherlands expired, and so war broke out again. Spain captured thirty trading ships of the Netherlands in the Strait of Gibraltar. The Army under the command of General Spinola then overwhelmed the Netherlands proper. Brave soldiers and generals maintained the glory of the Spanish Empire. On the other hand, the economy of Spain itself declined, and the morals of the Spanish were extremely corrupted.

At that time, what happened in the Balearic Islands? On the island of Majorca, in September, the government of the city investigated the yields of barley and wheat, and obtained food for the islanders. Peace was kept on Majorca. In Menorca, meanwhile, the fort was built again. In Ibiza, though, the governors did not take any such measure. On April 4th, 1628, therefore, they received a letter from the King telling them to defend the island (*Carta del Rey al Gobernador de Ibiza*, 4 April 1628). In December, the King sent a further letter saying that he would arrange to buy 10000 ducats worth of wheat in Malaga as food for the soldiers (id. 2 December 1628). In September in 1629, they got a letter saying that the wheat would be useful to this post of the King's demesne where salt was produced (id. 2 September 1629). Moreover, on the same day, the King sent a letter saying that the local authorities should stop arresting vessels smuggling salt, considering the great amount of salt produced in Ibiza (id. 2 September 1629). During this period the Governor-General Don Juan Casterbi presented a petition to the King asking to return home to Spain. In December, the King told him that the Netherlands would soon make an attempt to occupy Ibiza and then he had to repel it. The King, therefore, did not give him permission to come home.

However, the King had already forbidden the people of Ibiza from trading with English and Dutch (exchanging salt for wheat) (id. 30 March 1621). In 1628, he issued another ban on trade with the Netherlands and England. However, the people on Ibiza ignored the ban and bought wheat from the Dutch and English anyway. The King then told the officials of the city that they should punish such treasons and ordered the Governor-General to report about it (id. 15 July 1629).

Mr. Fajarnes y Tur, an inhabitant in Ibiza, concludes that the people continued to buy wheat from the smuggling vessels, despite the ban of the King, because they felt it was their right and also because of urgent necessity, a plea which has been allowed since ancient times. The miserable lives of the inhabitants and the island's imperfect defense justified the purchase of wheat from the smuggling vessels.

Setting aside the conclusion of Mr. Fajarnes y Tur, I wanted to learn about this situation more precisely and to see for myself the documents which Mr. Fajarnes y Tur had cited. Therefore, I visited the archives in Ibiza. There were no clerks there, but Father Juan Maria Cardonna, who supervised the archives, was

kind enough to see me and to allow me to enter. The archives on the second floor of the city hall were dark. It did not seem that people normally used this room. Father Cardonna explained that the civil war of 1937-1939 had left its traces in this room. Though he tried to look for the letters of the King, he did not succeed in finding them. Two days later, though, I got a telephone call from him. When I then went to the city hall, Father Cardonna brought the King's letter out from the big safe in the Deputy Mayor's room. There seemed to be about two hundred letters in all, in files but in disorder. First, we tried to find the seven royal letters which Mr. Fajarnes y Tur had cited, but we could not find any of them. Father said that the late Mr. Fajarnes y Tur, the former supervisor of the archives, would sometimes take letters to his home and forget to return them. Moreover Mr. Fajarnes y Tur's family had moved to Menorca, and so I had to give up the search. I could, however, find the following letters of the King which were very interesting to me: "On the Peace with England" (1623), "Thanks to God for the Victory in Brazil and Breda" (1635), "The Prayer for the Success in the War" (1628), "On the Smuggling Ships" (1644), "On the Permission to Trade with the English Trading Ships" (1650), "To be polite to the English Parliament and the Dutch Trading Ships" (1651), and many letters about the import of wheat and the export of salt. The titles I have cited, written on small pieces of paper, seemed to have been given by Mr. Fajarnes y Tur.

The historical archives in Palma de Majorca are bigger in scale, and the documents are better arranged than the archives in Ibiza. In Palma, all the letters of the King were copied by the clerks as soon as they were received. The originals are well preserved, while the copies are kept in two files. The paper of the copies is, though, not of good quality, and it is rather hard to read the copies, written in faint ink and with the paper spotted with age. If I could read the originals of the letters, it seemed that I would be able to know the relation between the Netherlands, England, and the Balearic Islands more concretely.

II

Next, from the point of view of the Netherlands, I would like to consider whether or not the Netherlands actually attempted to occupy Ibiza, as mentioned in Philip IV's letter to Ibiza in 1629. In 1621, as I have said above, the war between the Netherlands and Spain broke out again. The political leaders were not as eminent as Oldenbarneveld, and the Stadthouder, Maurice, who had won a reputation throughout Europe as a distinguished strategist, was too old. James I of England, an ally of the past, did not lend a helping hand to even his daughter's husband, the Kurfürst of Falz Frederick V, who was in difficulties in his struggle with the Habsburgs. On the contrary, James I tried to arrange for his son Charles to marry a daughter of the King of Spain. In France the pro-Catholic policy was continued under the regent, Marie de Medicis. In 1624, Breda, which was the most important place to Nassau, fell to the Spanish army under the command of General Spinola. (This event is depicted Velázquez's "a Capitulation of Breda".) Maurice withdrew his troops to the Hague and was too depressed to recapture

Breda. At that time, throughout Europe the political situation relating to the Dutch Republic was changing rapidly. This change had been stimulated by the Thirty Years' War in Germany.

