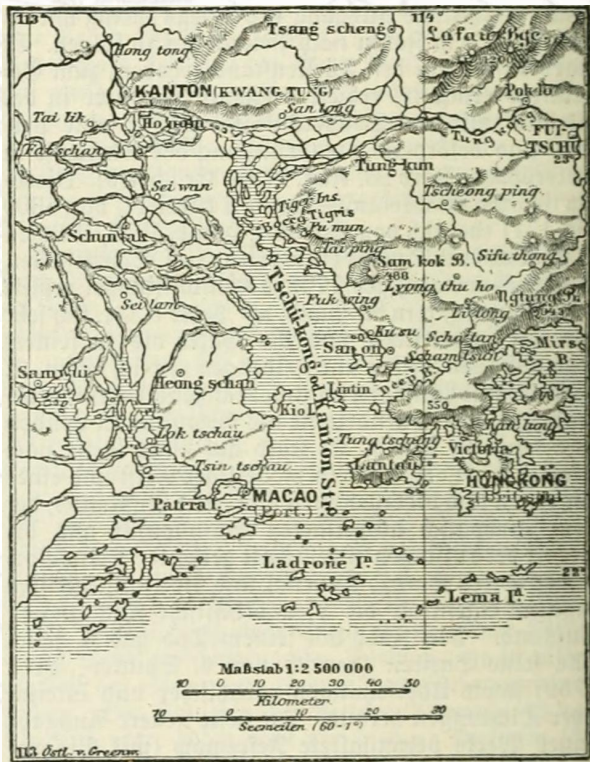


The Macau Incident

27th January 1799

The Macau Incident was an inconclusive encounter between a powerful squadron of French and Spanish warships and a British Royal Navy escort squadron in the Wanshan Archipelago (or Ladrones Archipelago) off Macau. The incident took place in the context of the East Indies campaign of the French Revolutionary Wars, the allied squadron attempting to disrupt a valuable British merchant convoy due to sail from China.



This was the second such attempt in three years; at the Bali Strait Incident of 1797 a French frigate squadron had declined to engage six East Indiamen on their way to China. By early 1799 the French squadron had dispersed, with two remaining ships deployed to the Spanish Philippines. There the frigates had united with the Spanish Manila squadron and sailed to attack the British China convoy gathering at Macau.

The British commander in the East Indies, Rear-Admiral Peter Rainier was concerned about the vulnerability of the China convoy and sent reinforcements to support the lone Royal Navy escort, the ship of the line HMS Intrepid under Captain William Hargood. These reinforcements arrived on 21 January, only six days before the allied squadron arrived off Macau. Despite being outnumbered in ships and guns, Hargood sailed to meet the French and Spanish ships, and a chase ensued through the Wanshan Archipelago before contact was lost. Both sides subsequently claimed that the other had refused battle, although it was the allied squadron which withdrew, Hargood later successfully escorting the China convoy safely westwards.

THE INCIDENT

The Franco-Spanish squadron, comprising the 74-gun ships of the line Europa and Montañés, and the frigates Santa María de la Cabeza and Santa Lucía, accompanied by Preneuse and Brûle-Gueule, sailed from Manila on 6 January 1799, under the command of Rear-Admiral Ignacio Maria de Álava. Alava's squadron crossed the South China Sea in three weeks, arriving in the Wanshan Archipelago near Macau on 27 January 1799 with the intention of attacking shipping at Macau and in the mouth of the Pearl River. Alava had been informed of the presence of the Intrepid by Danish merchants but was unaware of the arrival of Rainier's reinforcements.

Hargood immediately sailed to confront Alava, both squadrons initially forming lines of battle and steering towards one another, Virginie at the head of the British line. What followed has been the subject of dispute. Hargood reported that the Franco-Spanish squadron then turned and fled into the Wanshan Archipelago, where they anchored as darkness fell before withdrawing before dawn. He ascribes this to "their dread of a conflict that would in all probability have terminated in their disgrace".¹

¹ [Macau Incident \(1799\) - Wikipedia](#)

SCENARIO

BATTLE AREA

This scenario is played on a 6' x 4' area, with the wind blowing from the east. Clusters of small islands should be added to represent the Wanshan Archipelago.

DEPLOYMENT

British Escort Squadron

The British deploy in a line of battle with HMS Virginie at the head.

Allied Squadron

The allied squadron is deployed in line of battle, with the smaller vessels Santa Lucía and Brûle-Gueule acting in an auxiliary role protected by the main line of battle.

SPECIAL RULES

All British crews are Veterans.
All Spanish crews are Inexperienced.
All French crews are Regular.

Santa Lucía and Brûle-Gueule must remain in an auxiliary role unless fired upon or until the allied line is broken.

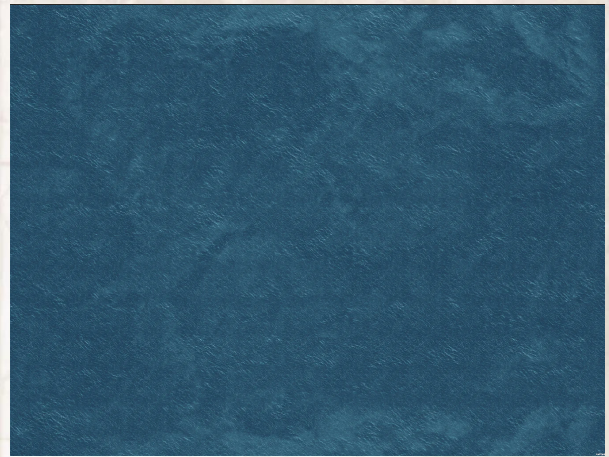
VICTORY

British Escort Squadron

The British objective is to remove the Allied threat by causing half the fleet to strike their colours (or sink).

Allied Squadron

The Allied objective is to withdraw to the safety of the archipelago. Half of the allied fleet, including at least 1 ship of the line, must successfully leave the table. If half of the allied fleet withdraw without a ship of the line the result is a draw.



FORCES

British Escort Squadron

Captain William Hargood

The British forces consisted of:

- **HMS Intrepid**, 64 Gun Ship of the Line
- HMS Arrogant, 74 Gun Ship of the Line
- HMS Virginie, 38 Gun Frigate

Allied Squadron

Rear-Admiral Ignacio María de Álava

The Spanish forces consisted of:

- **Europa**, 74 Gun Ship of the Line
- Montañés, 74 Gun Ship of the Line
- Santa María de la Cabeza, 34 Gun Frigate
- Santa Lucía, 26 Gun Frigate²

The French forces consisted of:

- Preneuse, 40 Gun Frigate
- Brûle-Gueule, 20 Gun Corvette³

² Represent with a 6th Rate

³ Represent with a Brig