

International Conference on

**SHIPPING,  
FACTORIES  
AND  
COLONIZATION**

(Brussels, 24-26 November 1994)

KONINKLIJKE ACADEMIE  
VOOR  
OVERZEESTE WETENSCHAPPEN



ACADÉMIE ROYALE  
DES  
SCIENCES D'OUTRE-MER

WETENSCHAPPELIJK COMITÉ  
VOOR  
MARITIEME GESCHIEDENIS



KONINKLIJKE ACADEMIE  
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Edited by  
J. EVERAERT & J. PARMENTIER

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## INTRODUCTION



# POURQUOI LES FACTORERIES ?

PAR

J. EVERAERT

La notion de **facteur**, dans le sens d'agent délégué, est née au début du 15<sup>e</sup> siècle dans le cadre des relations maritimes et commerciales entre le Portugal et la Flandre. D'ailleurs, du point de vue étymologique, les deux termes — facteur = agent — remontent respectivement aux mots latins *factor* et *agens* d'une signification presque identique : celui qui traite ou gère les affaires.

Au cours du 15<sup>e</sup> siècle, le rôle du facteur n'a guère évolué. La métropole de Bruges, florissant marché des produits et de l'argent, attirait aussi des facteurs royaux. Mais jusqu'en 1435, les rois portugais n'envoyaient des agents occasionnels que par intermittence et ceux-ci n'y résidaient que fort peu de temps. A partir du milieu du siècle, leurs successeurs restèrent en poste pendant plusieurs années. Les derniers facteurs royaux, installés à Bruges, distribuaient une quantité grandissante de produits coloniaux, essentiellement du sucre de Madère, des épices de Guinée et des défenses d'éléphant. De fait, le *feitor do rei de Portugal* exerçait une double fonction, à savoir celle de représentant du roi et celle de marchand indépendant. Bien qu'il fût l'agent commercial du roi et de sa maison, ses ventes étaient relativement limitées, les monopoles des produits coloniaux n'étant que peu significatifs à cette époque. Dès la fin du 15<sup>e</sup> siècle, une représentation analogue de la couronne portugaise fonctionnait aussi à Séville.

Les grandes découvertes et surtout l'ouverture de la route des Indes donneront un nouvel élan à la **factorerie**. Vers 1500, en détrônant Bruges, Anvers devint un centre de distribution internationale qui allait attirer peu après de nouveaux commerces : des épices orientales et de l'argent allemand, pour lesquels la factorerie allait constituer la plaque tournante. Le comptoir royal de Flandre, la soi-disant *Feitoria de Flandes*, essayait de réaliser le monopole portugais de la distribution des épices.

A l'exemple du modèle portugais, plusieurs firmes allemandes et italiennes, établies à Lisbonne dans le but de participer activement aux trafics coloniaux, y entretenaient également un agent qui gérait leur *Faktorei* ou le *fondaco*.

De nouveau, ce seront les Portugais qui prendront l'initiative d'appliquer à grande échelle la formule de la factorerie dans le domaine de l'expansion coloniale. Sur la côte occidentale d'Afrique, les établissements d'Arguim (1443) en Mauritanie et de São Jorge da Mina (1482) en Guinée étaient des implantations tout à fait nouvelles, fondées dans le but de faire la traite des esclaves, de l'or et de l'ivoire. Elles préconisaient déjà la généralisation de la factorerie aux Indes orientales. Mais là, contrairement à ce qui se produisit dans l'espace africain vide, les comptoirs portugais fortifiés furent souvent incorporés dans des sites déjà peuplés. En effet, dans l'optique de l'empire mercantile portugais, les factoreries sont implantées en raison de leur valeur stratégique commerciale et/ou maritime et mènent rarement à l'occupation territoriale. L'exception — d'ailleurs d'une superficie limitée — de Goa confirme cette règle.

Cette nouvelle expansion implique aussi le développement d'une navigation au long cours, funicule entre la métropole et les établissements dans des territoires d'outre-mer non encore sous contrôle effectif européen.

A l'instar du modèle portugais, leurs concurrents aux Indes orientales — d'abord les Hollandais, un peu plus tard les Anglais et finalement les Français — y fondèrent également des factoreries. Initialement, ces comptoirs étaient la charnière entre le commerce d'outre-mer européen et le trafic intra-colonial, intitulé *commerce d'Inde-en-Inde* ou *country-trade*. D'autre part, ils faisaient fonction de tête de pont pour le commerce colonial avec l'arrière-pays. Tel était le cas tant pour les factoreries portugaises que pour les loges des grandes compagnies. En outre, des comptoirs essentiellement mercantiles se sont parfois révélés des centres d'échange culturel.

Au cours des 17<sup>e</sup> et 18<sup>e</sup> siècles, plusieurs factoreries se sont avérées des bases opérationnelles pour des actions militaires et l'emprise territoriale. Cette stratégie a été suivie par les Hollandais en Insulinde et au Ceylan et par les Anglais au Bengale.

Mais plus tôt déjà et notamment en Amérique latine, quelques rares factoreries servirent de tête de pont pour l'exploration, la pénétration et même l'exploitation de territoires coloniaux. Les comptoirs, fondés par la firme allemande des Welzer au Venezuela, ainsi que les établissements hollandais sur la côte sauvage de la Guyane illustrent ce rôle actif quelque peu prématuré. En effet, c'est seulement au 19<sup>e</sup> siècle que les forteresses avec leurs postes satellites au service de la traite négrière, installées sur les côtes africaines, se transformeront d'abord en comptoirs pour la traite légale (produits oléagineux), ensuite en points de départ pour l'ouverture et le contrôle de l'intérieur du pays.

Dans l'histoire de l'expansion européenne, trois phénomènes, représentant une forte interrelation, dominent trois épisodes souvent consécutifs : d'abord la navigation au long cours ; ensuite les établissements européens dans d'autres continents ; finalement la domination de territoires d'outre-mer. Bref, dans ce processus de la colonisation, la factorerie constituait donc la pierre angulaire.

Alors que ces trois phases dans l'expansion européenne se sont manifestées parfois simultanément ou, plus souvent encore, sont succédé dans un rapport de cause à effet, leur corrélation n'a été étudiée que rarement. C'est précisément le propos de notre colloque d'analyser cette interrelation au moyen d'un certain nombre d'études comparatives, mettant plus particulièrement en évidence les rapports entre navigation et factoreries ou entre comptoirs et colonisation.

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Le projet d'organiser une conférence internationale sur le thème de «Shipping, Factories and Colonization» a été développé au sein du Comité Scientifique d'Histoire Maritime, sous la direction du regretté professeur émérite Ch. Verlinden, et sur une idée lancée par Mr J. Parmentier, membre de cette équipe. Pour des raisons logiques, le domaine à couvrir coïncidant avec le monde non européen, on a sollicité — par l'intermédiaire de Mr J. Everaert, président actuel de la Commission d'Histoire d'Outre-Mer — le concours de notre association sœur.

Les institutions de patronage des deux comités organisateurs, c'est-à-dire la Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België et la Koninklijke Academie voor Overzeese Wetenschappen/Académie Royale des Sciences d'Outre-Mer, sous la direction de leurs secrétaires perpétuels respectifs, les professeurs G. Verbeke et J.-J. Symoens, non seulement ont approuvé immédiatement cette coopération scientifique, mais surtout, elles ont mis à la disposition les moyens importants indispensables et cela à parts égaux. En outre, le Nationaal Fonds voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek, le Fonds National de la Recherche scientifique et la Maatschappij voor de Brugse Zeehaven, ce dernier en la personne de son président, Mr le Chevalier F. Traen, nous ont accordé une contribution financière substantielle. Nous leur exprimons notre vive gratitude.

L'Académie Royale des Sciences d'Outre-Mer, ayant pris en main l'encadrement administratif et pratique du colloque, nous a également accueilli pendant deux journées scientifiques. La session de clôture s'est déroulée aux Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, dont les riches collections ont émerveillé maint participant lors de la visite guidée.

De son côté, la Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België s'est chargée de la préparation des Actes du colloque. Les difficultés administratives, occasionnées par le caractère international des collaborateurs, ont été surmontées grâce à M. P. Verdoodt, attaché scientifique.

En conclusion, si l'organisation d'une conférence sous les auspices des deux Académies Royales précisées fut une primeur réussie, la présente publication témoigne de la coopération modèle qui s'est établie entre ces deux partenaires scientifiques.



## I. INDIAN OCEAN



# THE EUROPEAN FACTORIES IN INDIA : A BLESSING OR A CURSE ?

BY

Om PRAKASH

In a well-known passage in his magnum-opus *An Enquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith, the father of modern economic science argued that “the discovery of America and that of a passage to the East Indies by the Cape of Good Hope are the two greatest and most important events recorded in the history of mankind”<sup>1</sup>. While there clearly is an element of exaggeration in this statement, it nevertheless underscores the critical role of the two events in the emergence of a pre-modern world economy. The three principal segments of this economy, namely Europe, the New World, and Asia came together for the first time directly as a result of the great discoveries of the last decade of the fifteenth century. Unlike in the case of the New World, there had been a certain amount of interaction between Europe and Asia since antiquity and there is evidence to suggest that regular trade relations between the two continents went back at least to the early years of the Christian era. What the discovery of the all-water route via the Cape of Good Hope achieved was the overcoming of the transport-technology barrier to the growth of the Euro-Asian trade. The volume of this trade was no longer subject to the capacity constraint imposed by the availability of pack animals and river boats in the Middle East. It was indeed a critically important coincidence that the discovery of the Cape route had immediately been preceded by the discovery of the New World. For without the enormous quantities of American silver reaching Europe through the sixteenth and the early part of the seventeenth century, the enhanced trading opportunities between Europe and Asia opened up by the Cape route would essentially have been frustrated. Euro-Asian trade had traditionally been one involving the exchange of Asian luxury and other goods basically against

<sup>1</sup> Adam SMITH, *An Enquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 1776, reprinted from the 6th edition, London, 1905, vol. 2, p. 139.

European silver and, to a smaller extent, gold. This “bullion for goods” pattern of trade was an outcome of the inability of Europe to supply goods that could be sold in Asia in reasonably large quantities at competitive terms. Europe at this time had an undoubted overall superiority over Asia in the field of scientific and technological knowledge, but not as yet the distinct cost advantage that came with the Industrial Revolution in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This put the Asian, and particularly the Indian producers, with their considerably lower labour costs and a much longer history of sophisticated skills in handicrafts of various kinds, in a position of advantage over their European counterparts in the production of a variety of manufactured goods. As a result, Europe really had no option but to pay for the Asian goods overwhelmingly in terms of precious metals. Ever since the fourteenth century or so, the output of precious metals in Europe had by and large been stagnant raising fears of deflationary tendencies cropping up. This, coupled with the bullionist inhibitions regarding the export of precious metals, would almost certainly have created a situation where the non-availability of significant additional quantities of precious metals for export to the East would by and large have rendered the opportunities opened up by the availability of the Cape route quite ineffective. It is in this context that one must appreciate the critical significance of the two great discoveries — that of the New World and of the Cape route to the East Indies — having taken place almost simultaneously. It is from this time onward that one can legitimately speak of the emergence of a pre-modern world economy embracing in an organic and interactive manner all three of its principal components, namely the New World, Europe, and Asia.

In so far as the trade along the all-water route in the course of the sixteenth century was by and large not at the expense of the trade along the older water-cum-land route except perhaps in the early years of the century, the Cape route did lead to a fairly substantial expansion in the overall volume and value of the Euro-Asian trade. However, it was only after the English and the Dutch were able to remove the Portuguese stranglehold over the Cape route at the beginning of the seventeenth century that the really substantive expansion in the value of Euro-Asian trade began. The English East India Company, established in the year 1600, and even more so the Dutch East India Company chartered two years later, acted as the principal agents of this expansion, assisted later in the century by the French East India Company founded in 1664. Other European enterprises such as the Danish East India Company, the Ostend Company and so forth remained essentially on the fringes.

