



Universiteit  
Leiden  
The Netherlands

**The Dutch East India Company's tea trade with China, 1757-1781**  
Liu, Y.

**Citation**

Liu, Y. (2006, December 6). *The Dutch East India Company's tea trade with China, 1757-1781*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/5421>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/5421>

**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

## CHAPTER FOUR

## THE DUTCH-CHINESE-EUROPEAN TRIANGLE

*Introduction*

On 12 April 1760, the Chinese Imperial Court officially introduced what was to become known as the Canton System (1760-1842).<sup>1</sup> By imperial decree, all the European companies were ordered to do their business at one port only, Canton. Simultaneously with this decree, several regulations relating to the European trade in Canton were also issued by the local authorities of Canton. One of the decisions was no longer to force the representatives of the European companies to leave China during the off-season, but to allow them to sojourn in Macao.<sup>2</sup> Following the introduction of the Canton System, the conditions, under which representatives of these companies were obliged to be stationed together on a small strip of land outside the walls of Canton would last until the conclusion of the First Opium War in 1842.

Under the Canton System, the European trade in that city was meticulously organized and followed an invariable pattern. Each step was strictly controlled by Chinese officialdom. Each company had to engage one or more Hong merchants, who had been designated by the Chinese authorities to trade with the European companies as an appointed security. The Hong merchants acted as guarantor for the payment of customs duties by the Europeans, but their role and responsibilities were much wider. The Chinese authorities also held them responsible for the behaviour of the foreigners. The various functions of this system were put into practice on the orders of the mandarins in Canton: the *Tsongtu* (Zongdu (两广) 总督, Governor-General),<sup>3</sup> the *Fooyuern* (Fuyuan 抚员 or (广东) 巡抚, Governor),<sup>4</sup> and the *Hoppo* (Hubu or Yue Haiguan Jiandu (粤) 海关监督, Superintendent of Maritime Customs)<sup>5</sup>. Obligated by the constraints of this strictly regulated trade system, the supercargoes of the European companies had no choice but to negotiate with their Chinese partners about the sale and purchase of goods, always locked in fierce competition with the delegates of the other companies.

Nor was this mediation restricted to business affairs. In daily life, all the relations of European traders with Chinese officialdom were mediated by the Hong merchants and the interpreters, since the Confucian administrative elite of China held the merchant class in great disdain. This condescension was even more marked when they had to deal with foreign

(barbarian) merchants. The *Hoppo* was the only relatively high official with whom foreign traders were able to get in touch on a regular basis, as he was directly in charge of the customs administration and of supervising the Canton trade.

The activities of all the European and Chinese participants and the various kinds of *guanxi*, or Chinese “networking”, in terms of economic interests among them in this bustling emporium generated an extremely lively atmosphere during the business season. The process of negotiation between the Dutch trade representatives and the tea-supplying agents has already been discussed. This is then the juncture at which to give a description of other aspects of life in Sino-European interrelations. It is quite difficult to ascertain how the Dutch interacted with the Chinese and other Europeans at that time, but it is possible to find some clues from a close scrutiny of the records of the various companies.

#### *Protests against the establishment of the Co-hong*

In 1759, the English supercargoes in Canton sent James Flint to the northern port of Tianjin 天津 to deliver the local authorities a memorial listing the grievances they held about the administration of the Canton trade. The memorial was subsequently forwarded to Peking. When the High Commissioner was dispatched to Canton to investigate the *Hoppo*'s alleged misconduct, his subsequent investigation confirmed that the complaints were largely justified. Even so, the Chinese authorities responded unfavourably to the demands voiced by the Europeans requesting a liberalization of their trade. The municipal authorities ordered the European merchants to limit their business dealings in China, and to instruct the Hong merchants to establish a united association of their members which would be privileged to decide the prices of import and export goods. The task of this so-called Co-hong corporation was to regulate the Canton trade of their respective members and to consolidate their monopoly on the European trade.<sup>6</sup> The European trade representatives were vociferous in their fervent objections to this modification of the trade at Canton.

At the beginning of 1760, as matters were not yet properly sorted out, the atmosphere in Canton could be cut by a knife because the Hong merchants refused to engage in any business for more than six months ahead, as they were at that time deliberating the establishment of the Co-hong. Faced with this delay, compounded by the uncertainty of what the new arrangement would entail, the European trade representatives were like cats on hot bricks, anxious that they would not be able to conclude any contracts for the purchase of tea in time.

In July, the Hong merchants were still deep in discussions about how

to establish the Co-hong most efficaciously, but had not yet been able to reach a consensus. Smarting at the uncertainty, the English threatened the Hong merchants from time to time, stating in no uncertain terms that they would not deal with them if they set up “such a pernicious association”, and that they would seek co-operation from the other European nations in thwarting its establishment.<sup>7</sup> On 4 August, the Hong merchants asked the English why they had not begun to unload their ships. The answer was that they should ask the mandarins the reason. When they were asked whether they would trade with the Hong merchants as a company, the English replied that they were not free to do so. Naturally they were aware of the contents of the Emperor’s edict which decreed that the Europeans should do their business through the Chinese Hong merchants, but they pointed out that the Emperor had not ordered the Hong merchants to join together in a unified body. This being the case, they were determined to continue to deal with the Hong merchants as they chose.<sup>8</sup>

The joint Hong merchants immediately reported the rejoinder of the English to the *Hoppo* on 8 August, and debated with each other about whether or not a meeting should be called to discuss the negative attitude of the Europeans.<sup>9</sup> When the Dutch returned from Macao around this time, they had very little or no chance to discuss these matters with the Hong merchants, although they sedulously visited the principal among them every day. None of the Hong merchants dared to come into the Dutch factory, with the exception of Tswaa (Tsja) Suyqua who was the owner of the Dutch factory and resided in the front part. The Dutch never gave him credit because he was the joint protector of the Co-hong, along with Poan Keequa. During this time the Dutch did not see Swetja, Tsja Hunqua, or Poan Keequa, because the first two merchants deliberately chose to go into the city all the time to avoid being apprehended and beaten up because the officials might assume them collaborating with the Europeans. As president of the Co-hong Poan Keequa was busy with preparations for its establishment and simply had no time to spare.<sup>10</sup>

When the merchant Tan Tinqu (Chen Zhenguan 陈镇官) was detained at the Nanhai Court on 10 August, these merchants, who had seemed willing to talk to the Europeans, were now so discouraged that they also held themselves aloof. Tan Tinqu had been arrested on account of a few proposals which he had submitted to the *Hoppo* protesting about the establishment of the Co-hong to oblige the European merchants and to mediate in these matters. The *Tsongtu* distrained the effects of Tan Tinqu’s family members, including their houses and other chattels as security for a debt of circa 2,400 taels which he owed to the Chinese authorities. Whatever the rights and wrongs of the matter, Tan Tinqu was declared a risk to the peace and prosperity of the region, and his

Hong chop was withdrawn. With his family, the unfortunate merchant was sent back to his birthplace, Quanzhou, in Fujian Province in disgrace.<sup>11</sup>

As no Hong merchants came to the Dutch factory, the Dutch chief, Martin Wilhelm Hulle, went to the Hongs of the most prominent merchants on the 12th because he did not want to lose time. He said that from its inception, the Dutch had been led to understand that the merchants were holding discussions about how they would interact together within the legal confines of a company. He, however, was convinced that the Emperor had not ordered the Europeans to do business with a combination of eleven Hong merchants. If the *Tsongtu* wished to order the setting up of such an association on his own authority, he should inform the Europeans and give them the opportunity of whether to engage in trade or to refuse to comply with the new order and leave for Europe. It was impossible for the Dutch to commence trade or to leave on no firmer grounds than the Hong merchants' rumours. For such weighty matters, a chop or proclamation should be issued by the mandarins. Were this not forthcoming, he would lodge a formal complaint about the Hong merchants' conduct in a petition submitted to the *Tsongtu* and ask that they be punished.<sup>12</sup>

When the Hong merchants failed to give an unambiguous reply, the next day the Dutch chief hurried to the Swedish and English, fully resolved to clear up the matter once and for all. He requested his erstwhile rivals co-operate with him in finding a solution which would be acceptable to all of them. They should delay no longer but lead the Chinese to believe that they mutually disagreed with each other and, at the same time, secretly confer about what they should do. He said that because he had not received the desired mandarin's chop, he would summon all the eleven Hong merchants to his factory and ask them whether and on what conditions they were willing to trade with the Dutch this year. Thereupon, he proposed presenting a petition to the *Tsongtu* asking him to abolish the Co-hong. Hulle asked both the English and Swedes to send him one or two people to attend his meeting with the Chinese merchants, and subsequently, having hopefully learned the state of play, the three Companies could talk about the delivery of the request. Both nations promised to do so.