In 1625, Frederick Hendrik succeeded to Maurice, his brother. In 1623, the plan for the marriage between the English and Spanish royal families had broken down. After that, England, taking up an anti-Spanish policy, made a defensive alliance with the Dutch Republic.³⁾ Soon thereafter the Duke of Buckingham, the Queen's favorite, remembering the assault on Cadiz made by the combined fleet of England and the Dutch Republic in 1596, planned a strategy against Spain in league with the Navy of the Republic. In 1624, France followed an anti-Habsburg policy again upon the appearance of Richelieu and concluded a subsidy agreement with the Republic. Charles I of England, succeeding to James I in 1625, was warlike and had anti-Spanish feeling. He and Buckingham began to concentrate the combined fleet at the port of Plymouth in order to attack the Iberian Peninsula with the approval of Parliament. They also ordered the landing parties. England also requested the Estates-General of the Republic to collect ten thousand soldiers, to provide forty ships loaded with six months' provisions and to return to the English three thousand veterans and forty officers to form the center of the landing party. These English veterans had been employed in the Republic. In return, England offered to send other enlisted soldiers as relief. The Republic decided to send ten ships of from two or three hundred tons and ten ships of a hundred or a hundred and sixty tons, but refused the request of England for the return of the troops. The Stadthouder and the Estates-General of the Republic considered that replacing the veterans and officers with untrained enlisted soldiers, including vagrants, poor or sick men, would prove a fatal blow to the army of the Republic. They therefore returned the newly-arrived enlisted soldiers whom England had hurriedly sent. The Republic also thought that it had to have its own flag and admiral so that the Dutch marine fleet would not be absorbed into the British fleet. They insisted that the Republic and England should have a joint council of war composed of admirals and vice-admirals and that the spoils of war should be divided in a ratio of one to four based on the fact that the fleet was now composed of twenty Dutch merchant ships and eighty British ships (including warships and the ships for transporting for coal from Newcastle). These claims were admitted after revising the division ratio from 1: 4 to 1: 5. The Stadthouder of the Republic appointed his nephew, Willem of Nassau, as admiral and Laures Real as vice-admiral, the latter was to command the combined fleet of England and the Republic for the second expedition to Spain in 1626.

When England and the Republic discussed where the Anglo-Dutch Fleet should attack first, the envoy of the Republic conveyed his government's opinion to the Duke of Buckingham. There were, the Dutch thought, three points at which to attack the Spanish Empire: West Indies, Flanders, and Iberia. There were, however, not sufficient food and fodder to make an expedition to West Indies. On the other hand, their ships were too big to attack the Flemish coast, and more soldiers would be needed to land to Flanders. Therefore, the best idea was to attack Iberia. Accordingly, Charles I instructed the Admiral-General Sir

Edward Cecil to determine where the Spanish fleet was, which coasts were fortified against the enemy, and where the armories of the enemy were. At first, annihilating the enemy's fleet should be attempted. On landing, they should destroy and burn as many ships, arsenals, and storehouses for food and fodder as they could. It was not always necessary to occupy the towns of the enemy, but if the town was rich or if they could occupy it without great difficulties, they should occupy it in order to retrieve some of the expenses of mounting the expedition. After accomplishing these goals, the last point to be considered carefully was to pursue the Silver Fleet and the ships bound for Brazil and to decide whether or not they would make an expedition to the West Indies.

In the middle of September, the King and the Duke of Buckingham reviewed their troops at Plymouth and held a supreme council of the expedition. At last they selected Lisbon, Cadiz and Sanlucar as the best places to attack, leaving the final decision from among three sites to depend upon the circumstances. In the middle of October, accordingly, the Anglo-Dutch Fleet started for the Iberian Peninsula and sailed off Cape St. Vincent to the southwest of the Iberian Peninsula. As the fleet neared the strait of Gibraltar, they considered adding Gibraltar and Málaga to Cadiz and Sanlucar as possible attack sites. It was, though, hard to assault Gibraltar or to expect many spoils there. Málaga would be easy for them to attack, but it was too far from the strait where they intended to attack the Silver Fleet. Therefore, they decided to go on with the plan to attack Cadiz. The Anglo-Dutch Fleet entered the Bay of Puntal and landed at Cape Puntal. The weather was bad, though, and the moral of the troops was low. They therefore failed in the war plan. While the invaders spent several days in vain, Spain gathered its troops and undertook a counterattack. The Anglo-Dutch soldiers, therefore, returned to their ships and withdrew. The Fleet then cruised around Spain for three weeks, searching unsuccessfully for the Silver Fleet. While this was going on, one third of the soldiers became sick because of the bad food. At last the fleet scattered and had to return home.