The English, the Dutch, and the French East India companies thus became the principal instruments of European expansion into Asia in the early modern period. This expansion was carried out through shipping, factories and eventually colonization, all three of which dimensions are the subject matter

of the present conference. I shall confine my remarks and analysis in this paper by and large to the implications of the establishment of the European factories in India in the course of the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries for the subcontinent's economy. The dimensions of shipping and colonization will also figure in the analysis, but only as adjuncts to the main theme of the factories.

As is well-known, the term 'factory' in this context refers not to a manufacturing unit but to a trading station established in an Asian region by one of the European trading companies. The term gained general currency mainly as a result of the excellent thirteen volumes containing summaries and abstracts of the English East India Company documents for the period 1618-1669 edited by Sir William Foster, and the subsequent four volumes for the period 1670-1684 edited by Charles Fawcett. Each of the European trading companies had a string of factories in the regions they operated in. By far the largest number of these units, however, was established by the Dutch East India Company, reflecting mainly its unique position as the only European corporate group to engage in large scale intra-Asian trade in addition to Euro-Asian trade as an integral part of its overall trading strategy. The first step in this direction was taken with the establishment of an eastern headquarters of the Company at Batavia under the charge of a Governor-General-in-Council. The initiative for the expansion of the Company's trading activities into different regions of Asia came essentially from the officials based at Batavia — the most important amongst whom was Jan Pietersz Coen, first the Director-General and later the Governor-General of the East Indies — rather than from the *Heeren XVII* at Amsterdam. The basic idea was to engage in certain critical branches of intra-Asian trade which would both facilitate a further expansion of Euro-Asian trade as well as make available to the Company independent channels of making substantial profits.

From the very beginning, India figured rather prominently in the Company's network of intra-Asian trade. Indian textiles were traditionally the principal medium of exchange for obtaining southeast Asian pepper and other spices. It did not take the Company long to discover that if it obtained these textiles at source in India rather than in southeast Asia, it would get a much better deal. A factory was, therefore, established at Masulipatnam on the Coromandel coast, by far the most important region producing cheap cotton textiles in demand in southeast Asia, as early as 1605. By 1610, three more factories had been opened at Petapuli, Tirupapaliyur and Pulicat, the last of these being declared the chief factory of the region. The other principal region producing these textiles, namely Gujarat, was reached with the establishment of a factory in Surat in 1616. Factories subordinate to the one at Surat included those at Broach and Agra. It was not until the 1630s that a factory was established in another major region in the subcontinent, namely Bengal. What had attracted the Company to the region initially was the possibility of buying fairly large

quantities of relatively cheap raw silk — an item critically important for the silver and gold providing Japan trade to which the Company had exclusive access from the late 1630s onward. The precious metals obtained in Japan were in turn used to supplement the supplies obtained from home for investment in Indian textiles and raw silk. Another important item obtained in Bengal from the second half of the seventeenth century onward was opium which sold extremely well in southeast Asia. By about 1640 or so, the Company had managed to create a vast network of trade within Asia operating in the Middle-East, south Asia, southeast Asia, as well as in China and Japan. In other words, by this time the Company had established factories along each of the major segments of the “great arc of Asian trade” stretching from Persia in the extreme north-west of the arc to Japan in the extreme north-east.

What implications did the establishment of the Dutch and other European companies’ factories in the various parts of Asia have for the economies and the societies of the regions concerned ? In what follows, we will briefly attempt such an analysis in relation to India, though methodologically it can easily be extended to the other parts of Asia with some modifications. Within India, quantitative data would be drawn from Bengal, by far the most important of the Company’s trading regions in Asia, and accounting at the end of the seventeenth century for two-fifths of the total Asian goods imported into Europe.

In principle, there was a whole spectrum of alternative scenarios unfolding themselves with the establishment of a regular and substantive contact between Europe and Asia following the setting up of factories in the latter continent by one European trading company or the other. This spectrum ranged at one end from the establishment of a near-colonial relationship between the European nation-state the relevant company represented and the Asian region concerned, to the company being obliged to operate in the relevant Asian region in a distinctly hostile environment at the other. A near-colonial relationship would ordinarily be based either on outright conquest, or more usually the extraction of a treaty or an agreement conferring on the company exclusive trading rights to the detriment of its rivals and often also of the people of the region concerned. In the terminology of Gallagher and Robinson, the operative part was the availability to the European company of a political and economic “lien” in the territory concerned, enabling it to derive special advantages in the course of its trading operations in the area. A hostile environment, on the other hand, would signify a situation where the Company would be denied the facilities and freedoms which Asian states ordinarily made available to foreign traders. In the case of the Dutch East India Company, the Indonesian archipelago and Sri Lanka would exemplify one end of the spectrum, where the Company had managed to coerce the indigenous authorities in many areas to give it exclusive rights in the procurement of different spices to the great detriment of both its rivals as well as the domestic producers. At the

other end of the spectrum would probably lie Japan, where during the “era of exclusion” starting in 1639, the Company, while being the only European body to be allowed to operate in the region, was nevertheless obliged to give in to a variety of restrictions on its operations, as also to submit to arbitrary trade practices enforced by the Japanese government. Most other regions that the Company operated in would fall in the middle of the spectrum, where the Company neither had access to any special advantages nor suffered from any particular disabilities. Looked at from the point of view of the Asian regions the European trading companies operated in, the implications of the European trade for their respective economies would be related directly to the terms and conditions under which the companies functioned in a particular region.

Where does the Indian subcontinent fit into this scenario? As a first approximation, I would like to suggest that India by and large represented a case where the European trading companies neither enjoyed any particular privileges nor were subject to any specific disabilities. This statement, however, is subject to two qualifications — one across space and the other across time. Across space, it is important to realize that there was at least one Indian region where the norm of the European companies not enjoying any differential privileges did not hold. This region was the Malabar coast where first the Portuguese and then the Dutch enjoyed monopsony privileges in the procurement of pepper. By the treaty of 1663, the Dutch had also obtained monopoly rights in opium, which was by far the most important medium of payment for the pepper procured in the region. This meant that the producers and the merchants dealing in these items would not have obtained as good terms as they would have done in the absence of the special privileges. The only saving grace was that in its actual working, the Dutch company’s monopoly was qualified a great deal by the large scale smuggling in both opium and pepper. Given the topography of the region, all attempts to control such smuggling had come to nought. Across time, with the wresting of political authority in Bengal by the English East India Company following the battle of Plassey in 1757, the basic nature of the relationship between the English Company on the one hand and the artisanal and merchant groups on the other changed dramatically with the Company no longer being obliged to follow the market in its dealings with these groups.

The non-availability to the Europeans of a political or an economic lien in the greater part of the Indian subcontinent over the period between the sixteenth and the mid-eighteenth centuries was indeed one of the important circumstances that contributed to the companies’ trade in the subcontinent becoming an instrument of growth in the region. The other key circumstance contributing to this outcome was the “bullion for goods” character of the European trade to which I have already drawn attention. The large scale import of the precious metals by the companies may be regarded as a medium of settling the accounts in the balance of payments. This pattern of trade, involving

the generation of a substantial export surplus, had important consequences. Ordinarily, an increase in foreign trade in an economy leads to an increase in the output of export goods and a decline in the production of goods that are now being imported in a larger quantity. Since, by definition, the economy is relatively more efficient in the production of export goods than in that of import goods, the net result of growing trade is an increase in the value of the total output in the economy. But in the case of trade of the kind that took place between India and Europe between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries, the gain resulting in an increase in the value of output would be much more substantial. In view of the import mainly of precious metals rather than ordinary trade goods, the decline in the domestic production of import-competing goods would at best be marginal. The increase in exports would then involve a net increase in output and income. This increase could have been achieved through an increase in productivity per unit of input through technological change, a reallocation of resources in a way that more of the high value export goods were produced, and a fuller utilization of existing productive capacity and an increase in the capacity itself.

The European trade can then be regarded as a blessing for the Indian economy and a vehicle for an expansion in the total output and income in the economy. A quantitative study that I had carried out some years ago in respect of the English and the Dutch East India Company's trade in Bengal suggested that European trade was responsible for generating an additional 100,000 jobs or so in the textile manufacturing sector in the early years of the eighteenth century. Also, the fact that none of the companies had any special rights in relation to either the merchants or the artisans they dealt with, ensured that, in a situation of continuously rising demand in the market, the terms that these groups were able to extract from the companies were improving all the time.

In the monetary domain, the precious metals imported by the Europeans into the subcontinent performed a vital function in the increasingly monetized economy of the country. Given the negligible domestic production of precious metals, the monetary system was heavily dependent on imported bullion. Since foreign coins were not allowed to circulate in India, the imported bullion or coins were converted into local coins either through the mints or through professional dealers in money. There was, therefore, an automatic and corresponding increase in the money supply. But this increase was not reflected in the notional general price level in the economy evidently because the rise in the money supply was accompanied by a corresponding rise in the total output.

This highly positive configuration of circumstances, however, underwent a dramatic transformation from the second half of the eighteenth century onward, converting a blessing into a curse. The political control now exercised by the English East India Company in several major areas of the subcontinent

placed it in a position of substantial differential advantage vis-à-vis both the rival European companies as well as the intermediary merchants and artisans. The terms and conditions the Company imposed on those doing business with it were no longer determined by the market : indeed, these people were no longer always free even to determine whether to do business with the Company at all. In Gujarat, this situation developed after the English take-over of the Surat castle in 1759. On the Coromandel coast, the 1750s and the 1760s witnessed the acquisition by the Company of extensive land revenue collection rights in key textile producing districts in the northern Circars and central Coromandel, giving it an unprecedented degree of control over the textile merchants and weavers in the area. S. Arasaratnam has described in some detail the coercive measures adopted by the Company in its textile procurement in the region, including the demarcation of looms on which textiles would henceforth be produced exclusively for the Company <sup>2</sup>.

It was, however, in Bengal where the Company first obtained formal *diwani* rights in 1765 that the full impact of the new status of the Company was in evidence. The availability against bills of exchange of large amount of rupee funds that individual European merchants of different nationalities were interested in remitting home, enabled the English and the other companies operating in Bengal to cut down substantially the import of silver from Europe. Indeed, in the case of the English Company, this source, combined with the funds raised by the diversion of a part of the Bengal revenues to the procurement of goods for Europe, led to a possibly total suspension of the import of precious metals from home.

This phase also witnessed a fundamental alteration in the nature of the relationship between the Company and the producing groups. A gross abuse of the newly found political power available to the factors turned this relationship into one of widespread coercion and oppression. The available evidence points to a substantive worsening of the situation of the textile weavers. The position was not very different in respect of the groups producing the other major commodities procured by the Company or its employees operating in their private capacity. Opium, figuring extensively in the intra-Asian trade carried on by the English private traders, provides an important example of the monopolistic control exercised on production and procurement. In the 1760s, the English factors at Patna, operating in their private capacity, monopolized the procurement of this item. In 1773, the Company assumed monopoly rights in the drug for itself. After the replacement of the contract system by the so-called agency system in 1797, all private cultivation of poppy was banned.

<sup>2</sup> S. ARASARATNAM, *Weavers, Merchants and Company: the handloom industry in South-eastern India 1750-1790*, in : "The Indian Economic and Social History Review", XVII (1980), 3, pp. 257-281.

Each opium peasant was now required to cultivate a specified plot of land and to deliver its entire produce at the fixed government price to the Agent. Heavy penalties were prescribed for shortfalls in the area cultivated. The cause of the opium peasant did indeed find occasional support even at the highest levels of the English Company hierarchy. Thus in a communication to their Calcutta factors in December 1776, the Court of Directors observed, "If you shall be of Opinion that abolishing the monopoly of opium will contribute in any great Degree to the Relief of the Natives, we authorize you to give up that Commodity as an Article of Commerce, only by fixing and reserving a reasonable Duty thereon to the Company, which we think should not exceed 30 Rupees per maund". But the advice was perhaps not meant to be taken seriously and no notice was taken of it <sup>3</sup>.