On the morning of 14 August, the Dutch chief went to see the merchants but heard nothing about the decree from the *Tsongtu* on this matter. On his return, he immediately sent the interpreters accompanied by the Dutch fiscal and clerk around to all eleven Hong merchants and asked them to present themselves at the Dutch factory for further discussions at eleven o'clock the next morning. When Hulle received a speedy reply intimating that the merchants would indeed attend at the appointed time, he

informed the English and Swedes of the positive response and arranged with them that two supercargoes of each nation should be present at that time to hear the merchants' answer; later, in the afternoon, they could meet again at the Dutch factory to deliberate on what further steps to take and how to deliver their requests.<sup>13</sup>

After all his preparations, the Dutch chief organized a meeting at his factory with the Hong merchants in the presence of two English and two Swedish supercargoes on 15 August. Since it was highly unlikely that the merchants would have already reached a firm decision, and to ensure the Hong merchants understood what he had in mind, Hulle acquainted the latter of the general content of the request which he planned to write to the mandarins in Chinese. This is what he told them:

To their great surprise the Dutch had learned that ten of the eleven Hong merchants,<sup>14</sup> who enjoyed the exclusive privilege of trading with the Europeans by order of the Emperor, had been forced to unite at the behest of and with the full approval of the mandarins. Dealing with such an association would be the same as dealing with one Chinese merchant. All the European companies had sent ships from so far away with only one intention to trade with as many Chinese merchants as seemed suitable to them. The free trade in which the Europeans had been engaged so far with the Emperor's permission greatly deviated from the manner of trade which they now wanted to introduce. If the Co-hong were to be established as they were planning, the Chinese merchants would be able to purchase the imported goods from the Europeans at a low price, but sell their own products at a high price. Such a policy would totally ruin the trade which was already on the decline.

The Dutch would beseech the Emperor to cast his beneficent gaze on them and to ensure that the freedom of trading with different Chinese merchants would not be abolished. The corporation of Chinese merchants which threatened to cut off the artery of all European traffic sooner or later should be abolished. The Hong merchants should be permitted to deal separately with the Europeans as they had done in the past. Only under these conditions would the Dutch be able to obtain some profit for their directors and maintain the shipping link to Canton.

During the fifteen days he had spent in Canton, he had assiduously made repeated efforts to discuss the matter with some of the Hong merchants, but had only succeeded a few times then by exerting the utmost effort and had never received any answer to his inquiry, namely: who would guarantee the customs fee and payment of the goods? Who would be members of the association and would pay any debt incurred should the association become insolvent or the members split up; and who should the Dutch address were the association not to fulfil its contracts and obligations in the stipulated time or not respect the contract, or pro-

duce shoddy wares when the goods were delivered? Were such a person not produced to set the minds of the Dutch at ease, who would resolve all disagreements between the Europeans and this association with absolute impartiality? He had added that were their questions not answered, they would be pertinently unable to enter into negotiation with the Hong merchants. The Dutch could not entrust goods or money to this association unless high-ranking mandarins were to stand guarantor for it, because on many occasions of two or more merchants the one had signed the contract for the other, but in the event of death of one of them, the other had been constrained to pay only his own portion under Chinese law, although under the terms of the contract he was also obliged to stand guarantor and pay for the other. This being so, he had good reason to fear that this association would not pay in proportion to its share at best and comply with this afore-mentioned judgement with respect to other members who did not have a penny to their names. Therefore, it was only reasonable the Dutch should do their best to obtain an explanation of the points just raised before they decided to take the plunge with this association “christened with whatever name or dressed in whichever garment.”<sup>15</sup>

Having described the situation in general, the Dutch chief put his specific questions to the Hong merchants present:

1) Whether or not the Dutch could do any business at present.

The Hong merchants answered that the Dutch could do business with one or more of them as they wished.

2) How was it such an association that had been created among the Hong merchants?

The Hong merchants answered that the Emperor had issued various regulations about the Europeans and European trade in Canton. As example they stated, the Chinese should pay the Europeans’ debts promptly to ensure the latter could depart at the stipulated time. Therefore, the *Tsongtu* had settled the matter as beneficently as possible, believing that the establishment of a corporation among the Hong merchants had been the best means to achieve such a purpose.

3) Whether this association had been created by order of the Emperor or by that of the *Tsongtu*, or simply on the initiative of the Hong merchants.

At that point, the Hong merchants fell silent. Although Hulle had asked them individually one after the other for an answer, they just said that they would have to read through all the chops again before they would be able to give a reply. When Hulle insisted on a response, they promised to answer his question the following evening.<sup>16</sup>

Around two o’clock in the afternoon on 16 August, the interpreters arrived at the Dutch factory with a communication of the *Hoppo*. In this chop was stated that all the foreign goods should be confided to the

administration of security merchants approved by the mandarins, and matters pertaining to trade be settled in a lawful way. The *Tsongtu* in conjunction with the *Fooyuern* and the *Hoppo* had presented a memorial to the Emperor and everything was now properly regulated. If the foreigners wished to engage in trade as they had done before, they should abide by the fixed regulations. Perhaps they were unaware that particular shopkeepers and all unapproved merchants were now banned from trading with them; those who erred against this prohibition would be punished. The interpreters and Hong merchants were ordered to be exceptionally diligent in their observance of these rules. Ill-natured merchants had been covert in their action and others spun webs of subterfuge and deception. Fortunately some of these had been detected and punished. The officials had established the corporation with no other purpose than to prevent the knavish tricks and deceptions of these malicious Chinese. Now, the officials had selected benevolent and sincere merchants in whom the Europeans could trust. The Dutch ships had already lain at anchor for a long time without unloading their goods. The Dutch were invariably considered honest men who should not be led astray by the false stories of the English. Now they should deal with the Hong merchants they preferred. They would do well to begin their business if they wished to return home in time. If they chose not to, it would be on their own heads and not that of the *Hoppo*. The foreigners should hasten to address themselves to the approved merchants and not delay the trade any longer, if they were not to risk losing out on the weather for their return voyage. Foreigners who behaved themselves and did not oppose the regulations would be treated with indulgence, but those who persisted in their obduracy would risk shame and find every reason to repent at leisure afterwards. The rules had already been issued to the Hong merchants, and the *Hoppo* would address the Hong merchants again urging them to remind the English and Dutch emphatically and with the utmost sincerity of the rules, granting them plenty of leeway to conduct themselves accordingly. The Hong merchants had given an unequivocal indication that they had understood the premises on which the officials had based the reasoning and had given assurances. They would not act against them, pleading ignorance as justification for their lapses. The *Hoppo* gave the interpreters three days to explain everything thoroughly and to make certain that the English and Dutch wished to submit themselves to the new rules.<sup>17</sup>

When the ten Hong merchants showed up at six o'clock in the evening, the Dutch chief, Hulle, demanded the promised answer from the merchants, with the English and Swedes as witnesses. In the name of all the merchants Swetja announced that vexed by the troubles with the Europeans which had occurred last year,<sup>18</sup> the *Tsongtu* had submitted several proposals to Peking. The imperial approval had now arrived, intimat-



ing that the Hong merchants should take care of all business in agreement with the requirements laid down by the mandarins in order to set the minds of the Europeans at rest. In order to be able to take care of the business imposed on them as effectively as possible, at their own request with the sanction of the *Tsongtu* the Hong merchants had agreed to unite into one business corporation. Their petition had been passed through several Courts of Justice and had obtained the approval of each court.<sup>19</sup>