At the end of 1626 and the beginning of the next year, the Anglo-Dutch Fleet undertook a second expedition to Spain. This ended more miserably yet. When we examine these two expeditions to Spain, we see that England and the Republic had no plan to occupy any places in Spain. They wanted only to invade Spanish waters and to capture the Silver Fleet and the ships bound for America. The targets of the attack by the Anglo-Dutch Fleet were Spanish privateers of the Dunkirk Spanish Navy, the Spanish ships bound for Central and South America, and the Silver Fleet. The Dutch navy, therefore, did not plan to extend its power through the Strait of Gibraltar to the western Mediterranean. Still less was it considered that the Republic would occupy Ibiza.

III

The periodic shortages of grain suffered by Spain and other Mediterranean countries — particularly acute from 1586 to 1590 — gave the Dutch Republic a card of entry and opened the area to Dutch and English shipping. The Republic

began to export a lot of grain to Mediterranean countries, especially to Liborno on the west coast of Italy. By the terms of truce between Spain and the Netherlands in 1602, the Dutch fleet started openly to pass through the Strait of Gibraltar and into the sea of Spain, and to trade with Italy and Spain. The biggest menace for the Dutch was the existence of the Muslim pirates, who still had much power in the western Mediterranean.⁴⁾ After 1598, Dutch marine fleets ever traded in the territory of the Turks, flying the French flag by permission of Henry IV of France. In 1602, Cornelis Haga, having been secretly given instructions by the Estates-General, succeeded in concluding a commercial treaty at the court of Turkey. The purpose of this treaty was not so much trade with the Levant as obtaining the right to negotiate with two ports on the coast of North Africa, Algiers and Tunis, under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. These ports were useful as refuges from pursuit by Spanish ships on the Sea of Spain, also by using them Dutch ships could evade attack by Muslim pirates. At that time, the pirates were changing from the use of big galleys to the use of sailing ships like those used in the countries of northern Europe, and were beginning to commit all sorts of outrages.

Moreover, not only the Muslim were pirates, English and Dutch sailors also engaged in privateering, having been authorized to do so by governments during the war with Spain. After the war, though they were recalled, they did not return home, but continued to sail about as privateers. There were not a few who preferred adventurous privateering to being sailors receiving low wages. At the port of North Africa, these Christian pirates had a good chance to sell the goods and ships which they had captured. On the other hand, there were merchants and capitalists who invested in profitable privateering. W. Sombart has insisted that privateering and piracy as a business was one of the factors which contributed to early modern capitalism, and T. S. Jansma has considered that capitalists found many chances to invest in profitable privateering and piracy. In fact, in the 17th century many big merchants in Amsterdam were rumoured to have business with pirates at some points.

The Dutch wanted to stop these assaults on their merchant ships in the Mediterranean and to release captured and enslaved Dutchmen. In 1610, 1614 and 1615, therefore, the Republic succeeded entering into treaties with Morocco, Tunis, and Algiers and began to station consuls there. In 1625, the city government of Amsterdam appointed a committee to organize trade with the Levant and sailing across the Mediterranean. The committee was comprised of such prominent merchants as Elias Trip, Gerrit Hudde Marcus de Vogelaer, and Jan Bicker. An organization imposed customs and duties on Dutch merchant ships passing through the Strait of Gibraltar and into the Mediterranean, the fees intended to finance convoy service for them. The committee also kept a touch with the consuls at Aleppo in the Levant, Algiers and Tunis, and gave subsidies to them.

Meanwhile, the Estates-General were busy struggling with Spain. Therefore the Dutch merchants could not help devising means of self-protection against piracy by making an organization. The organization, however, suffered from a shortage of funds. Consequently, it could not pay the expenses of any occupa-

tion of Ibiza. In conclusion, it is not considered that the Netherlanders made any attempt, whether public or private, to occupy Ibiza for the benefit of Dutch trade and transportation in the Mediterranean.

Notes

(1) Charles-Emmanuel Dufourcq; *Aspects internationaux de Majorque durant les derniers siècles du Moyen âge*, in *Ibiza*, no. 20 (1965) p. p. 5–52.

Alvaro Santamaria Arandez; *El reino de Mallorca en la primera mitad del siglo XV*, Palma de Mallorca 1955.

(2) Enrique Fajarnes y Tur; *Propósito de los Holandeses de apoderarse de Ibiza en 1629*, in *Ibiza*, no. 7 1944.

(3) Dr. H. Winkel-Rauws; *Nederlandsch-Engelsche samenwerking in de spaansche wateren, 1625–1627*, Amsterdam, 1946.

(4) H. Wäthen; *Die Niederländer im Mittelmeergebiet zur Zeit ihrer höchsten Machtstellung*, Berlin, 1909.

T. S. Jansma; *De economische en sociale ontwikkeling van het Noorden*, in *Algemene Geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, vol. VI, Utrecht, 1953, p. p. 89–146.