To conclude, the period between the early sixteenth and the late eighteenth centuries witnessed a remarkable transformation in the nature of the impact that European trade had on the Indian economy. The age of shipping and factories, marked by a mutually advantageous relationship between the trading companies on the one hand and the Indian merchants and producers on the other, was followed in the latter part of the eighteenth century by the age of colonization tilting the scales heavily in favour of the metropolitan world.

<sup>3</sup> For details, see Om PRAKASH, *Opium monopoly in India and Indonesia in the eighteenth century*, in : "The Indian Economic and Social History Review", XXIV (1987), 1, pp. 63-80.

# THE ROLE OF BRITISH CAPITAL IN FINANCING THE TRADE OF THE VOC-FACTORY IN BENGAL, C. 1760-1795

BY

Femme S. GAASTRA

(Leiden)

The enormous growth in the demand of Indian textiles in Europe made the factory Bengal in the 18th century the most important trading establishment of the Dutch East India Company (VOC). Although the Dutch position was severely undermined after 1756, when the English East India Company gained the supremacy in this region, the VOC-trade in textiles and raw silk as well as in opium and saltpetre remained important until the outbreak of the war between the Dutch Republic and England at the end of 1780.

Bengal used to be a major silver-importing area. But shipments of silver bars and coins from Europe were not the only source of capital for the trade of the European companies. They made use of private capital, that their own servants or European freetraders wanted to transfer to their home-country. The VOC in Bengal succeeded in attracting private capital, especially Anglo-Indian capital, for bills of exchange on Europa. These remittances and the financial networks behind it are well described by Peter Marshall, Holden Furber, Ole Feldbaek and others<sup>1</sup>. Detailed information in the archives of the VOC can reveal much more information over the role of the Anglo-Indian remittances for the Dutch Company and over the persons involved in the transactions than has been given so far.

<sup>1</sup> Holden FURBER, *John Company at Work. A Study of European Expansion in India in the late Eighteenth Century*, second ed., New York, 1970 ; P. J. MARSHALL, *East Indian Fortunes. The British in Bengal in the Eighteenth Century*, Oxford, 1976 ; Ole FELDBAEK, *India Trade under the Danish Flag 1772-1808. European Enterprise and Anglo-Indian Remittance and Trade*, Odense, 1969.

## I

The most common way of transferring capital from Asia to Europe was to buy bills of exchange from an European Company. A company servant in Bengal could go to the bookkeeper or cashier of his Company and pay him a sum in rupees in return for a bill that could be cashed at the office of his Company in London, Amsterdam, Paris or Copenhagen. Dutch servants, even those serving in Bengal, mostly used the head-office of the VOC in Batavia for such transactions<sup>2</sup>. The VOC-factory in Bengal was since 1756 officially authorized to take money for bills of exchange, but already from 1745 onwards money had been transferred via the Dutch in Bengal to Amsterdam, although on a limited scale. The directors imposed several times quota on the bills in Batavia and in Bengal, as, for instance, in 1768, when the Director and Council at Houghly (where the VOC had its headquarters in Bengal) were even forbidden to accept any money for bills on the VOC in patria. These restrictions were lifted in 1775. The VOC-factory was then allowed to accept some *f* 500,000 to *f* 600,000 from EIC-servants or English freetraders, while Dutch servants were allowed to transfer a maximum amount of *f* 100,000<sup>3</sup>.

Around 1770, the Dutch introduced another way of acquiring British money in Bengal for financing their trade: the *bewindhebbers* bought bills in London via Anglo-Dutch banking houses as Hope & Co. or Pye, Rich & Wilkieson. These bills were sent to Bengal and cashed there, while the banker was paid after return of the ships and the sales in Holland in October or November. A proposal for such a transaction was made to the Dutch directors in Amsterdam as early as 1767. The Dutch were not the first in buying bills in London for financing their trade. It may well be that directors followed the example of the French East India Company. Jacques Necker, the director of the French Company and later the well-known minister of finance of Louis XVI, had tried to use this channel for developing the French trade<sup>4</sup>. The Danish seems also have used this system.

It took some time to work out such a deal, but in December 1769 the *bewindhebbers* finally agreed that the VOC should buy four bills of 50,000 sicca rupees each in London via the house of Clifford & Soonen. These bills were drawn by Ascanius William Senior in London on two Calcutta merchants, Joseph Jekyll and James Lister. If the merchants in Bengal should not or only

<sup>2</sup> F. S. GAASTRA, *Private Money for Company Trade. The Role of the Bills of Exchange in Financing the Return Cargoes of the VOC*, in: "Itinerario", XIII (1994), pp. 65-76.

<sup>3</sup> Algemeen Rijksarchief, The Hague, VOC-archive no. 135, Res. Heren XVII, 9 Oct. 1775. J. A. VAN DER CHIJS (ed.), *Realia. Register op de Generale Resolutiën van het Kasteel Batavia (1632-1805)*, Batavia, 1882-1886, p. 371 (Res. G.G. en R., 6 June 1768).

<sup>4</sup> H. LUTHY, *Necker et la Compagnie des Indes*, in: "Annales: Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations", XV (1960), pp. 869-870.

partly meet their obligations, Clifford & Soonen would have to pay 4 percent of the amount not paid for<sup>5</sup>. The whole operation, however, ended in a failure. The bills were received by the VOC-director George Vernet in October 1769 and had to be paid three month after sight, before the end of January. But already in their missive of January 11, 1770, Vernet and his council warned their superiors in patria, that the course of the rupee was too disadvantageous for merchants in Bengal to accept, so that it was to be feared that they would not pay. Indeed a subtile play developed of evading and postponing. Ultimately the bills were formally protested. A general shortage of ready money (it was the time of the great famine in Bengal) was the main cause for this failure, according to Vernet<sup>6</sup>.

The VOC had reason to be disappointed, as well as Clifford & Soonen<sup>7</sup>. Nevertheless, the *bewindhebbers* tried again to tap English capital sources in Bengal. In 1773, the banking house of Pye, Rich & Wilkieson proposed to offer bills on British in Calcutta. The contract was signed in August 1773. Pye etc. delivered the VOC four bills of 125,000 guilders each, to be paid in Calcutta to the Company at a rate of 26 *stuiver* per rupia. The compensation to be paid by Pye, in case the bills were protested, was put at 12 percent<sup>8</sup>. These bills were promptly paid and in 1774, the *bewindhebbers* were already negotiating new contracts, not only with Pye, Rich & Wilkieson, but also with Hope & Co. and Francis Melvill<sup>9</sup>. Drawing bills on Calcutta became the most important way of financing the Bengal trade of the VOC from 1774 until the outbreak of the war between the Dutch Republic and England in December 1780.

For the Dutch it meant that they could finance their trade after 1773 without the need for shipments of huge amounts of silver as in former times. Each year, when the *Heren XVII* made their decision about the amount and composition of the precious metal to be send to Asia, a fair amount of silver

<sup>5</sup> VOC 178, Res. Heren XVII, 14 Oct. 1767 and 31 March 1768 ; VOC 278, Res. Chamber Amsterdam, 10 and 24 Oct., 3 and 7 Nov. and 29 Dec. 1768.

<sup>6</sup> VOC 3257, f. 785-786, Extract missive Directeur en Raad te Houghly aan Heren XVII, 11 Jan 1770 ; VOC 3823, f. 1-20, Letters concerning the bills of exchange protested by Joseph Jekyll and James Lister.

<sup>7</sup> Is is not clear how far the house of Clifford was hurd by this case — could Clifford charge Senior for the 4 percent, had he already paid to Senior for the bills ? It is therefore impossible to make any connection between this event and the fall of the House of Clifford in 1773, which caused a general crisis on the Amsterdam financial market. This crisis is generally ascribed to the failures of Scottish and London banks in 1772, partly caused by overextending credit and speculating in shares of the East India Company.

<sup>8</sup> VOC 281, Res. Chamber Amsterdam, 8 July and 26 Aug. 1773.

<sup>9</sup> VOC 135, Res. Heren XVII, 18 Oct. 1774, 4 March and 9 Oct. 1775 ; VOC 283, Res. Chamber Amsterdam, 15 Dec. 1774, 16 Jan. 1775. A collection of contracts regarding these bills of exchange, officially made up by the notary Van Beem in Amsterdam, in VOC 7051. Cf. FURBER, *John Company*, pp. 79-80.

was destined for Bengal. Since 1773, they included the restriction in their resolutions, that the amount might be replaced by bills that could be bought in London — and this normally happened. The outbreak of the war with England in December 1780 interrupted these transfers. The last contracts were signed in Amsterdam at the 19th of December of that year, with Pye, Rich & Wilkieson, with Hope and with Jan Hoffman. After the war, only two contracts seem to have been concluded, one with Thomas & Charles Wilkieson in December 1784 (for 250,000 rupees), and one with the house of the Veuve Juran & Fils for 100,000 rupees.

The high amounts of money that the VOC at Houghly received on bills were substantial (see table 1 and 2). Apart from the *f* 9,355,000 that the VOC could invest in Bengal by cashing the bills drawn on Calcutta from London, at least *f* 21,109,768 became available via “normal” bills. In certain years, as in 1757/58, 1765/66 and 1766/67 and towards the end of the 1770’s, it seems that there was a run on the cashier of the Dutch factory by those who wanted to remit their capital. The British capital flow via the VOC in Bengal has been seen by Furber as a result of the changing relations between the Dutch and the British<sup>10</sup>. As British power increased, the number of Dutch “country ships” declined and the VOC had to rely on British capital for its investments. But perhaps this capital should rather be seen as a substitution for export of silver from Europe, just as mentioned in the “resolutions” of the *Heren XVII*. From 1775 onwards, the directors of the VOC consigned high amounts of bar silver for Bengal, but at the same time they decided that these consignments could be replaced by bills to be drawn on Calcutta merchants. If one compares the total amount of silver destined for Bengal during the period 1773-1780 with the amount of bills bought in London, than the figures are

TABLE I  
Bills of exchange bought by the VOC in Europe  
and cashed by the Dutch factory in Bengal, 1773/4-1780/81

	rupees	guilders
1773/74	384,000	429,200
1774/75	429,596	536,995
1775/76	659,000	851,400
1776/77	977,429	1,209,567
1777/78	1,129,506	1,399,987
1778/79	964,955	1,227,508
1779/80	1,272,354	1,764,054
1780/81	1,558,500	1,936,675
Total	7,375,340	9,355,386

Source : VOC 7051, Contracts for bills of exchange, 1773-1785.

<sup>10</sup> FURBER, *John Company*, p. 78.

TABLE 2  
Bills of exchanges bought at the VOC factory in Bengal  
(1745-1794) (in guilders)

1744-50	199,608
1750-60	1,052,369
1760-70	6,124,002
1770-80	8,779,556
1780-90	4,828,582
1790-94	125,651
1744-94	21,109,768

nearly the same : around nine million guilders <sup>11</sup>. The system may have made the VOC more dependent on British capital, but it can equally be seen as a safe and inexpensive way for financing the returncargoes.

## II

The transactions of the Dutch servants were of a small scale compared to the those of the British. The transfers in 1757 by Adriaan Bisdom (director from 1755-1760) en Robert Armenault (bookkeeper) in 1757, exceeding two million guilders, were exceptional <sup>12</sup>. This money had be paid to Joshua van Neck in London. But this capital did not came from fraud or private trade of these two men, as Lequin seems to think. Bisdom and his council had decided to accept an English offer for 12 lakh (or *f* 1,890,000) for bills on Europe. The money was deposited in the VOC chests by the well-known Indian banker Jagatseth Fatechand <sup>13</sup>.

There can be no doubt that the second peak in the transfers in 1766/68 was related to the special events which resulted in a sudden and enormous wealth of a small group of EIC-servants. After Plassey, Clive and some others received substantial "presents" and the same happened nine years later, when the Nawab Mir Jafar died and the young Nawab Najm-ud-daula succeeded him. According to Marshall, over Rs 1,000,000 had been "levied" by the EIC-servants out of the succession of Najm-ud-daula. John Johnstone, who was the head of the delegation sent from Calcutta to confirm the succession, was the greatest single beneficiary with about Rs 321,500 or £ 36,000 <sup>14</sup>. Robert Clive,

<sup>11</sup> See for the consignments of silver for Bengal in the resolutions of the *Heren XVII*: J. R. BRUIJN, F. S. GAASTRA and I. SCHOFFER, *Dutch-Asiatic Trade in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, The Hague, 1987 (Rijks Geschiedkundige Publicatiën 165), pp. 242-243.