As Hulle felt discomposd by the *Hoppo's* letter, he again summoned the English and Swedes to his factory that same evening. They made a joint agreement that each nation should present a petition to the *Tsongtu*, arguing that an association such as the Co-hong would be extremely detrimental to the Europeans. Their trade should not be transacted with the association as a whole but with the Hong merchants individually, as had been the case in the past. The Swedish delegates excused themselves, saying that they needed further consultation with their factory and promised to give an answer either the same evening or the next morning. They returned to the Dutch factory early on the 17th and declared themselves opposed to the presentation of a petition before the arrival of their other ships, because for the moment they had no business to transact. At their factory, the English also debated the predicament of whether or not they should present a petition to the *Tsongtu*. Since the Swedes had cried and because there had been insinuations that the *Hoppo's* chop in a very particular manner was a very clear indication of why the Dutch were not doing business, the English thought that all these arguments were specious and contradicted the interpretation they had received from the interpreters. They resolved to send for their security merchants and ask them ingenuously to explain the chop. In the meantime, they informed the Dutch that they needed more time to consider whether or not to present a petition. They said that the Dutch should go ahead without waiting for them, because they had heard the mandarins suspected the English of inciting the Dutch. They could not resolve to do anything at all as they feared the mandarins might again misconstrue their actions.<sup>20</sup>

This unexpected situation forced the Dutch to take action alone. They wrote the petition immediately and asked the security merchants to take it to the city. In this petition, Hulle announced that the Dutch had decided to postpone their business transactions because they had been told that the united Hong merchants were going to trade as a corporation. On the 21st the ten Hong merchants had solemnly declared at the Dutch factory that they united in a corporation to conduct all sorts of trade at the instigation of the high-ranking mandarins, but that the Dutch were still free to negotiate with those members with whom they wanted to deal. It mattered not one jot to them whether the Dutch traded with the corporation or one particular member since all the eggs were in the one basket.

On these grounds, the Dutch believed that the *Hoppo* should pronounce according to the usual legal provisions about all the disagreements which had arisen between themselves and the Hong merchants, now that he had been fully informed of their complaint. The Dutch were grateful for the beneficence, favours and kindness which high-ranking mandarins had bestowed on them for many years. Pertinently they had come to Canton with no intention other than to trade. They also wanted to unload their goods as soon as possible, but now that they had been informed about the formation of the Co-hong, they had some inhibitions about opening negotiations. They had appealed for permission to engage in business as before and continue to pursue their trading activities unhampered, but had been informed that they would be obliged to deal with the merchants in the association as a body. These new arrangements would be an insurmountable obstacle to pursuing negotiations, because the new association would be in the position to fix the price arbitrarily. In their petition the Dutch stated they were in the dark about whether it was the *Hoppo* who had ordered this association to be formed or whether it was a decision which the Hong merchants had taken on their own initiative. They believed that the knavery and deceit so prevalent in business could only be halted by the *Hoppo* and not by the formation of such an association. Therefore, they requested the *Hoppo* to issue orders which would be beneficial to the foreigners' interests and to take pity on their plight, and they begged the latter to disband this association because it benefited their situation not one iota. If the Co-hong were to be set up, they anticipated no more Dutch ships would be sent in the coming year.<sup>21</sup>

On the 22nd, the Dutch received a communication from the Chinese officials, saying that:

The Europeans have traded here for a number of years without any damage on either side. But at present, shopkeepers and other members [of the public] are deceiving the Europeans in all sorts of ways, making contracts, then reneging on them, borrowing money without repaying it and misleading Europeans by suggesting ruinous schemes to their greatest detriment, [...]; We, the *Tsongtu*, *Fooyuern*, and *Hoppo*, have sought the assistance of His Imperial Majesty and have beseeched Him to decree that the Europeans shall only be permitted to trade with the present Imperial Merchants; [...]; therefore you should realize without entertaining a single shred of doubt that everything had been done for your own benefit; if the merchants do not behave magnanimously under the present conditions, we shall punish them severely and our unfailing scrutiny will certainly make their deeds known to us in good time [for steps to be taken].

You people say that should you not have your own way, you will not be able to come here again and will lose absolutely on the trade. Be free to do what you think fit! The meagre duties which this far-flung Empire receives from your trade can be counted as nothing compared to those enormous sums which it raises for its Emperor every year and to all which pertaining

to the life and enjoyments which abound in His lap.

It will be best that you proceed with your affairs and deal with those of the Mandarin's Merchants whoever pleases you in fairness to both sides, without raising further objections to a company or concerning the connectedness of the merchant's circumstances, and it should be sufficient for you that we shall protect you in all cases against your enviers, while you will return to your home country sooner, &c.<sup>22</sup>

Obviously the answer the mandarins gave to their petition was not at all what the Dutch had expected. In order to take further action, the Dutch chief now again summoned the members of the Trade Council on 25 August. He announced that this association of Chinese merchants had been assembled, whether covertly or openly, in such a cunning and effective way that it would not be easy to shake its foundations unless other more emphatic means were planned. Since the European merchants had done everything to stop the formation of this association but had failed to achieve their end, they should seek to reach an accord as to how they could continue to carry on their trade as propitiously as possible.<sup>23</sup>

After a long discussion, the Council resolved to do all the business of selling and contracting Bohea with three security merchants, Tsja Hunqua and Semqua in association, Tan Chetqua, and Swetja, on condition that each of them stood surety for the others in every aspect, because the Dutch would rather give these three partners credit than to all the other seven members of this corporation. These three merchants were, after all, the most honest of their confreres who were favourably inclined towards the Europeans. Hulle suggested that business be commenced with these appointed merchants. Without further ado, the very next day, Hulle informed the English that he had already proceeded to do business.<sup>24</sup>

In the month of September, the Dutch sold their goods and contracted for teas. The Swedes, and Danes began their negotiations in October and the English followed in December.<sup>25</sup>

In this case, the Dutch, who all along were disinclined to oppose the mandarins in public, at first planned to lead this protest, and wanted to engage in an open dispute with the Hong merchants to persuade them into relinquishing their intention. After some mature reflection, they sensibly gave in at once after they had received the Chinese authorities' final confirmation, as they knew that foreign traders should never confront the authorities of this vast Empire if they wanted to do successful business in China. It was the English who raised the first protests about the intentions of the Hong merchants and it was their rumours which induced the Dutch to follow suit. Later, when they were planning to lead the protest against the establishment of the Co-hong, the Dutch expected the English to co-operate. The latter did so at the beginning, but when they

learned about how angry the Chinese authorities were with them, they beat a quick retreat, leaving the Dutch in an uncomfortable dilemma.

*Purchase of the Herstelder*

On 10 July 1772, the Macao ship the *St Luz* arrived in Macao from Batavia bearing news that the Dutch Company ship the *Rijnsburg*, assigned to Canton by the High Government, had sailed from there on 8 June. This Macao ship also carried Governor-General Petrus Albertus van der Parra's missive, saying that owing to the delay in the arrival of the Company ships from Europe the High Government had resolved to fit out the ships the *Rijnsburg*, the *Bodt*, the *Prinses van Oranje*, and the *Veldhoen* for Canton. The *Rijnsburg* had already sailed and the loading of the other three was in progress and would probably be finished by the middle of June. If no ship from Europe were to arrive in Batavia, the High Government would send the other three ships to oblige the Company.

