

Narrative and Historical Facts of Shen Youyong's Repulsion of the Dutch in 1604

Tsung-jen Chen

ABSTRACT

In 1604, the Ming general Shen Yourong ordered the fleet of the Dutch East India Company, led by Wybrandt van Waerwyck, to withdraw from the Penghu Islands. Previous research on this event has emphasized the Dutch occupation of Penghu and portrayed Shen Yourong, commanding a force of 50 warships, as successfully compelling the Dutch retreat through personal courage, diplomatic skill, and military strength.

Although grounded in historical sources, this narrative has been shaped by the laudatory writings of local literati and later reinforced by Twentieth-century nationalist historiography. As a result, it tends to magnify Shen Yourong's individual agency while underestimating the broader geographical and political context in which the event unfolded.

This article reexamines the episode by reassessing the respective roles of Shen Yourong and Wybrandt van Waerwyck, as well as the positions and strategic objectives of the Fujian provincial authorities and the Dutch fleet. It argues that greater consideration should be given to the early operational model of the Dutch East India Company and to the seasonal monsoon patterns in East Asia. These factors, rather than Shen Yourong's personal intervention alone, were crucial in shaping the decision of the Dutch fleet to depart.

Keywords: Dutch East India Company, Shen Yourong, Penghu Islands, Maritime Trade, Fujian Naval Force