<sup>12</sup> LEQUIN, *Het Personeel*, pp. 189, 192. Three bills were bought, of respectively *f* 638,487, *f* 676,045, and *f* 713,603.

<sup>13</sup> VOC 2894, f. 560-563, "Over de voordelen van de Engelse negotiatie", 4 July 1757. See also LEQUIN, *Het Personeel*, p. 192.

<sup>14</sup> MARSHALL, *East Indian Fortunes*, pp. 172-175.

beginning his second term as Governor, made an inquiry into this case, which had even in his eyes gone too far. Some of those involved (Johnstone and John Burdett) thought it wise to leave the Company's service and to return to England. The others (Charles Stafford Playdell, Ascanius William Senior, Randolph Marriot, Samuel Middleton, Ralph Leycester, George Gray and Gideon Johnstone) were dismissed. Another councillor, William Sumner, too had to resign. John Johnstone, Playdell, Leycester and Gray choose in 1765 the VOC as channel for remitting at least a part of their capital safely to England, while in the next year their example was followed by Marriot and Sumner.

Clive himself, however, cannot be accused of modesty either. The VOC was for him good enough to transfer a large part of the fortune that he acquired during his second term of office. But if much of the capital that the VOC accepted in 1766 for bills on Europe originated from extortion by higher officials, this was not the case with all the money. Robert Gregory, who transferred in 1766 a nice sum of 378,000 guilders or Rs. 302,000, had earned his fortune (to be said well over 1,000,000 guilders) by trade only<sup>15</sup>.

After 1766, English names disappear from the list of bills in the VOC-papers as result of the orders from the *bewindhebbers*. When the ban was lifted in 1773, a new generation of EIC-servants figures in the list. Among them such well-known EIC-servants and nabobs as William Aldersey, Richard Barwell, Nathaniël Brassey Halhed, Ewan Law and William Paxton. These are for the greater part the same persons, who are also mentioned in the bills bought in Europe.

In these contracts that were made in Amsterdam, there were always three parties involved apart from the VOC itself. The bankers were confined to a small group of well-known Amsterdam and London based merchant houses. Pye, Rich and Wilkieson were mediating in 34 contracts, Hope & Co (later Adriaan Hope) in 14 and Francis Melvill (later Melvill & Wolff) in 5. The names of the houses of Balthasar van Stomrigh, *Vrouwe* M. A. le Roy, Widow Chabenel, Francois Noël and Jan Hofmann only figure once. In 1785 contracts were made with Thomas & Charles Wilkieson and *Veuve* Juran & Fils.

Those who were living in England and drew the bills on merchants in Calcutta seems to be mostly former EIC-servants. The person, who was engaged in the first transaction of this sort, was the already mentioned A. W. Senior. Prominent in the list are Thomas Rumbold, Richard Becher, J. Lawrell and especially the house of Mayne & Graham. We met also names of those who had already used the VOC for their transactions in earlier years, such as John Johnstone and George Gray.

The man who was a key-figure in Calcutta and who is mentioned in 48 bills is David Killican. His name appears often in relation with others,

<sup>15</sup> MARSHALL, *East Indian Fortunes*, p. 240.

such as Richard Barwell (8 ×), Charles Croftes (9 ×), Philip Dacres (5 ×), Thomas Graham (13 ×), Charles Grant (10 ×), Ewan Law (5 ×) and Edward Wheler (4 ×). If one assumes that the shares in the bills were equally divided among those who had to pay in Bengal, then Killican had the lion share in the amount of these transactions with Rs 730,000. Thomas Graham, who took part in 13 bills together with Killican and others, and in 6 other bills, had a share of Rs 460,000 and Richard Barwell (with a total of 21 bills) of Rs 440,000. Killican was a Scottish merchant, who departed in 1765 at a young age for India to try his luck as free merchant<sup>16</sup>. He carried with him a letter of recommendation for Clive and a sum of £ 10,000 furnished by his elder brother, “a man of fortune”. Killican entered the service of the EIC in 1773, but his private enterprises were much more important. In 1775, he founded the “Bengal Commercial Society”, together with Charles Croftes, Charles Grant, John Fergusson and John Robinson. The expeditions of this Society to the Red Sea and the financial results are described by Marshall<sup>17</sup>. When Killican died suddenly in October 1785 — “Mr. Killican was feasting & merry with his friend on Friday ... and died on Sunday morning” — he was more or less bankrupt.

It seems hard to believe that the money transferred by Killican and his partners was all their own. It might well be that he acted an agent for others, that he used money from those who had returned to England for his private business or for the Commercial Society, and that he had to pay it back on certain instances. Nor did he confine his transactions to the VOC. Ole Bie, the Danish chief in Serampore claimed in 1776 that he could raise any amount of money by means of bills through David Killican<sup>18</sup>.

The close relation between the Dutch and the British in Bengal, which was so profitable for both of them, was interrupted by the war in 1781. It seemed as if in 1785 the old days returned. It is true that according to the official lists EIC-servants no longer seem to deposit any money at Dutch factory for bills on Europe. But the same lists indicate that a lot of money has to be paid to merchants living in London. The VOC-bookkeeper in Hougly Teunis van der Broek, for instance, transferred c. f 180,000 to several persons in London. The Dutch Council in Houghly explained to the *bewindhebbers* that it had been necessary to use his name for transactions of EIC-servants, who needed such a cover-up because it was forbidden for them to use foreign

<sup>16</sup> Data about Killican were gathered by two of my students, H. C. Simon Thomas and P. J. S. Th. Stehouwer from the Fort William - India House Correspondence and from some archival source in the India Office Library.

<sup>17</sup> P. J. MARSHALL, *The Bengal Commercial Society of 1775: Private British Trade in the Warren Hastings Period*, in: “Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research”, XLII (1969), pp. 173-187.

<sup>18</sup> FELDBAEK, *India Trade*, p. 30.

companies<sup>19</sup>. But the Dutch could not sustain their position. The financial problems of the VOC in Europe were growing and gradually people lost faith in the credibility of the Dutch Company. So, the British in Bengal turned to other other channels for the remittances.

#### CONCLUSION

In the period 1750-1870, the Dutch trade in Bengal was financed for a considerable part by remittances to Europe. The share of the British in these transfers was considerable, but before 1773, this share was confined to certain years. In 1757 as well as in 1766-1768, the initiative for attracting British capital seems to have been with the Dutch servants at Hougly who exploited the sudden richness of the higher EIC-officials. It was only after 1773, that the directors *in patria* developed the possibilities for tapping the private fortunes of the British in Bengal for their own trade. This may be seen as a weakness of the VOC, becoming dependent on British capital and falling back, as far as the Bengal trade is concerned, in a position similar to the smaller Danish Company. But it seems to have been a good alternative for export of silver form Europe and a cheaper way of financing the returncargoes.

<sup>19</sup> VOC 3659, Herklots and Council to Heren XVII, 12 Jan. 1785.

COMPANY MONEY  
AND PRIVATE ENTERPRISE :  
THE FINANCING OF FRENCH ASIAN TRADE  
1719-1741

BY

C. MANNING

The French were latecomers to the world of Asian trade. In the seventeenth century the French East India Company, slower to develop than the national companies of England and the Netherlands, at first eschewed Asian trade and concentrated its efforts on the European market. Only with the refounding of the Company by Law in 1717 did trade beyond the Cape of Good Hope become a French objective. My subject in this paper is the source of finance of this new project ; I shall examine the balance between corporate and individual, and between European and Asian investment in the partnerships that undertook this trade.

The relationship between these elements in the French case is interesting, for it reveals a distinctively French organization, differing from its European rivals. The English Company had for the most part relinquished Asian trade to its servants and to the private traders from the 1680s, so English country trade was a private joint-stock enterprise ; the Dutch kept country trade as a company monopoly until 1742 ; theirs was largely a corporate effort until that time. The French, in contrast, from the moment that they entered the world of Asian commerce in 1719, developed a characteristic brand of partnership between corporate and private enterprise. All European trading activities in Asia were a combination of public and private : the state, the monopoly company and the individual merchant each having a share. In the French case the combination took an unusual form, the origins of which lie in French social and administrative habits. Here, it is enough to say that the French Company was a state enterprise, much of its funding coming from state sources and its administration part of the royal bureaucracy, unlike the English, Dutch and Ostend companies. Yet, paradoxically, the Compagnie des Indes depended heavily, especially in Asian trade, on private investment which thus, instead

of being incorporated in the Company on a joint-stock basis, kept its own identity as a separate but allied element.

At first the French Company wished to emulate the Dutch and to maintain all Asian trade as a company prerogative. The financial collapse of Law's System and the reluctance of French merchants to place their money in the hands of bureaucrats meant that lack of capital denied the Company the power to exercise such a monopoly. Private money from a variety of sources was necessary to finance the trade. At first Company servants were forbidden to invest in the Company's expeditions, but that restriction, too, was dropped by 1726 and from then on the French Company accepted partners wherever it could find them. To examine who those partners were and the implications of their relations with the Company I shall take the voyage of the ship the "Pondichéry" from the French port of the same name to Mocha on the Red Sea between 1727 and 1735 in order to see the balance of interests in a French Asian trading voyage <sup>1</sup>.

The expedition to Mocha was the most important country voyage for the French Company. Coffee was in steady demand in Europe and, though competition from Caribbean and Bourbon coffee was growing, Arabian coffee was considered the finest, so the French Company ordered 4-500,000 lbs a year from the Red Sea. In 1727 a partnership was made in Pondicherry between the Company, its employees, and local Indian and Armenian merchants. The administration of the voyage was placed in the hands of two Company undermerchants who did the paperwork and supervised the ordering and loading of the cargo. Their expenses, though not their salaries, were charged to the accounts of the voyage and they were paid an additional 1% of the value of the goods sold at Mocha for their work. The ship, the "Pondichéry", had belonged to the Company and was sold to the partnership for 3500 pagodas in May 1727. Coarse textiles suitable for the Arab market were ordered and some investors contributed their share of the capital in kind rather than in money. The partnership was renewed in August each year; sometimes the old partnership continued and no money was withdrawn apart from the profits; sometimes all accounts were closed, a new partnership made and the ship transferred from the old to the new owners. During the months of September

<sup>1</sup> The Archives d'Outremer, Aix-en-Provence, have sets of documents relating to country trading voyages originating in Pondicherry during the 1720s in which the Superior Council invested on behalf of the French Company. I have traced the voyages to Mocha in the following documents: Inde, P31, fol. 131; P32, fols. 281 and 329; P37, fols. 730 and 734; P39, fols. 15, 31, 59 and 97; P41, fols. 605, 619 and 626; P46, fol. 203; P48, fol. 87; P53, fols. 179 and 245; and in the following published documents: *Correspondance du Conseil Supérieur de Pondichéry et de la Compagnie*, ed. A. MARTINEAU, 6 vols., Pondicherry, 1920-34, vols. 1 and 2; *Procès Verbaux de Délibérations du Conseil Supérieur de Pondichéry, 1701-39*, ed. E. GAUDART & A. MARTINEAU, 3 vols., Pondicherry, 1912-13, vol. 2: 1724-35.

to December the "Pondichéry" was sent to Bengal to escape the monsoon on the Coromandel coast. Rice was loaded for ballast and was sold to the Company in Pondicherry where famine was endemic at this time. In January the ship took on board its cargo, that is goods belonging to the partnership, and freight at Pondicherry and Porto Novo. It sailed at the end of the month and made for Mahe on the Malabar coast of India where it collected pepper bought at a preferential rate by the Company to the benefit of the private partnership. On arrival at Mocha cargo and freight were consigned to the head of the French post who received 5% commission for his services. In Mocha the money belonging to the partnership deriving from the sale of the cargo of textiles and pepper and from the freight charges was used by the Company's agent to buy the coffee needed for Europe, so the partnership's money was used to buy the Company's goods. The shareholders in the voyage were repaid what was owing to them by the Superior Council at Pondicherry when the ship returned. The Company's coffee was charged either a percentage of its value, ranging from 2% to 6%, as freight dues, or an agreed flat rate.