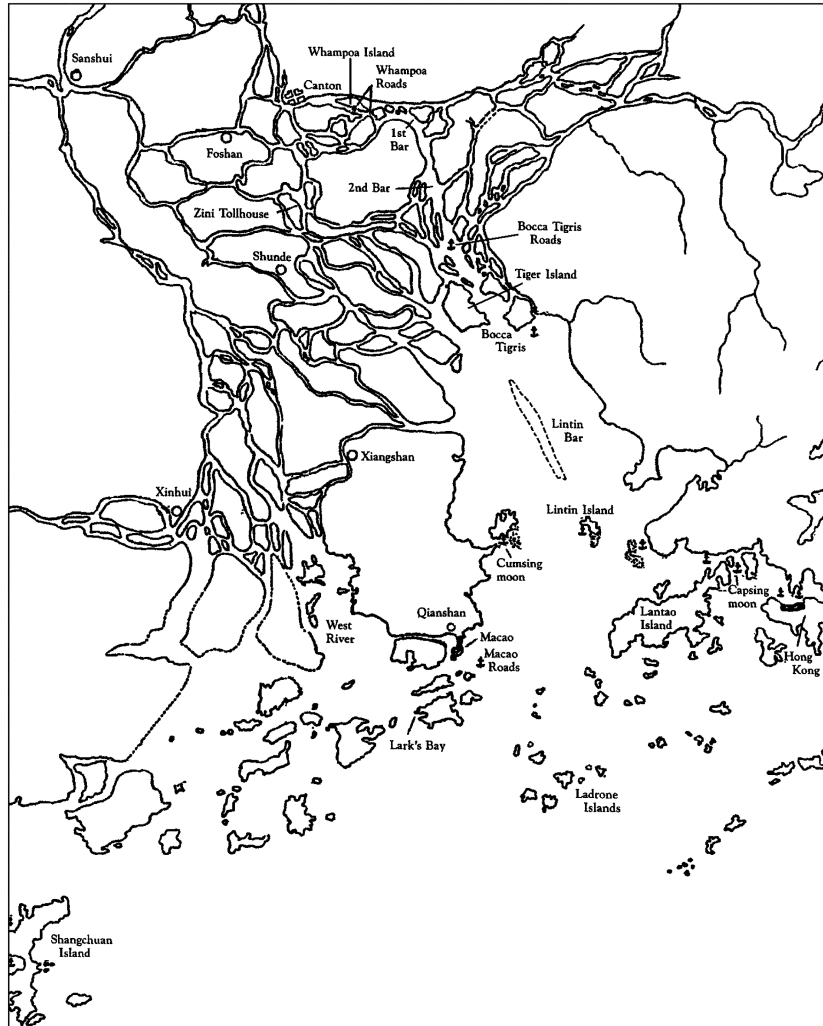
On 16 July, the English in Macao received news of the arrival of the ship the *London*, under the command of captain Webb. A terrible typhoon which had blown up that same night forced the *London* to put out to sea. From the topmast a crew member of this ship had seen a ship aft of them and suspected that was the *Rijnsburg*.

On 21 July, an English country ship and a Macao ship, the *St Simão*, from India arrived in Macao. The crew of the English ship, as said, had seen a Dutch ship at the latitude of St Jan, which, as they supposed, had anchored there to ride out the storm but shortly after had disappeared.<sup>26</sup> In the afternoon of the 22nd, the Dutch ship the *Bodt*, under the command of captain Staring, arrived in the outer roadstead of Macao. That captain was surprised that the *Rijnsburg*, which had sailed three weeks before he had, had not arrived.<sup>27</sup>

On 1 August, the Dutch supercargoes, who had returned to Canton on 30 July, heard that five men had entered into the toll house and these were survivors of the wreck of the *Rijnsburg*. These people would remain where they were until the mandarins had prepared a chop addressed to the *Tsongtu*. While awaiting this august document the Dutch supercargoes sent food and some refreshments to the men and were then informed that they were actually the first mate and four sailors from that ship. The same afternoon, these five people entered into the Dutch factory.<sup>28</sup>

As early as 2 August, the Dutch supercargoes considered replacing the *Rijnsburg* with another ship. They knew of nothing better than the *St Simão*, belonging to the Governor, or Captain-General, of Macao, so they wrote to him asking whether he would be willing to sell his ship. Five days later, the Governor replied that he was prepared to do so and he would send two people to bargain over the purchase in order to strike a deal,

Map 4 The Pearl River Delta



Source: Adapted from Paul A. Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade*, x.

thereby avoiding a lengthy correspondence. The Dutch chief, Anthony Francois L'Heureux, immediately answered that he could not sign a contract until he had inspected the ship to judge whether she was seaworthy enough to be sent to Europe. The upshot was that the supercargo, Andreas Everardus van Braam Houckgeest, and the assistant, Jan van den Bergh, went to Macao to bargain with the Governor. More professionally perhaps the first and second mates and the chief carpenter of the *Bodt* were also commissioned to inspect the Macao ship and its rigging.

On 15 August, L'Heureux received news from Van Braam in Macao informing him that the *St Simão*, 65.9 cubits long and 25.4 cubits at the beam, had been found to be sturdy and seaworthy according to the report of First Mate Justus Hendrik Pheil and the others. He had asked the Governor, Diogo Fernandes Salema e Saldanha, to proceed with the sale of the ship as soon as possible. His efforts were in vain because the Governor asked 43,000 taels of Spanish rials for the ship, for which Van Braam offered only 24,000 taels. The difference was so big that the Governor thought it superfluous to continue the negotiations and called the sale off. Not to be outdone L'Heureux ordered Van Braam to abandon the negotiations because he thought the Governor simply wanted to take advantage of the predicament, convinced that the Dutch would buy his ship at any price. On 19 August, L'Heureux again instructed Van Braam to bid as low as possible a price.<sup>29</sup> Eventually, on 21 August Van Braam reached an agreement with the Governor and bought the ship for 38,000 taels of Spanish rials, to be paid in October. The next day the formal transfer took place and the name of the ship was changed to the *Herstelder*. Poan Keequa was invited to be the security merchant of the *Herstelder*, a position which he accepted.<sup>30</sup> On the evening of the 28th, Van den Berg accompanied by Second Mate Weever and Chief Carpenter Jan Fredrik Smith left for Canton, and First Mate Pheil and Van Braam remained in Macao to sail for Canton on the *Herstelder*.<sup>31</sup>

On the morning of 31 August, the Governor of Macao informed Van Braam that the *Hoppo* of Macao had assembled some malevolent Macao people to prevent the ship from leaving the roadstead for Canton. As he wanted to be absolutely sure of his information, he requested Van Braam to inquire personally about the matter with the *Hoppo*. Van Braam immediately set off to see the *Hoppo* pretending to know nothing about what was afoot and applied for a chop for the pilot who would navigate the ship to Canton. The *Hoppo* replied that he could not give the ship a chop because she was a Macao ship and therefore should be loaded there. Van Braam objected to this explaining that the ship was no longer the property of the Governor of Macao but was now owned by the Dutch Company. Consequently the ship should sail for Whampoa (see Map 4) to take on cargo because the Company could not load her at Macao. The *Hoppo*

haughtily replied that this was none of his business, and the Dutch should not have bought a ship which belonged to Macao. Since nothing could be settled, Van Braam said that he would write directly to Canton to request a chop from the *Tsongtu*. The *Hoppo* answered that Van Braam was free to do as he pleased and that he would immediately give a chop if Van Braam received permission from Canton. Accordingly, Van Braam at once sent a report to Canton. Shortly after this, the procurator (*procurador*)<sup>32</sup> of the Senate of Macao sent an interpreter to Van Braam to explain that the *Hoppo* had ordered him to interdict the departure of the *Herstelder*. The ship was not to leave before a chop had been received from Canton in order to avoid any possible imbroglio between the Chinese administrations with the Senate of Macao.<sup>33</sup>

With this message in hand, Van Braam went to see the Macao procurator to find out what was going on. The procurator began by asking Van Braam to ignore the message sent. He had been forced to send it in his official capacity as a precautionary measure because the Chinese, as “great rascals”, sought any excuse to lodge an attack against the Senate. Van Braam replied that he had talked to the *Hoppo* in person that same morning and had already been forewarned that he was seeking to hold the ship up. As he had already sent an express message to Canton to ask for a chop, he was confident that it would be dispatched soon. Van Braam also asked the procurator whether there might not be some other request or document which would have to be presented to the Senate in connection with the departure of this ship. He was authorized to act in the name of the Dutch Company in his capacity of deputy-president of the Trade Council. He was most adamant that he did not want to infringe any formalities and was determined to avoid any kind of argument with the procurator. The latter answered that with regard to the purchase of this ship, he could do nothing more than he had already done. The ship could leave as soon as he was in receipt of a chop from Canton. Nobody could then stop Van Braam from sailing it to Whampoa.

Van Braam went on to ask whether it was advisable he should also pay the Senate some money to muster the crew. The procurator answered this was unnecessary as this was one of the responsibilities of the Governor. If the latter gave Van Braam permission to sign on the sailors, that would be enough. Van Braam said that he had expressly requested information about what he was supposed to do because he did not want to be found wanting in anything that was required. He also expressed the hope that the Senate would not create any more hindrance which would detain this ship and block her departure. He also asked the Senate to be mindful of the fact that this was not private but Dutch East India Company business. Should any more obstacles be strewn in the path of this ship's departure, it was always still in the power of the Dutch Company to give tit for tat

with territorial Macao ships if they were to enter Dutch territorial waters. The procurator replied that there was no reason for any anxiety. He assured Van Braam that the Senate would gladly co-operate with the Dutch Company and that there was nothing for the Dutch to fear.

When Van Braam visited the Governor again, the latter inquired about his conversations with the *Hoppo* and the procurator. He was indignant about the *Hoppo's* announcement, and declared that such a message was unacceptable because the matter of whether a ship was bought in Macao and whether it was sent full or empty to Whampoa was wholly out of the jurisdiction of the Chinese government. This was a matter solely for the ship-owner, and the *Hoppo* should not pretend otherwise and exact any more than the usual toll and tonnage fees. The Senators maintained their privileges by such chicanery whenever they saw a chance to put their power against him into effect. He accused them of offering the Chinese mandarins decisions which would undermine the laws in Macao. Meanwhile, the Governor had assured Van Braam that he feared no more trouble, because he had performed all his duties most astutely and he had no need at all to ask the procurator if anything else should be done. Subsequently, Van Braam wrote a report to the Trade Council in Canton explaining the situation in which he found himself and requested a chop from the *Hoppo* of Canton to obviate all the trouble. At the same time, he reported that he had already signed on sixty-seven ordinary ratings and three ship's officers.<sup>34</sup>

After receiving Van Braam's report, L'Heureux immediately went to Poan Keequa on 1 September, informing him of the state of play and requesting him to deliver a chop as soon as possible. Poan Keequa promised to attend upon the *Hoppo* early the next morning.

He was as good as his word. On 2 September, Poan Keequa informed the Dutch that he had spoken to the *Hoppo* and the latter had informed him that it was necessary to submit two requests, one to the *Tsongtu* and the other to himself. If these conditions were fulfilled, he might be in a position to receive a chop for Macao. Poan Keequa promised that he would visit the *Tsongtu* again the next afternoon. Meanwhile, in Macao Van Braam sailed the ship into the outer roadstead and anchored her there. Then, he went to see the Governor and asked permission for the ship to pass the Barra Fort so it could enter the Bay of Taipa.<sup>35</sup> The Governor said that he would inform Van Braam of the answer the next day.<sup>36</sup>

Back in Canton, Poan Keequa came to the Dutch factory on 3 September, and reported what he had done at the office of the *Tsongtu*. He had explained in detail that the ship had been bought in Macao as a replacement for the wrecked ship the *Rijnsburg*. The Dutch chose not to load the ship in Macao because of the high expenses involved, but preferred to load at Whampoa as they used to do with all their ships.



Therefore, a chop was requested granting the ship permission to sail upriver. The *Hoppo* of Macao, who was also present, took good measure of how anxious Poan Keequa was. He said that the Dutch had no urgent need to move the ship from Macao. If this ship were to sail, there would not be more than ten ships remaining at Macao which in effect meant a loss of income for him. Last year one had been burnt and two others had been forced to return without completing their journey. In these straits he would be distressed to see yet another ship taken away from Macao. Poan Keequa then turned to the *Tsongtu*, who promised to discuss the business with other mandarins and to announce the result the following day. He intimated that all this should be not much of a problem and that the only reason which might prevent the ship from entering the Bocca Tigris would be the fact that it arrived empty and therefore deprived the *Hoppo* of Macao of any fee from its cargo. This might arouse some suspicion at the Imperial Court that he might be retaining the impost on the cargo. Nevertheless, there was still room for a reciprocal discussion.<sup>37</sup>

In Macao, Van Braam received the answer from the Governor telling him to go to the procurator to find out whether or not some trouble might also be stirred up with the Chinese government if the ship was moved to the Bay of Taipa. Van Braam did as he was bid, but the procurator explained that, in his opinion, no obstacle could be thrown up by the Chinese side, because this business was completely out of their hands and that nothing could prevent Van Braam from moving the ship to Taipa if he had permission from the Governor to pass the Barra Fort. When Van Braam notified the Governor of this, the latter declared that Van Braam should present a request only on this subject to him, whereupon he would give the order to let the ship pass. Van Braam immediately followed this up and made the request.<sup>38</sup>

However, in response to Van Braam's request the Governor sent him the order that the ship still had to remain and could not sail outside that day. This confused Van Braam, so he went directly to the Governor and asked the reason why the ship might not depart for Taipa. The Governor clarified his decision by explaining that it would be better for the ship to remain inside until the coming Monday when Van Braam would receive a message from the Senate. Now it really no longer made any difference if the ship did remain inside longer, because Van Braam could not possibly leave without the promised message from the Senate. The Governor announced that he could not take any risk with the Senators who were suspicious of him. As far as the protestations of the Chinese administration were concerned, he grumbled that they had been unjustifiably made and it was therefore a scandal that the procurator had responded to this protest. Despite this acknowledgement he was careful not to get into trouble with the Senate which would happen were the ship to leave with-

out awaiting its permission. Van Braam replied that he did not intend to inconvenience the Governor by organizing a hasty departure and would not leave Macao before he had received the message from the Senate. His purpose in sending the ship to Taipa was to muster the crew and to round up any absentee while the ship was still in the bay. The Governor said that if Van Braam departed after having received the assent of the Senate, he would not procrastinate but sign Van Braam's request and send an order to the Barra Fort to let the ship pass.<sup>39</sup>

On the evening of 4 September, Poan Keequa came to the Dutch factory with bad news concerning the granting of a chop which would allow the *Herstelder* to go to Whampoa. He explained that the *Hoppo* of Canton had summoned him and informed him that he had discussed this business in detail with the *Tsongtu* and other mandarins. They had advised him not to grant a chop if he wanted to be sure of not receiving an imperial reprimand. The Emperor undoubtedly would be convinced that they had embezzled the *Hoppo* money or import duties on the goods brought on one of the Dutch ships and that the mandarins had lined their own pockets. Even if there was a formal statement to the effect that one Dutch ship had shipwrecked and that another ship had been bought at Macao as a replacement, it would still be impossible for the Imperial Court to comprehend that this ship from Macao had arrived in the roadstead of Whampoa empty. He suggested that the ship be loaded at Macao.

The Dutch supercargoes were surprised by this answer and wondered whether they would ever be able to procure a chop at all, since, as they pointed out, the *Hoppo* of Macao also complained about the drop in the number of ships entering his port and was not overjoyed at the prospect of the *Herstelder* leaving Macao and sailing into the hands of strangers. He had protested about her departure as strongly as it was possible for him to do so because he felt he would certainly be punished were he to allow the ship to leave. It was certain that should the *Tsongtu* and *Hoppo* persist in refusing a chop to allow the ship go to Whampoa, she would have to remain at Macao. The purchase would either have to be cancelled or its cargo would have to be loaded there. There was absolutely no doubt that the *Tsongtu* feared an imperial reprimand if he let the ship approach Whampoa without taking the appropriate measures. Faced with this impasse, Poan Keequa hurriedly said that he would see the *Tsongtu* again the next day and would try to persuade him to think it all over again. Surely the Emperor would not be happy were his export duties to be lost.<sup>40</sup>

On the morning of 4 September, the *Herstelder* left the Inner Harbour of Macao and anchored in the Bay of Praia Grande. In the afternoon, Van Braam went on board accompanied by First Mate Pheil. He hoisted the Prince's flag with a seven-gun salute, and the Guia Castle hoisted the flag

as well and returned the salute. Van Braam then mustered the crew and found fourteen absentees. Going back ashore, he sent their names to the Governor with a request that they be arrested and sent on board. On the morning of 5 September, the Governor informed him that the most of the absentees had been arrested and Van Braam could take them on board. Van Braam therefore sent orders for a boat which could transport the crew.<sup>41</sup>