From this account of the operation of the partnership and the voyage it is already evident that the Company's organization and personnel were extensively employed for the benefit of what was essentially a private enterprise.

If we look in detail at the 1729/30 voyage we see that the total capital raised was 26,500 pagodas of which the largest part, 17,400 pagodas or 65.4%, came from the Company's employees as private traders. Three thousand pagodas or 11.3% came from Armenian merchants, 200 pagodas or 7.5% from Europeans, 1600 pagodas or 6% from Indian merchants and 2500 pagodas or 9.4% from the Company. The percentages varied from year to year ; the groups remained the same.

The contributions from European, Armenian and Indian merchants are significant, both for their existence and small size. The European investors were mostly Portuguese or Luso-Indians : they were a very important group to the French, less for the capital than for their expertise and familiarity with the routes and ports of Asia where they had been established for two centuries and where the French were tyros. Many French traders, including Dupleix, married into Luso-Indian families and based their private commerce on these family connexions.

The Armenians, like the Portuguese, had long been trading in the Indian Ocean, but they were more resistant to the take-over of their networks than the Portuguese. The French, endlessly analysing the success of the English factories at Madras and Calcutta<sup>2</sup>, attributed it very largely to the presence

<sup>2</sup> A number of memoranda were written between 1720 and 1754 by French employees describing Asian trade, frequently referring to the practice of the Dutch and English Companies : Archives Nationales, Paris, Colonies, C<sub>2</sub> 15, fol. 3, "Mémoire sur ce que la Compagnie des Indes peut tirer de bénéfice de son commerce, année commune", Anon. ; A.N., Colonies, C<sub>2</sub> 20, fols. 30-65

and activity of Indian and Armenian merchant communities in these towns, enhancing the volume of trade and supplying capital, particularly in the form of *respondentia* loans, for English voyages. Acting on their analysis, the Superior Council of Pondicherry tried to bribe, cajole and, when Madras was under French control in 1746-48, to threaten Armenian and Indian merchants to persuade them to move to Pondicherry. To no avail. The French themselves recognized the causes of the reluctance of these groups to settle in their enclave : a history of religious intolerance and poor credit. To these elements may be added the fact that the French were not involved in country trade in the boom of the late seventeenth century and only entered during a period of depression on Coromandel, so they had no networks built up in the good days to help them through the bad ones. The failure of this relationship, between French traders and Indian and Armenian merchants, was the crucial difference between French and English country trade in the early eighteenth century.

The foundation of the French voyage to Mocha was the alliance between the French servants and their employer, the French Company. How did the relationship between the two groups work ? The Company in India was represented by the Superior Council of Pondicherry, the members of which were also private investors in the voyages from their port. So the Company, represented by its employees, made a contract with the same people in their individual capacities as private traders, to undertake a voyage. This led to innumerable examples of the Company's money being invested in ways and in quantities that suited the employees. If investment from other sources did not reach the required sum, the Council voted to top it up with a Company contribution. If a voyage was well subscribed and the profits were expected to be good, the Company's share was correspondingly reduced. The case of Mocha shows the symbiosis between the Company and its partners at its most benevolent. The Company benefitted from the partnership, as its coffee was bought with money which it did not have when the ship left Pondicherry in January. It only repaid the investors their money which had been used

and *Revue historique de l'Inde française*, 1 (1916-17), "Mémoire sur les Établissements de la Compagnie et sur son Commerce dans les Indes Orientales par Dupleix des Gardes"; A.N., Colonies, C<sub>2</sub> 56, fols. 22-43 ; C<sub>2</sub> 197, fols. 1-18, "Mémoire sur le Commerce de l'Inde" by Jacques Vincens (this memorandum is discussed by Indrani RAY, *India in Asian trade in the 1730s : A discussion by a French trader*, in: "Professor Sushobhan Chandra Sarkar Felicitation Volume", New Delhi, 1979) ; A.N., Colonies, C<sub>2</sub> 25, fols. 151-194, La Bourdonnais to Peyrenc de Moras, 1733 ; Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, Nouvelles Acquisitions françaises, 9354, fols. 305-370 ; A.N., Colonies, C<sub>2</sub> 28, fols. 124-338, "Mémoire du Commerce général des Indes Orientales", by Guillaume Février, 1737 ; A.N., O<sub>1</sub> 597, nos. 5 and 6, "Notions générales pour les Affaires et le Commerce des Indes..." by Benoît Dumas, 1740 ; B.-F. MAHÉ DE LA BOURDONNAIS, *Mémoire des Îles de France et de Bourbon*, annoté par A. LOUGNON, St-Denis, 1937 ; A.N., Colonies, F<sup>2</sup> B<sup>10</sup>, "Mémoire concernant le Commerce actuel de Bassora..." by Claude Gosse, 1740s ; A.N., 158 AP 13, "Mémoire pour le Comptoir de Chandernagor et ses Dépendances" by Georges Duval de Leyrit.

to buy coffee when the ship returned in August, by which time the European ships had arrived in India with the necessary bullion. The private traders benefitted from the use of the Company's organization in Pondicherry and Mocha, as well as from the money contributed by the Company's investment and freight and from the safe return of their money by bill of exchange drawn on the Company in Pondicherry. However, the fact that the Company's interests were represented by the same people who were its partners led to anomalies of which the Directors in Paris were aware but about which they could do little. The employees continued with Company investment in Asian trade in defiance of orders from Paris, opened factories and kept them open at Company expense for the benefit of private trade, inspite of orders to close them down. This behaviour is not exclusive to the French ; similar examples could be multiplied from English and Dutch sources. However, in the French case, questions of disobediende and corruption are not as clear cut as elsewhere ; as we have seen, on the route to Mocha their trade only existed on the basis of the symbiosis that I have described.

To conclude : the partnership between the Company and the private traders was essential to the success of French Asian trade. After 1741, the Company, beset by financial problems in France, withdrew definitively from country trade, so ending the partnership between corporate and private finance. The consequences of this were momentous. The French turned from Asian trade to Indian politics as a more profitable area of operations, selling the services of their troops in the complex world of South Indian politics and starting that train of events which culminated twenty six years later with the English victory at Plassey.



# FACTORIES AND COUNTRY TRADE THE ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN FACTORIES IN THE INTRA-ASIAN TRADE DURING THE FIRST HALF OF THE 18th CENTURY

BY

Jan PARMENTIER

The scene for our paper is the Indian Ocean, the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea in the years 1720-45. During this period we can notice that the Europeans and the Asians still shared the trade and the shipping in a close-woven net of co-operation. It was a partnership wherein quiet often the shipping of the Europeans — both private merchants and official Companies — carried goods of the Asians and for the Asian markets whereas later (in the second half of the 18th century) they acted more and more for a restricted European clientele <sup>1</sup>. Before 1750 intra-Asian trade, based on this partnership, emerged and even overshadowed the volume of the direct trade between Asia and Europe <sup>2</sup>.

In this complexe structure European factories scattered from the Red Sea as far as the Pearl River in Canton played a crucial role. This web of trading-stations, carefully inserted on strategical places for commercial and maritime purposes, formed the foundation for the intra-Asian trade and created for private European entrepreneurs opportunities to develop an alternative structure which competed with the official trade of the East India Companies. Quiet often the border-line between Company-business and private enterprise was not very clear. Especially in the country-trade during the first half of the 18th century we could discern several times that loyal Company-servants at

<sup>1</sup> Ashin DAS GUPTA, *India and the Indian Ocean in the Eighteenth Century*, in : A. DAS GUPTA & M. N. PEARSON (ed.), *India and the Indian Ocean*, Calcutta, 1987, pp. 131-133.

<sup>2</sup> K. N. CHAUDHURI, *The Trading World of Asia and the English East India Company 1660-1760*, Cambridge, 1978, pp. 208-210 and Om PRAKASH, *The Dutch East India Company and the Economy of Bengal, 1630-1720*, Princeton, 1985, pp. 118-182.

I Do hereby Acknowledge that Capt. Edward  
 Coward is concerned under me the Sum of  
 Rupees Eight Thousand Curr. of Calcutta in  
 the Stock and Bloch of Brigantine Success  
 (whereof he is master) in her present Voyage up  
 the Gulph of mocha. The full Dividend of  
 which Sum, I promise (on her return) to be  
 answerable for, and pay to his order, or the  
 Bearer hereof. Fort William 17<sup>th</sup> October 1719  
 S. Greenhill.

Curr. Rs. 8000. --

FIG. 1. — Part of 8,000 Rupees in the voyage of the brigantine "Success". This share belonged to the G.I.C.-strawman Edward Coward. The E.I.C.-servant of Calcutta Samuel Greenhill was the major financier of this country-trade-expedition (Stadsarchief Antwerpen).

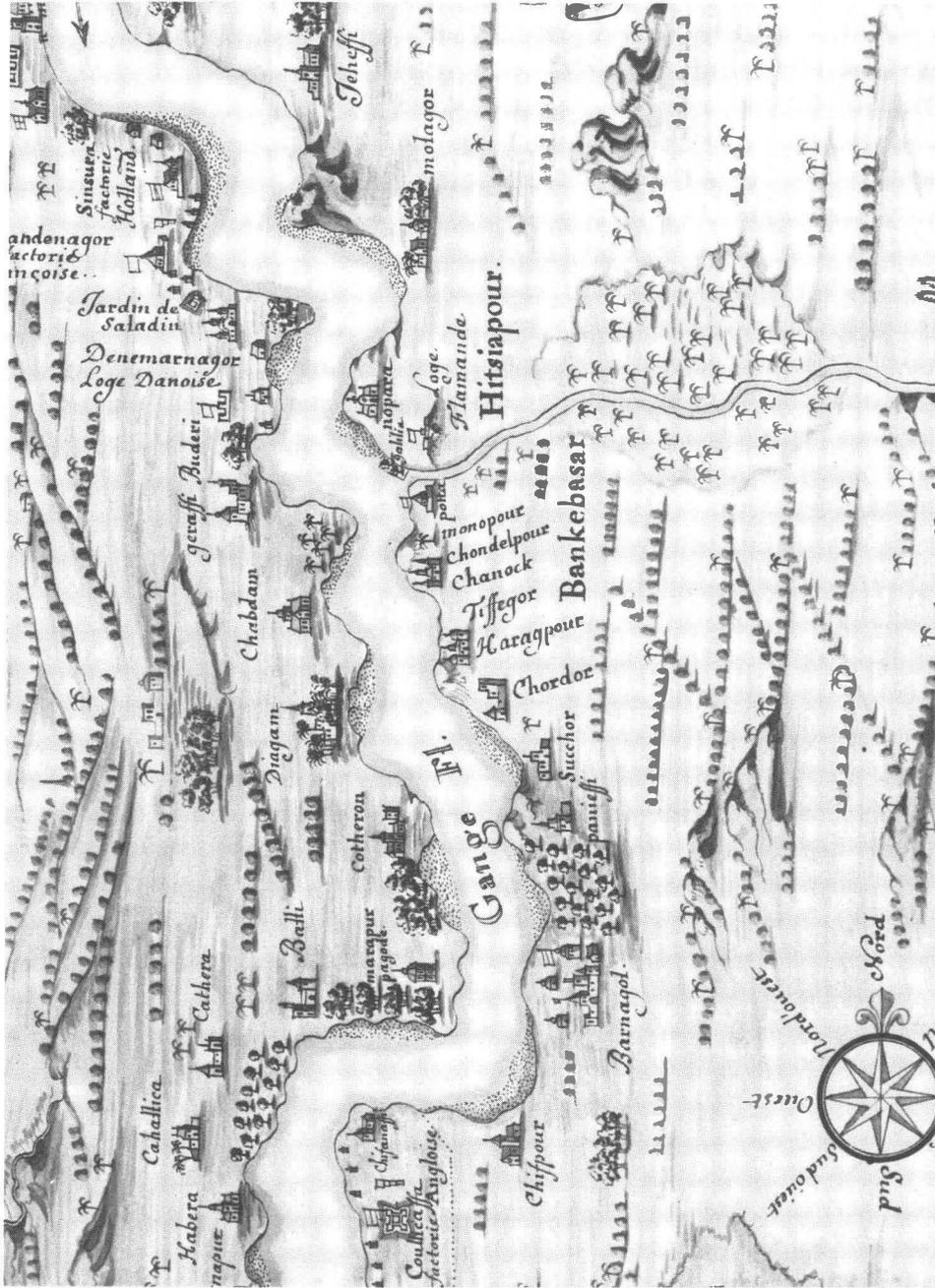


Fig. 2. — Map of the Hougli-river (Ganges) with the European factories Banquibazar, Calcutta (Coulicatta) and Chinsura (Sinsura).  
 Made by J.-A. Cobbé, 1725 (Koninklijke Bibliotheek Brussel).

first sight acted also as private merchants which lead to a conflict of interests. The distincted Company-directions in Europe acknowledged these problems but reacted very differently<sup>3</sup>. For instance the French and English servants were permitted to trade on their own account as long as it not damaged the Company activities, what of course happened all the time<sup>4</sup>. The Dutch East India Company (VOC) on the other hand refused to give away and fined her servants who were involved in private trade<sup>5</sup>. This was an ostrich-policy for an efficient controle-system was not available. So only a few VOC-merchants — the tip of the iceberg — were condemned or dismissed<sup>6</sup>.