The same day, Poan Keequa came in declaring that he had spoken to the *Hoppo* of Canton but, as matters were still inconclusive, he would have to continue his discussion the next day. In order to facilitate the business, the frustrated Dutch now proposed that the *Herstelder* should take over part of the cargo of the *Veldhoen*, which had just arrived, before sailing into the Bocca Tigris.<sup>42</sup> On 6 September, Poan Keequa was invited by the English for a meal, but he excused himself saying that he had to see the *Hoppo*. L'Heureux was then asked to see him to be given some good news, because he could not afford to come to the Dutch factory as the English might see him. When L'Heureux went to see him in his office, Poan Keequa explained that, having deliberated the business in question with the *Tsongtu* and *Hoppo*, he had proposed once again that some of the goods from the *Veldhoen* be transferred to the *Herstelder*. Upon hearing this, the *Tsongtu* promised to give a chop to allow the ship to be loaded in this way. The *Tsongtu* recommended to Poan Keequa that the Dutch should submit a request to him and to the *Hoppo*. The next day, the draft submission to the *Tsongtu* and *Hoppo* was delivered to Poan Keequa who promised to hand it over that same day.<sup>43</sup>

On 6 September, L'Heureux wanted to talk with Poan Keequa about the chop for the *Herstelder*, but the latter had gone to the city. Upon his return from the city, Poan Keequa declared that the chop could not be delivered right away because of the festivities for the *Tsongtu*'s birthday, but it would be handed over as quickly as possible. On the evening of 10 September, Poan Keequa again said that he would do all the work required on the 11th.<sup>44</sup>

On the morning of 11 September, L'Heureux received a letter from Van Braam dated 9 September, in which he stated that he had decided to wait no longer for the chop from the *Hoppo* because he had already received the message containing the assent of the Senate. He had sailed out of Taipa that same evening, and at present he was sailing through the Bocca Tigris without a pilot and hoped to arrive at Whampoa the following day. This unexpected news caused the chief great consternation and anxiety, and he worried about how to present this *fait accompli* to the *Hoppo*, since no chop had been received to allow the ship to enter Whampoa.

At noon, Poan Keequa arrived at the Dutch factory, anxiously impart-

ing the news that he had been summoned by the *Hoppo*. The latter declared that he was curious to know why the *Herstelder* had arrived before she had been granted a chop. He urgently recommended that Poan Keequa speak to the *Tsongtu* and also ask the Dutch what was going on. In order to delay his exposure to the *Tsongtu's* fury, Poan Keequa chose to visit the Dutch factory first and then report to the *Tsongtu*.

L'Heureux decided to give the *Hoppo* as innocent an explanation as possible, telling him that the ship was compelled to go to the Bocca Tigris by the bad weather and had even been forced to sail to Whampoa without a pilot since there was no secure anchorage at the Bocca Tigris. Standing his ground, he ordered Van Braam in an express not to approach Whampoa itself but to anchor outside until further orders. Meanwhile, Poan Keequa went to see the *Hoppo*. That afternoon, Poan Keequa's chief clerk informed the Dutch that his master had talked with the *Hoppo*, who suggested that the *Herstelder* should leave the Bocca Tigris again and then after one or two days enter when the chop was ready. The Dutch were requested that this be put into effect without further ado. This offered the only escape-route from what would otherwise be a sea of trouble and a plethora of administrative turmoil.

The Dutch supercargoes adduced diverse excuses, but in vain. They were assured that without the chop the *Tsongtu* would never allow the ship to appear in the roadstead of Whampoa to be loaded. Seeing there seemed to be no solution in sight, the members of the Trade Council considered their predicament and reached the unanimous decision to follow Poan Keequa's advice, as was recommended by the *Hoppo*. Consequently it dispatched a letter to Van Braam, informing him of everything and recommending that he sail back out of the Bocca Tigris and anchor at an appropriate spot.<sup>45</sup>

On 12 September, the comprador, Ajet,<sup>46</sup> who had left with L'Heureux's letter to Van Braam on the 11th, reported that he had handed the letter over and had been told that the ship would remain where she lay close to the Bocca Tigris. In the afternoon, L'Heureux received news from Van Braam stating that he had sailed the *Herstelder* close to the Zoet-Zoet-Ham<sup>47</sup> where he would anchor according to instructions. L'Heureux communicated this to Poan Keequa, who was satisfied and recommended sailing the ship out of the Bocca Tigris.<sup>48</sup> Early on the morning of 13 September, L'Heureux received a letter from Van Braam, announcing that he had anchored outside the castle at the Bocca Tigris at the place he deemed safest and that he was waiting for the chop. L'Heureux immediately informed Poan Keequa who was very pleased and promised to work with might and main to expedite the reception of the chop. That evening, Poan Keequa came out of the city and informed the Dutch that he had had a very embarrassing meeting with the *Hoppo* and consequently no

chop for the *Herstelder* was forthcoming. He thought that he needed one more day when the *Hoppo* would hopefully be in a better mood to grant the chop. Therefore the Dutch should be patient and wait. That same day, a commission had gone to the Bocca Tigris in the name of the *Tsongtu* and *Hoppo* to investigate whether the *Herstelder* really lay outside or not. When the commission came on board, Van Braam requested its permission to sail inside the Zoet-Zoet-Ham. The mandarins refused but promised that the chop would be issued in three days.<sup>49</sup> September 16 came and went and the interpreter arrived at the Dutch factory to report that the mandarins would grant no chop because they believed that the whole matter was suspect and quite irregular. The next day Poan Keequa even said that the high-ranking mandarins who had boarded the *Herstelder* had not reported to the *Tsongtu* and the *Hoppo*. He stated that the ship lay fairly close to the Bocca Tigris. He reckoned that it would take three more days before the Dutch were granted the chop.<sup>50</sup>

On the afternoon of 24 September, Poan Keequa privately announced via one of the clerks that he had returned from the city and was happy to discuss affairs. In response to this invitation, L'Heureux went to see him and asked why there was such a delay with the chop for the *Herstelder*. What was this all about? L'Heureux said that if matters could be facilitated with some presents, he might be prepared to undertake this on the account of the Company, but if Poan Keequa thought that obtaining a chop was completely out of the question, he should say so. In that case, the Dutch Trade Council would send the ship back to Macao. Poan Keequa answered that no presents were needed because he dealt directly with the *Tsongtu* and *Hoppo* about the matter, but that "presents" might be needed if things were to be speeded up by the mandarins. He was absolutely confident that the chop would be granted, but he could not ascertain when exactly this would happen. He said that he had requested the *Hoppo* for the chop again that very day but it still had not been forthcoming. The *Hoppo* absolved himself of blame saying that he himself was awaiting an answer with definite information about permission for the ship from the Casa Branca.

After L'Heureux had patiently listened to all the excuses, he pointed out to Poan Keequa the dangers besetting the ship lying exposed off the Bocca Tigris should there be any high winds or electrical storms. She ran the risk of shipwreck owing to the long delay with the chop. Also, costly time was running out to make the ship ready for departure that year. In view of the perils which might await her, he proposed that should the *Hoppo* not approve the chop, at least the mandarins should permit the ship to sail inside the Bocca Tigris so as to protect her against potential damage. Poan Keequa thought he should apprise the *Hoppo* of this idea, and he believed the coming day would be the right moment to do so,

principally because the *Tsongtu* would then be receiving good wishes for his birthday, at which time he was usually in a good mood.<sup>51</sup>

Quite unexpectedly, the Dutch received the chop from Poan Keequa in the afternoon of 25 September. The mandarins permitted the *Herstelder* to sail to Whampoa from the Bocca Tigris. L'Heureux immediately sent this message to Van Braam.<sup>52</sup> Consequently the matter of the *Herstelder* was settled.<sup>53</sup>

This incident shows that in order to settle the *Herstelder* business the Dutch not only had to negotiate with the ship-owner, the Governor of Macao, they also had to treat cautiously with the Macao Government, of which the Senate was the principal authority in all dealings with the *Hoppo* of Macao and with the Chinese authorities in Canton.<sup>54</sup> The Macao Government consisted of the Governor (or the Captain-General) and the Senate. The Governor was just in charge of the forts and of the exiguous garrison, and the real governing body was the Senate which frequently was at loggerheads with the Governor. No matter what the state of the relationship between the Governor and the Senate was, living under the roof of the Chinese authority, the Macao Government had no escape from the Chinese rules and laws when any business pertaining to the Canton trade had to be dealt with. This was, of course, also applied to all the European companies trading in Canton and sojourning in Macao.

#### *Recapture of the Goede Hoop*

On 17 August 1781, the English trade representatives in Macao were reported that captain John McClary of the English country ship the *Dadloy* had that day captured the private merchantman the *Goede Hoop* which was anchored at Whampoa under Dutch colours. Captain McClary justified his action by pointing out that Great Britain had declared war on the Dutch Republic in December 1780.