The main subject of our paper is to point-out with a few examples that the Europeans in Asia were able to organize a private network of intra-Asian trade, due to the existing infrastructure, which the Companies had extended during the 17th and the beginning of the 18th century. We would like to describe it as an era of smuggling and illicit traffic, a time wherein a new type of factory was created, which was more run by private merchants than by loyal Company-employees. In other words we would like to show you the “Twilight Zone” of the intra-Asian trade.

During the first decennia of the 18th century Bengal became the centre of the European trading activities in Asia. For instance it surpassed the Coromandelcoast in the export of textiles, the main commodity wanted by the Europeans<sup>7</sup>. This region attracted, besides the three major companies — the Dutch, the English and the French — also newcomers like the Ostend or Imperial East India Company. This little trading company managed under difficult circumstances (a lot of grim opposition of the VOC and English East India Company (E.I.C.)) to get a *paravanah* — a permission of the local Muslim government — to built a factory in Banquibazar near the border of the Hougli-river. Banquibazar was situated close to the French factory Chandernagore and about 15 miles more upstream from Calcutta, the English headquarters in Bengal. The main factory of the Dutch East India Company, Chinsura — near the city of Hougli — was established only 8 miles north from the Ostend trading-post. Unfortunately the Ostend Company ceased to exist in 1731, hardly

<sup>3</sup> Om PRAKASH, *op. cit.*, pp. 83-89 ; P. J. MARSHALL, *East Indian Fortunes. The British in Bengal in the Eighteenth Century*, Oxford, 1976, pp. 228-230 ; I. RAY, *Dupleix's private trade in Chandernagore*, in : “Indian Historical Review”, vol. 1 (1974), 2, pp. 279-294.

<sup>4</sup> Several times E.I.C.-servants helped Ostenders, *persona non grata* according to the official English Company policy, to buy Indian goods. In 1718 Robert Adams, the English director of the Malabar factory Anjengo, even sold Company pepper to the Ostenders, against which practise the VOC protested but the E.I.C.-directors in London did not take any measures (Algemeen Rijksarchief Brussel, Diverse Manuscripten, no. 4361).

<sup>5</sup> Frank LEQUIN, *Het personeel van de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie in Azië in de achttiende eeuw, meer in het bijzonder in de vestiging Bengalen*, Leiden, 1992, pp. 186-191.

<sup>6</sup> Om PRAKASH, *op. cit.*, pp. 86-89.

<sup>7</sup> S. ARASARATNAM, *Merchants, Companies and Commerce on the Coromandel Coast, 1650-1740*, Delhi, 1986, pp. 179-180.

nine years after their arrival in Bengal<sup>8</sup>. Nevertheless the former servants of the Imperial Company were able to keep alive their existing factory until 1744. So the question occurred how did they survive without any financial support from the Austrian Netherlands ?

Already before the swan-song of the Ostend Company started the directors in Antwerp instructed the factory governor Alexander Hume, a very capable Scottish merchant who became later a successful director of the E.I.C., to organize country-trade under Imperial flag<sup>9</sup>. The profits of this traffic had to be used to cover partially the upkeep expenses. However the official policy of the Dutch and English East India Companies of “not assisting” the Imperials with their trade, forced Hume to set up several secret operations. For this purpose he needed also to create a net-work of agents spread allover the major ports and factories in Asia. Especially French, English and Danish Company-servants, together with a handful Portuguese private merchants, were eager to earn some extra money by acting as commissioners<sup>10</sup>.

A clear example that Humes’ system was efficient occurred in 1729. After visiting Samuel Greenhill in Calcutta, who was a high-ranked E.I.C.-servant, Hume could make an interesting deal with a private supercargo and captain named Edward Coward. Alexander Hume invested 8,000 Rupees (Rs.) in the expedition of Coward’s brig “The Success”, bound for Bombay, Djeddah and Mocha. But the official bill of lading only mentioned that Coward financed 25% or 8,000 Rs. of the voyage and Greenhill 75%. What really happened was that Coward served only as a straw man for the Imperials. They shipped off with the “Success” a cargo of textiles and silk valued 8,000 Rs. to cover the share of Coward. The results of this expedition were positive although a part of the cargo was left unsold in Djeddah. But their English agent in this Red Sea-port managed to make a profit on it a few months later<sup>11</sup>.

For this type of voyages a well oiled network of correspondents proved to be essential. Before Alexander Hume left Bengal he wrote a memorandum for his successor concerning the profitable country-trade lines and the accompanying web of agents.

Striking in this document was the great number of official European factories where Imperial vessels — probably sailing under foreign colours — could call for selling Bengal products<sup>12</sup>. It confirms that expeditions like the one organized by Hume, Coward and Greenhill were not exceptional and it shows that private merchant-enterprises were not hampered by the official

<sup>8</sup> Jan PARMENTIER, *De holle compagnie. Smokkel en legale handel onder Zuidnederlandse vlag in Bengalen, ca. 1720-1744*, Hilversum, 1992, pp. 21-35.

<sup>9</sup> Conrad GILL, *Merchants and Mariners of the 18th Century*, London, 1961, pp. 46-47.

<sup>10</sup> Jan PARMENTIER, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-44.

<sup>11</sup> Jan PARMENTIER, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

<sup>12</sup> Stadsarchief Antwerpen, G.I.C., no. 5922.

national conflicts. Albeit Samuel Greenhill was dismissed in 1730, after serving the English East India Company for thirteen years, for dealing with the Ostend Company. But this fact was marginal for Greenhill because he had still secured enough fortune, with his private enterprises, to enable him to purchase an estate in England of 5 or 600 £ per annum and to live a “country life”<sup>13</sup>.

Apart from shipping company-merchandise on private vessels active in the country-trade the Ostenders even invested more by the way of partnership or with bottomree-contacts in the impressive number of intra-Asian-trade voyages the French governor of Chandernagore, Joseph-François Dupleix, organized with great success in the years 1731-1741<sup>14</sup>.

A third manner the Ostenders and more especially François de Schonamille, who became governor of Banquibazar in 1731, developed to earn their living in Bengal was using the factory and the low custom-rights of this settlement as a base for other Companies and private merchants, who had no official representatives or factories in this region. On commission de Schonamille and other Ostenders purchased whole cargoes of textiles, salpêtre and silk for three Swedish Bengalmen during the period 1733-1741. For this task Schonamille received a lot of assistance from Dupleix, who mobilized all the local merchants, who normally worked in service of the French “Compagnie des Indes”, to place all the orders of the Swedes. Further de Schonamille as well as Dupleix financed with bottomree-contracts the private trade of the “Swedish” supercargo’s<sup>15</sup>. Actually these merchants were from English, French and Flemish origin and a few of them were even former servants of the Ostend Company and English East India Company<sup>16</sup>. Also the Dutch in Chinsura, like director Jan Albert Sichterman, found these Swedish expeditions very attractive to send home private goods of great value (precious metals and diamonds) along Göteborg to Amsterdam<sup>17</sup>. So the “Swedish connection” with the factory Banquibazar proved to be a golden opportunity to organize private trade and to transfer capital that could not bear the light of day.

Further Banquibazar helped a Danish country-trader from Tranquebar — the Danish chief-factory on the Coromandelcoast — to procure textiles and salpêtre. François de Schonamille even started diplomatic negotiations for the Danes to get them a new factory on the Hougli-river. This Danish mission was

<sup>13</sup> P. J. MARSHALL, *East Indian Fortunes. The British in Bengal in the Eighteenth Century*, Oxford, 1976, pp. 228-229.

<sup>14</sup> I. RAY, *op. cit.*, pp. 285-290.

<sup>15</sup> Jan PARMENTIER, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-78.

<sup>16</sup> Universiteitsbibliotheek Gent (U.B.G.), Fonds Hye-Hoys, Hs. no. 1982 & 1998 and Algemeen Rijksarchief Den Haag, VOC, no. 2453, 19/09/1739.

<sup>17</sup> The directors of the Swedish East India Company knew very well the existence of a smuggle-line from Bengal to Göteborg and Amsterdam. But they allowed these activities in the hope to have an influential Dutch friend (Sichterman) in the Ganges-delta (UBG, Fonds Hye-Hoys, Hs no. 1998).

set up in 1736 by the official Danish Asiatic Company-servants of Tranquebar in combination with two private traders, the Englishman Thomas Crawford and the Armenian Nazar Jacob Jan, both living in Madras, and four E.I.C.-servants (two from Madras and two from Calcutta) <sup>18</sup>.

Besides the small, but very profitable Scandinavian Companies, a private merchant named Tempest Milner found Banquibazar as a partner for direct trade between Bengal and Lisbon. Milner was an English supercargo living in the Portuguese capital who had a lot of ideas and who was desperately seeking the necessary funds to start a new company. He even unrolled his plans to the former directors of the Ostend Company <sup>19</sup>. Milner wanted to organize expeditions under Portuguese flag to Brazil and Bengal. For every voyage he needed an outward cargo of 20,000 £. Sterling in “reales de ocho”. With this American silver he would buy a cargo on the Coromandel coast and in Bengal. For these Indian products he had customers in Brazil and in Portugal. He estimated the net-profits per expedition around 110%. Tempest Milner was not successful with his project in the Austrian Netherlands, because the former financiers of the G.I.C. feared the negative reaction — confiscation of the ships — of the Dutch and the English if they got the message that Flemish funds supported Milners’ outfittings. But nevertheless this supercargo managed to find sufficient capital, probably in Portugal, but certainly also in Bengal, to finance three expeditions <sup>20</sup>. Actually these were the only Portuguese ships which anchored in the Ganges-delta during the period 1733-39 <sup>21</sup>. Once again a similar scenario like with the Swedish visitors was followed by de Schonamille. Also the French in Chandernagore and the Dutch director Jan Albert Sichterman participated in making Milners’ outfittings profitable. It occurred even that during the long lay-time (a few months) between the orders and the deliveries of the home-cargo, the Portuguese Bengalmen undertook country-trade-missions to the Coromandel coast on behalf of Dupleix. Like exporting rice to Pondichery, which was at that moment a lucrative business for there was a famine at the East-coast of India, and returning to Bengal with a cargo composed of salt, pewter and other goods among which 200 chests of China-ware especially addressed to Dupleix.

So like we can notice the function of the former Ostend factory Banquibazar changed from a traditional Company-trading-post into a private entrepot and merchant-house. One could say that de Schonamille was forced to this

<sup>18</sup> Jan PARMENTIER, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-69.

<sup>19</sup> UBG, Weens archief, Dépêches Impériales, 16/07/1735.

<sup>20</sup> Jan PARMENTIER, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-70.

<sup>21</sup> Vitorino MAGELHÃES GODINHO, *The Portuguese and the “Carreira da Índia”, 1497-1810*, in : J. R. BRUIJN and F. S. GAASTRA (ed.), *Ships, Sailors and Spices. East India Companies and their Shipping in 16th., 17th. and 18th. centuries*, Amsterdam, 1993 (NEHA-Series III), pp. 20-21.

transition, but we are certain he was very pleased that the factory became a private enterprise with still the facilities the Imperial East India Company had received from the local government. What's more François de Schonamille and the other European inhabitants of Banquibazar had every season the opportunity to repatriate on East-Indiamen bound for Europe. Before de Schonamille was engaged by the Ostend Company he already made some fortune as a private merchant on the Coromandelcoast<sup>22</sup>. We may assume that he knew quite well the market and furthermore the presence of Dupleix, who created an impressive country-trade-company of his own, made it for de Schonamille much easier to enter the private business-circuit.

In studies on the private enterprises of Dupleix historians never have emphasized the important role of the infrastructure and commercial relations the "Compagnie des Indes" offered this small genius to make his fortune in private trade. His talent was finding the necessary funds — European as well as Asian investors — which he combined with the already existing network of factories the French, but also the English, possessed. In that decenniad also Chandernagore became more and more a private business-centre for all Europeans and Asians who wanted to risk some money in the intra-Asian-trade. Of course not all expeditions Dupleix set up were successful. It was even so that in 1737 he had to take out 50,000 Rs. (a fortune!) from the Company-cash-desk to finance some of his new enterprises<sup>23</sup>.

In this period the French private country-trade to the Persian Gulf, which was a natural extension of the voyages from Chandernagore to Gujarat, proved to be very typical on how the official Company-trade was taken over by the private interests of the company-servants, often in relation with free merchants. In 1730 the "Compagnie des Indes" withdrew from this market and immediately Chandernagore took over the country-trade to Basra and Bandar Abbas. In this structure especially the function of the French factory in Basra during these years is worth mentioning. While the official French country-trade organized by the Company did not make any profit before 1730, Dupleix and his friends managed to create a very beneficial traffic between Bengal and Basra from the start in 1731<sup>24</sup>. Dupleix and other French employees who made their livelihood with country-trade urged the Company-direction to appoint new permanent representatives in Basra, solely to improve their private enterprises in the Persian Gulf. The advantages of having a commercial resident were beyond dispute. Finally in 1736 the "Compagnie des Indes" reopened the Basra factory<sup>25</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> Jan PARMENTIER, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-14.

<sup>23</sup> Bibliothèque Nationale Paris (BNP), FF, no. 8980, 06/06/1737.

<sup>24</sup> Jan PARMENTIER, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-47.

<sup>25</sup> Catherine MANNING, *Fortunes a Faire : The French in Asian Trade, 1719-1748*, Unpublished doctoralthesis, London, 1990, pp. 261-264.

So this trading-post we can put forward as a Company-factory existing only for the benefit of the private country-trade for the French Company took no interest in these expeditions. Dupleix even wanted to monopolize the French country-trade to the Persian Gulf. Therefore he was very reffled when in 1737 Jan Albert Sichterman started to organize in co-operation with the French free merchant Matthieu de Villeneuve voyages to Basra. Dupleix even blamed unjust the French residents in Basra for assisting this new joint-venture. Fortunately for Dupleix the first ship of the Sichterman - de Villeneuve association perished on her home voyage in the Bay of Bengal and de Villeneuve died in the same year <sup>26</sup>.

In 1741 the French Company, having financial problems, looked for ways of limiting expenditure and wanted to eliminate several factories like Basra. The private traders defending their major income argued that other French factories like Mahé on the Malabarcoast and Mocha, which the Company did not want to close down, could only survive thanks to the commercial activities — the commission-trade — of the private country-traders <sup>27</sup>. This argument was correct. However the private enterprises could not be runned properly without the Company's services and protection. So for both parties a network of factories was a necessity.

Not only within the French and English Companies employees and free merchants manipulated the existing infrastructure, also the Danish Asiatic Company (D.A.C.) was confronted with similar problems. In 1745 Dupleix, at that moment governor in Pondichéry, could persuade the Danes in Tranquebar to organize a private French voyage to Manilla under Danish colours. Ship and cargo were French, the supercargo Andrew Brown was a former servant of the Ostenders in Bengal, but the passports and the officers on board were Danish. So it looked very much like an ordinary D.A.C.-voyage. At first The Danes and Dupleix even set up a fake auction of a French barge in Pondichéry. This ship was bought by the Danish governor Bonsach and he immediately renamed it "Dansborg" (which is the name of the fort in Tranquebar). Also nothing concerning this expedition was allowed to be entered in the official copy books and ledgers of the Danish Asiatic Company <sup>28</sup>.

Summarizing we may say the during the first half of the 18th century the official Company-factories played a crucial role in the network of the private country-trade, organized by Company-servants and free merchants. Without this existing structure this kind of trade could never increase so rapidly in a short notice. In a few cases like the Ostend factory Banquibazar or the

<sup>26</sup> BNP, FF, no. 8980, 06/06/1737 & 24/12/1737. Sichterman lost 87,000 Rs. with his only Basra-expedition.

<sup>27</sup> Catherine MANNING, *op. cit.*, pp. 56-64.

<sup>28</sup> Rigsarkivet København, Asiatisk Kompagni protocol, no. 1256b.

French trading-post in Basra even a transition from Company-factory into a private runned merchant-entrepot took place. Probably in several other English factories, which lacked commercial attention of the E.I.C., equal evolutions emerged. In this period the private European country-trade was well-established in Asia and began gradually to throw into the shade the Company activities on this market.

# EUROPEAN PERIPHERY AT THE HEART OF THE OCEAN : THE MALDIVES, 17th-18th CENTURIES

BY

Remco RABEN

This article does not intend to propagate the long-neglected importance of the Maldivian Islands to the European powers in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. But although European activities on this atoll sultanate during the early modern period were rather ephemeral, Maldivian history still has some things of interest in store for historians of European expansion.

The central position of the Maldives in the trade system of the Indian Ocean up to the mid-seventeenth century has not escaped the notice of contemporary and modern authors. After that, Maldivian trade relations were gradually dominated by the one product for which the Maldives are particularly famous, the cowrie : small off-white shells which were used as money in many parts of India, South China and last but not least Africa, where cowries became a very important component in the Atlantic slave trade. For this reason, the Europeans, and first and foremost among them the Dutch East India Company, turned their attention to the major source of this important means of exchange : the Maldives.

Two questions will form the central theme of the following narrative : first, what precisely was Dutch policy towards the Maldives, and concomitantly what part did Ceylon play in this policy ? And second, what were the effects of the heightened European interest in the cowries on the Maldives as a trading nation ? On the face of it, they simply seem to have disappeared from view somewhere in the process of the increasing European ascendancy.

The most comprehensive history of the cowrie trade is that written by Jan Hogendorn and Marion Johnson, *The Shell Money of the Slave Trade*<sup>1</sup>.

\* Weights : lbs are Amsterdam *ponden*, weighing ca. 1.09 lbs avoirdupois.

1 *kotta* contained 12,000 shells. The Dutch equated 1 *kotta* to 25 lbs.

<sup>1</sup> Jan HOGENDORN and Marion JOHNSON, *The Shell Money of the Slave Trade* (African Studies Series, 49), Cambridge etc., 1986.

As regards the shell trade, these pages can do no more than supplement that excellent study. However this article will look at the Maldives from a slightly different angle, viewing them not simply as a place where cowrie shells could be harvested, but as a trading nation which found itself entangled in a widening, globalizing economic system in which the European trading companies assumed an increasingly important role.

#### MID-OCEAN HUB

Since time immemorial, the Maldives had been an important link in the trade system of the Indian Ocean, due to their central position along the sea-routes between the western and eastern basins of the Ocean. Between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries C.E., the Maldivians formed one of the great sailing and trading nations of the Indian Ocean. Male was a prominent hub in mid-ocean, where merchants from the surrounding shores came to exchange their items of trade. Unlike their Oceanic neighbours the Sri Lankans, the Maldivians were themselves great seafarers. Their ships plied to all corners of the Indian Ocean maritime network, from Melaka and Aceh in the east, Bengal and Gujarat in the north, and Persia, Arabia and the African shores to the west <sup>2</sup>.

In fact, the Maldivians had no alternative to trade, as their country could not provide them with the principal necessities of life. Rice, textiles, areca nuts and metalware, to name but a few basic commodities, had to be imported. In exchange, the islands offered every imaginable product from the coconut palm, but above all coir, as well as such non-palmaceous products as ambergris, woven textiles and dried fish. Above all, the islands were the source of cowries for a market that extended from China to the Atlantic Ocean, although initially, this trade item was surpassed by the other commodities.

The Frenchman, Pyrard de Laval, captive of the sultan from 1602-07, was witness to the prospering Maldivian trade. Referring to the cowries, he reported that "All go to Bengal" <sup>3</sup>. Large amounts of Maldivian cowries did indeed make their way to Bengal, where they served as a money in small transactions, but they also found their way to far more distant markets, especially

<sup>2</sup> See, for a survey of eyewitnesses of the Maldivian shipping and trading activities, John VILLIERS, "The Portuguese in the Maldivian Islands", in : T. F. EARLE and Stephen PARKINSON (eds.), *Studies in the Portuguese Discoveries, I (Proceedings of the First Colloquium of the Centre for the Study of the Portuguese Discoveries)*, [Oxford] 1990, pp. 17-34, esp. p. 17. For the Maldivian trade to Melaka, see M. A. P. MEILINK-ROELOFSZ, *Asian Trade and European Influence in the Indonesian Archipelago between 1500 and about 1630*, The Hague, 1962, p. 171.

<sup>3</sup> H. C. P. BELL, "Excerpta Máldiviana no. 11. Dutch Intercourse with the Máldives : Seventeenth Century", in : *Journal of the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 32, no. 85 (1932), pp. 226-242, esp. p. 228.

in Yünnan in southern China <sup>4</sup>. In the early sixteenth century, five or six ships from Bengal carrying rice and textiles, to trade for cowries arrived annually in Male <sup>5</sup>. There, the foreigners had to deal with the representatives of the sultan, because for centuries the cowrie trade had been the sultan's monopoly and remained so until it petered out in the nineteenth century.

The main trading partners of the Maldives were the neighbouring states on the south-western coast of India, however : Cannanur, Calicut, Cochin and the other Malabar states. The relative proximity of the Indian coast enabled even small vessels to transport the products of the islands to the markets there. The trade items in this commercial link were still mainly coir and other products of the coconut palm, but cowries also came this way, and Malabar was in its turn a re-exporter of the shells <sup>6</sup>.

The arrival of the Portuguese in the early-sixteenth century did not change the basic pattern of politics and trade. Yet they did manage to turn it to their own profit, by usurping trading privileges and forcing the sultan to pay tribute to Goa. They even went so far as to establish a puppet kingdom in Male in 1554. The immediate provocation was Sultan Hasan IX, who had been chased off the throne in 1550, and had fled to Cochin. There he embraced Christianity, took the name Dom Manuel and married a Portuguese woman of noble descent. In 1554 his investments in the Portuguese cause bore him fruit : Male was captured by a Portuguese fleet. A peculiar political construction resulted : a Maldivian regent under the auspices of a Portuguese officer was to govern the Maldives in name of Dom Manuel, who remained in Cochin. He had to share his tribute from the Maldives with the Portuguese in Goa. Within short time, however, the Maldivians were able to set up an independent sultanate in the southern atolls, and managed to retake Male in 1573. In 1649, two grandsons of Dom Manuel tried to reconquer Male, to no avail. The tribute payments were stopped, and Maldivian history resumed its independent course. The Maldivian traders were once again as active as ever in the Indian Ocean trade <sup>7</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Hans Ulrich VOGEL and Sabine HIERONYMUS, "Cowry Trade and its Role in the Economy of Yünnan, the Ninth to the Middle of the Seventeenth Century", in : Roderich ПТАК and Dietmar ROTHERMUND (eds.), *Emporia, Commodities and Entrepreneurs in Asian Maritime Trade, c. 1400-1750* (Beiträge zur Südasiensforschung, Südasiens-Institut, Universität Heidelberg, 141), Stuttgart, 1991, pp. 231-262.