The Dutch trade representatives in Macao reacted promptly to this act of violence. They first desired a co-signed statement from other European delegates pressing the English supercargoes to condemn captain McClary for his action, but they refused to comply. Then, on the security merchants' advice, on 21 August the Dutch requested the mandarins in Canton to intervene because Canton was a neutral port where the ships of foreign nations – even if they were at war with each other – should never break the local peace; more acts of violence might follow if they did not take immediate action.<sup>55</sup> The Dutch chief, Cornelis Heyligendorp, who also happened to be in Macao, lodged a strong protest with the English supercargoes.<sup>56</sup>

In view of the justification of this act on account of the rupture between the two nations, we think it proper to address ourselves to you the representatives of your sovereign and the Company in this empire in order to point out the injustice of such a procedure. You should be aware that ships of belligerent powers anchored in a neutral port are always considered safe from the attacks of each other. This may have very prejudicial consequences to both Companies, [... and] will be exposed to similar enterprises as well as those of private persons. We require your assistance, so that the Dutch ship with her crew and cargo will be given back immediately. In case this will not be put in effect we shall feel ourselves forced to lodge a protest in the strongest manner against this action and make the author of it answerable for all the consequences it might have.

This letter was originally written in Dutch but was then translated into French, because the English said no one in their factory understood Dutch. The English replied in English, saying not without a touch of arrogance that some of the Dutch understood English well enough. In their reply, the English stated that they agreed with the practice of respecting the neutrality of ports in the countries with which they were living in peace, but that they had no control over the captains of the country ships. Their only option, they said, was to apply the strictest observation of neutrality on the ships of the English Company, but they would not tackle the private traders.<sup>57</sup> The Dutch, of course, were not satisfied with being brushed off with such an answer. Suffering from an obviously disadvantageous position as the weaker party in the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War, their only recourse was to appeal to the Chinese authorities.

After receiving complaints from the Dutch condemning this act of violence, the mandarins in Canton instantly demanded restitution of the Dutch ship. Captain McClary did not want to return his prize, and proposed that the cargo would be sold to the Chinese merchants as if she belonged to the Dutch, ensuring the *Hoppo* would not lose his duties, on the condition that the mandarins did not interfere. He threatened that he would take his prize out of the river and sail her away if he were molested in any way by the Chinese authorities. The mandarins were infuriated by his words. When they continued to press McClary to return the ship, he began preparations to make sail, weigh anchor, and go downriver towards the Bocca Tigris with the tide. Every man in the Chinese Customs House was now alarmed. All the troops who could be hurriedly assembled, about 2,000 soldiers in all, were ordered to a rendezvous on the Tiger Island, and preparations were made to obstruct captain McClary's passage.

The mandarins still preferred a peaceful solution to a violent one, and dispatched messengers to the English in Macao who now found themselves in a very disagreeable predicament. On 24 August, a mandarin travelled to Macao and addressed the English supercargoes, not through

a merchant or an interpreter as was usual, but through the Portuguese procurator of the Senate. He complained loud and long about the outrage and insult to the Imperial Government brought about by their English fellow countryman, and announced that the Chinese would hold the English supercargoes accountable for his behaviour, if they did not oblige captain McClary to restore everything he had taken forthwith. The supercargoes replied that they had heard of what had happened at Whampoa only by word of mouth because they did not regard this as part of their responsibilities. They said they had no control over McClary, the captain of a country ship, and therefore could not compel him to do anything. None the less, they assured the mandarin that they also considered the act both illegal and violent, and were also desirous of preventing captain McClary from carrying out his threats; they would exhort him to restitute his prize in order to appease the mandarins. Their offer was accepted, and the mandarin himself delivered the English supercargoes' letter to captain McClary, in which the latter was merely informed that his non-compliance might endanger the Company trade in this port.

When another mandarin was treated just as cavalierly one day later, the mandarins sent an order requiring the attendance of the English chief and other supercargoes at the Bocca Tigris, in order to compel captain McClary to comply with the *Tsongtu's* demands. The English chief, James Bradshaw, complained that no Hong merchant had been sent to acquaint him with the particulars of this affair about which he knew only from hearsay. He protested that the supercargoes had already done everything in their power and he, as the chief, would neither put himself in such a humiliating and disagreeable situation nor would he subject himself to being sent to the Bocca Tigris. This blunt reply obviously displeased the mandarin, yet from that moment on other mandarins continued to come to Macao almost every day, threatening that the trade of the English Company as well as that of private persons would be made to pay for captain McClary's conduct. They refused to accept the argument that the English supercargoes had no control over any ships other than those of the Company. The more the mandarins of Canton perceived their lack of control over the real offender, the more it seemed their resolve to implicate the English supercargoes hardened. Fortunately, for the English supercargoes a way out of this tricky situation presented itself.

While they were pressing the English in Macao, the Chinese authorities also were continuing direct negotiations with captain McClary on the Pearl River. As the *Dadology* was moving downriver with the tide, the principal magistrates of Canton and the merchants surrounded her with their boats. They kept up a constant barrage of intercourse with captain McClary; sometimes attempting to intimidate him, at other times trying to soothe him, but he was not at all impressed by these ravenous oppo-



nents. Despite his display of *sang-froid*, it was clear to him that he would never be able to leave the river unscathed. At long last, Poan Keequa, the principal security merchant of the EIC, contrived the following strategy with the English captain. They agreed that when McClary approached the Bocca Tigris with his prize, he would order his men off the *Goede Hoop*. He was as good as his word and immediately the ship was triumphantly boarded by the shouting Chinese.

The mandarin went to see the English in Macao again on 29 August, for the *Fooyuern* had had representations made by the aggrieved [Dutch] party, claiming that part of the cargo of the *Goede Hoop* was still missing. He maintained that the English supercargoes should oblige captain McClary to return everything. The English cavilled that this time the mandarin in Canton had contacted them in an extraordinary and highly unusual manner. On every former occasion the mandarins had assiduously made use of the Hong merchants and interpreters to convey their messages.

Captain McClary's conduct created a sea of troubles for the English supercargoes in Macao, because the officials of Canton had ordered the local magistrates to send boats to prevent McClary escaping with his prize. It was rumoured in Canton that the *Fooyuern* was preparing to do whatever was in his power to compel captain McClary to make a full restitution of the captured goods. On 3 September, the English were even informed that a mandarin from Canton had asked the Governor of Macao to seize some persons belonging to the English factory and have them delivered to him, but this had been refused by the latter. On 8 September, the Dutch supercargoes once again wrote a letter to the mandarins, informing them that captain McClary still refused to return all the remaining items in compliance with the mandarins' order. The *Dadoloy* therefore was once more surrounded by Chinese war junks stationed to prevent any communication with the English supercargoes.

On 23 September, the EIC trade representatives returned to Canton and at once discussed the captain McClary affair with Poan Keequa. Poan Keequa informed them that the *Fooyuern* was extremely displeased with captain McClary's behaviour and wanted to punish him as if he were a pirate; he was also highly incensed with the English supercargoes, because they had procrastinated in complying with his orders. It seemed that nothing could have prevented him from perpetrating some violence against the English, but Poan Keequa had dexterously made up a story explaining that the English Company resided in the "north" [England], whereas the individual traders came from the "south" [India], and that the English were at war with these people, even in their own country. Consequently it was no wonder that these people would not allow the English supercargoes to exert any power over them in Canton. Somewhat

soothed by such strategies, the *Fooyuern* seemed to have calmed down a little. Then, on 28 September, the English supercargoes, together with the other European supercargoes, received a general chop in the name of the *Tsongtu*, *Fooyuern*, and *Hoppo*, dated 9 September, saying that:<sup>58</sup>

As it is the first time a thing of this nature has happened, and as the offender pleaded ignorance of the laws and customs of this country, we have forgiven him and have moreover excused him the payment of port charges, and ordered all the assistance that may be necessary for the repairing of his ship and preparing her for the voyage.

This is to give notice to the supercargoes of the different nations in order that they may inform their countrymen that the Emperor will not suffer them to bring war into his dominions, and that whoever does so in the future shall be treated as an enemy.”

After reading the chop, it was painfully clear to the English supercargoes how much the mandarins were inclined to consider them responsible for all the irregularities or outrages that were committed by the commanders of the country ships. To set the matter straight, they therefore thought it proper to address a letter to the mandarins, expressing their opinion of captain McClary's unjustifiable conduct, disclaiming once again any kind of power over ships not belonging to the English Company. They explained that their failure to go to the Bocca Tigris was the result of sickness, and then complained of the ill-treatment they had experienced at the hands of the lower-ranking mandarins. Finally, they hotly denied there was a difference between Englishmen from the “north” and the “south”, insisting that all this was the fault of a mistranslation by the security merchant. In no uncertain terms they said that they found the answer of the *Fooyuern* of 2 October bristled with “boasting, insults, and threats, as was never before uttered to Europeans, even in this scene of their humiliation.”<sup>59</sup> Not mincing his words the *Fooyuern* had written as follows:<sup>60</sup>

You English are a lying and injurious people, for other nations that come to Canton are peaceful and do not hurt anyone, but you English are always making trouble. Some time ago one McClary took a ship and her cargo. Supercargoes are sent here by your king to superintend the Company business, and private persons are permitted to trade here by the same power. Why did you therefore say that you had no power to prevent the misdeeds of those individuals, and why did you refuse to obey me when I ordered you to come to Bocca Tigris to oblige this McClary to restore what he had taken? [...] If your sickness was not feigned, why do you excuse yourselves for not coming to the Bocca Tigris by telling me you have no control over private persons? From such equivocations I see that all this is bogus, and it is not clear to me but this attempt to take away the ship was made by your order [...]. Let me inform you that if hereafter you do not follow my orders the English ships shall not be permitted to trade here any more, and I will send my soldiers to expel you from the country. What will you then do? [...] To

my tribunal your representations seem insolent and impertinent. [...] If any of you English in future shall do wrong, whether supercargoes or individuals, he shall be punished to the full measure of his crime.

The mandarins' reply exacerbated the English supercargoes' thoughts of how unpleasant their present situation was: it seemed to them that every mandarin in Canton exerted his authority over them according to his own particular humour and was invariably hostile to them. They realized that they could not have recourse to the justice from the mandarins for their affairs. The only solution was to bear this treatment patiently as if they were timid of character, although they were by no means willing to be at all submissive.

In fact, the English very much envied the relations the Dutch entertained with the mandarins in Canton. One striking example was the case of a Dutch seaman who had been murdered by one of his own countrymen some months earlier. The Dutch supercargoes were not forced to hand the murderer over to the mandarins but executed him themselves on board one of their ships, in sight of the Chinese. Such privileges of this kind were not extended to other Europeans. For example, in October 1780 a French sailor killed a Portuguese sailor in Canton and consequently the Portuguese petitioned that the culprit should be handed over to them so he could be tried for murder in Portugal. The *Fooyuern* refused to consider this petition and put the murderer on trial and had him executed. These two instances show the variable nature in the proceedings of the Chinese tribunal in the trials of different Europeans. The English supercargoes drew the conclusion that if a murder concerning the English were committed, there was little probability that they would be allowed to try the culprit themselves. The mandarins would try, condemn, and execute the murderer.<sup>61</sup>

The atrocious situation of the English supercargoes in Canton and Macao was the result of their own non-intervention in captain McClary's business. They had made their own bed and they had to lie in it. Apparently, the English had learned the wrong lesson from the "Chinese debts" trouble in 1779, in which Sir Edward Vernon (Admiral and Commander in chief of the squadron and fleet of the EIC in India) dispatched captain John A. Panton to the mandarins of Canton, requesting the liquidation of the Chinese merchants' debts borrowed from the British creditors in Madras and in Britain. On this occasion, the English supercargoes were forced to negotiate with the mandarins in Canton on behalf of the British creditors. After the negotiations broke down, the mandarins reported this business to Peking and consequently the defaulting Chinese debtors were severely punished. Nevertheless, the British creditors received a very unreasonable recompense for their loans and the Company business also ran into difficulties because of this trouble.<sup>62</sup>

When called upon to intervene in clearing up the matter of captain McClary's privateering acts, the English supercargoes preferred not to stick their noses into the trouble caused by their fellow countryman, shrugging aside the admonishments from both the Dutch and the Chinese who felt that the English supercargoes should intervene. Hence, it is easy to understand why the Dutch headed directly for the English supercargoes when some cargo and a chest belonging to the *Goede Hoop* had still not been returned. On 28 October, the Dutch chief who arrived in Canton from Macao handed a paper over to the English chief, containing a detailed account of sundry stores as well as a chest of gold and pearls seized by captain McClary.<sup>63</sup> Confronted with this evidence, the English supercargoes at once strongly remonstrated with McClary and demanded he return all the remaining goods forthwith.

On 4 November, the *Goede Hoop* was advertised for sale by auction at Whampoa, but was only sold a year later in October 1782, when she became British property. On 16 December 1781, the troublemaker captain McClary fitted out his ship in warlike array and left the Pearl River for Bengal loudly declaring that he intended to take many Dutch prizes on his trip back to India. This was not an idle boast, because a few months later, without hesitation he plundered a Chinese junk bound for Batavia in the Bangka Straits under the pretext that the property on board the junk belonged to the Dutch.<sup>64</sup>

In seeking redress, the Dutch had finally made use of their satisfactory contacts with the Chinese merchants and their good terms with the Chinese authorities. The Dutch understood they would never win in any direct confrontation with the English, which had been their unhappy experience in previous years.<sup>65</sup> They behaved very shrewdly throughout the whole process. They did not take up arms directly against the troublesome captain but lodged protests with the English supercargoes, at the same time as they begged the mandarins to intervene, and picked the Chinese merchants' brains for suggestions as to how to outmanoeuvre the English. Simultaneously this case exposes the English supercargoes' difficulty in controlling the country traders, whereas the Dutch did not have the same kind of "private trader" problem in China.

### *Conclusion*

Since the official establishment of the Canton System in 1760, every year the delegates of the VOC, as well as those of the other European companies, had remained in Canton during the trading season and in Macao during the off-season. Under such conditions, they would perforce interact in various ways not only with the Chinese merchants and local author-

ities but also with the servants of other companies and the Macao Government. The three cases set out above collectively give a fine illustration of the Dutch-Chinese-European (principally English and Portuguese) triangle.

As far as relations with the Chinese were concerned, the VOC trade representatives in Canton were well aware of the need to preserve agreeable contacts with the Chinese merchants and to remain on good terms with the mandarins. In other words, the Dutch supercargoes always did their best to negotiate with the Chinese merchants for fair dealings,<sup>66</sup> and to make a favourable impression on the mandarins by presenting themselves as “honest men”. The inescapable conclusion is that the Dutch delegates carried out their business in Canton by conscientiously paying full respect to the Chinese authorities, as they were painfully aware of the dominant role of the Chinese authorities in the European trade in Canton. They behaved in a similar manner towards the Japanese bureaucracy when they traded at their trading-station Deshima in Nagasaki.<sup>67</sup>

As for the relations with the English in Canton, as shown by the first and third cases, the Dutch competed on the market and conflicted in daily life with their rivals far more than they co-operated with them. In comparison to the good relations between the VOC trade representatives and the Chinese authorities, interestingly enough, the English had suffered very shaky relations with the Chinese authorities since they started their China trade at the beginning of the eighteenth century, although the volume of their business with the Chinese merchants was much larger than that of the Dutch. In the third case, by their independent and sometimes rash behaviour the English country traders must have acted as the spoilsports in any efforts to maintain good relations.

As regards the relations with the Macao Government, the second case, the purchase of the *Herstelder*, shows that the VOC trade representatives kept in close contact with this administration no matter whether they were sojourning in Macao during the off-season or whether they negotiated some business with this administration while in Canton. Frankly speaking, the Dutch delegates probably received such fair treatment from the Macao Government because they had strong backing: the High Government. A number of Macao (Portuguese) vessels sailed to Batavia to trade every year, and the Portuguese traders frequently put in at Batavia for a short call when they sailed to Timor and other Asiatic ports, so to a large extent the treatment the High Government meted out to these Portuguese, mirrored the treatment the Macao Government gave to the Dutch supercargoes.<sup>68</sup>