<sup>5</sup> Geneviève BOUCHON, "*Regent of the Sea*". *Cannanore's Response to Portuguese Expansion, 1507-1528* (French Studies in South Asian Culture and Society, 2), Delhi etc., 1988), p. 42.

<sup>6</sup> Sanjay SUBRAHMANYAM, "Notes on the Sixteenth Century Bengal Trade", in : *Ibidem*, *Improvising Empire. Portuguese Trade and Settlement in the Bay of Bengal 1500-1700*, Delhi etc., 1990, pp. 96-127, esp. p. 114.

<sup>7</sup> M. A. H. FITZLER, "Die Maldiven im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert. Ein Kapitel portugiesischer Kolonialgeschichte", in : *Zeitschrift für Indologie und Iranistik*, 10 (1935-1936), pp. 215-256 ; VILLIERS, "Portuguese in the Maldivian Islands".

At this time, the tide of Portuguese power in the region was receding and they found themselves incapable of retrieving their position. The Dutch were by then on full course for extending their sphere of influence in the Indian Ocean. A prolonged war from 1638-1663 left them in possession of the main harbours and coastal areas of Ceylon and Malabar. Ceylon became the base for Dutch policy towards the Maldives.

#### DUTCH DEMAND FOR COWRIES

Perhaps there is no better illustration of the differences in purposes and methods employed by the Portuguese and Dutch in their Asian ventures than the vicissitudes of the Maldives. At no point in history did the Dutch ever consider conquering the atoll sultanate, let alone installing a, say, Protestant puppet king on the throne and then marrying him off to a lady from the Dutch upper classes. Instead, they preferred to remain aloof from these islands, which were notorious for their unsalubriousness and the perils to shipping formed by the reefs and strong currents.

Dutch commercial policy towards the Madives made headway only slowly, following in the wake of the increasing demand for the shells in the West African slave trade. Overtures made by Sultan Ibrahim Iskandar I to the Dutch had already begun as early as 1645, when he sought their assistance against his arch-enemy the Portuguese<sup>8</sup>. The Dutch, however, were only marginally interested in the atolls, and left them to themselves for most of the seventeenth century. Only one man, the VOC commander and governor of Ceylon, Rijcklof van Goens, was astute enough to value the trade connection with the Maldives for the procurement of cowries. In 1658, 1662, and 1669, expeditions were fitted out in Colombo to sail to the atolls, but they met with only limited success and had to face subdued resistance from the Maldivians, who had, understandably, developed a certain aversion to European advances. They still entertained a lively fear that some European power or other would once again jeopardize their independence, and they strongly opposed visits of Dutch, or any other European shipping to the islands<sup>9</sup>.

Until the late seventeenth century, purchases of cowries were made alternately in Bengal, Malabar, Surat, and only occasionally in Ceylon. Although 1688 saw thirteen Maldivian ships reaching Ceylon, this was an exceptional number, and in the next decade the annual average was reported to have sunk

<sup>8</sup> It is not true, however, that the annual embassies began in this year. They only became regular in the eighteenth century. Cf. HOGENDORN and JOHNSON, *Shell Money of the Slave Trade*, p. 35.

<sup>9</sup> See Pieter VAN DAM, *Beschryvinge van de Oostindische Compagnie*, II, II, F. W. STAPEL ed. (Rijks geschiedkundige publicatiën, 76), 's-Gravenhage, 1932, pp. 277-278 and 298 ; HOGENDORN and JOHNSON, *Shell Money of the Slave Trade*, pp. 41-42.

back to three or four, and these only called when they were in need of repair or victualling, presumably on their way to or from Bengal. In 1692, the officials in Colombo wrote that Maldivian traders could not be lured to Ceylon<sup>10</sup>.

At the end of the seventeenth century, the demand for cowries took a sudden sharp upturn and, concomitantly, the competition for them was followed by a rise in prices on the markets in Europe. Annual orders from the directors of the VOC in the Netherlands rose threefold from 80,000 lbs in 1696 to 250,000 lbs in 1702<sup>11</sup>. But the market was fickle and Dutch orders slumped to a mere 100,000 lbs around 1710. With the end of the War of the Spanish Succession in Europe in 1713, this amount once more shot up to a 3 to 400,000 lbs in 1716. In view of this increasing demand for cowries for the slave trade, the directors strongly urged their officials in Asia to ensure that the shipping link to the Maldives fell into their own hands.

However, the demands for cowries in Europe was still subject to drastic fluctuations. Retaining its high level of 3-500,000 lbs throughout the 1730s and 1740s, the Dutch cowrie market sagged around 1750, and stocks were so abundant that a halt was called to any further purchases in Asia<sup>12</sup>. Until 1765, the directors constantly urged their officials in Asia to buy as few cowries as possible. There is even evidence that the Company was increasingly selling cowries on the Asian markets, off-loading them in Bengal especially<sup>13</sup>. The demand caught up around 1765, continuing to remain at a fairly stable level of 2-300,000 lbs until the end of the century and the demise of the Company. It was difficult for the officials in Asia to construct a consistent policy for this particular trade item, and their actions provide a vivid picture of their desperate struggle to do so. The actual workings of the market in Europe lie somewhat outside the scope of this article, but it is enough to say that the orders from the directors bear sufficient witness to the many slumps to which it was subject<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> W. Ph. COOLHAAS and J. VAN GOOR (eds.), *Generale missiven van gouverneurs-generaal aan Heren XVII der Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (Rijks geschiedkundige publicatiën, grote serie 104, 112, 125, 134, 150, 159, 164, 193, 205), 9 vols., 's-Gravenhage, 1960-1988 [hereafter *GM*], V, pp. 279 (27 Feb. 1689) and 766 (8 Feb. 1696); VAN DAM, *Beschryvinge* II, II, p. 384.

<sup>11</sup> *GM*, V, p. 760 (1696 Feb. 8); Algemeen Rijksarchief, The Hague, Archives of the Dutch East India Company [hereafter VOC], inv. nr. 13398, orders by the *Heren XVII* to the governor-general and council of the Indies, 1702.

<sup>12</sup> VOC 2756, Minutes of the governor and council of Ceylon, fol. 994v (1750 Oct. 20).

<sup>13</sup> Sinnappah ARASARATNAM (ed.), *Memoir of Julius Stein van Gollenesse, Governor of Ceylon 1743-1751 for his Successor Gerrit Joan Vreeland, 28th February, 1751*, Colombo, 1974, p. 33.

<sup>14</sup> The *eisen* (orders) are included in the annual correspondence between the directors (*Heren XVII*) in the Netherlands and the governor-general and council in Batavia. A separate series of *eisen*, partly with the replies from the Asian establishments, is in VOC 13398-13471, covering the years 1702-1792; there are many lacunae, but the series gives a good overview of the development of the demand by the directors in the Netherlands.

Until well into the eighteenth century, the markets which supplied cowries to the Dutch remained quite diverse. In 1673, the “Amersfoort” arrived in Batavia from Surat with 78,300 lbs cowries. In 1686, prices for cowries in Surat were calculated to be a quarter higher than those in Balasore, at the other end of the subcontinent. This was the motive behind the cessation of Dutch purchases of the shells in Surat in the early eighteenth century<sup>15</sup>. Malabar could sometimes acquire large amounts of cowries, such as the 300,000 lbs bought in 1704, but supplies were unstable: a year later, this had dropped to only 13,000 lbs. Cowries reached Cochin directly by ship from the Maldives, as well as through mediation of the Ali Raja of Cannanur<sup>16</sup>.

The purchases in Bengal are of a completely different order. Until about 1750 the VOC bought large amounts of cowries on the markets in Bengal, reaching such peaks as 385,015 lbs in 1733 and 150,000 lbs in 1749<sup>17</sup>. Earlier arguments about this trade which stated that the Dutch secured their cowries mainly through their establishments in Ceylon have to be gainsaid<sup>18</sup>. The Dutch did enjoy mounting success in curbing the Maldivian cowrie shipments to Ceylon, but this did by no means entail a complete monopoly. In 1750, the Dutch government in Batavia ordered the commander in Malabar to send all Maldivian ships through to Ceylon, but after this date ships still arrived in Cochin, loaded with cowries, coir, and dried fish, exchanging them for rice, textiles, and wood<sup>19</sup>. Bengal, and to a lesser degree Malabar remained vital to the flow of cowries to Amsterdam until 1750 at least. It is only after that year that Bengal is no longer featured in the orders for cowries, and most purchases were made in Ceylon.

#### EXPEDITIONS TO THE MALDIVES

Before the Dutch succeeded in acquiring enough cowries through Maldivian transport to the Company harbours in Ceylon, they had been diligent in their quest for other tactics by which they might buy the shells. The sudden increase

<sup>15</sup> J. A. VAN DER CHIJS (ed.), *Dagh-register gehouden int Casteel Batavia vant passerende daer ter plaetse als over geheel Nederlandis-India. Anno 1673*, Batavia and 's-Gravenhage, 1901, p. 298 (1673 Oct. 23); *GM* V, p. 15 (1686 March 8); VOC 13399, order of the *Heren XVII* to gg&c, 1703. Only late in the same century, an incidental purchase was again made in Surat, but this was no more than a trickle.

<sup>16</sup> *GM* VI, pp. 314 (1704 Nov. 30) and 371 (1705 Nov. 30); VIII, p. 144 (1727 Nov. 30). See also VOC 3324, Minutes g&c Ceylon, unfol. (1771 April 12) for cowries arriving from Tuticorin.

<sup>17</sup> VOC 13417 and *GM* IX, p. 577 (1734 March 31).

<sup>18</sup> HOGENDORN and JOHNSON, *Shell Money of the Slave Trade*, p. 51: “the sum of this third route [through Bengal and Orissa] must have been small”.

<sup>19</sup> VOC 780, resolutions gg&c, p. 475 (1750 Aug. 31); A. GALETTI, A. J. VAN DER BURG and P. GROOT (eds.), *The Dutch in Malabar*, Madras, 1911, p. 170 (memoir Moens, 1781).

in demands for cowries around 1720 and the fierce competition posed by the other European traders in these years, impelled the Company to search for every other means to buy their cowries. In 1722 this led to a suggestion that expeditions to the islands should be resumed in order to tap the shells at the source<sup>20</sup>. In 1723, two small ships were despatched with 28,648 guilders' worth of money and goods consisting of areca, rice, cotton goods, sugar, pepper, and spices. Arriving in Male on 20 March, the Dutch found themselves confronted by an extremely uncooperative court. They were kept dangling for several weeks before they were allowed to trade their products and buy cowries. In fact, the court officials, who carried out all the negotiations, allowed the Dutch no freedom of action whatever. They drove a hard bargain, fixed the prices at what was for the Dutch an almost unacceptably low level, and eventually even did all the unloading and carrying. One after the other felled by fever, the Dutch crew went down like ninepins and could only wait and see. Before the ships could return, both commanders had died and been buried. Only on 2 May were the Dutch ready to weigh anchor. The expedition did produce a profit, but it was so small, that the governor decided to abandon any further plans for sending shipping to the Maldives. As for the cowries, the voyage yielded 2,586 *kotta* (or 64,650 lbs)<sup>21</sup>.

Four years later, and again a year later in 1728, under pressure from the demands of their superiors in Holland, the Dutch again ventured towards the atolls. This time they were hardly more successful. In 1727, the yacht the "Colombo" and the sloop the "Elisabeth" were sent to the Maldives and returned with 4,353 *kotta* cowries. The overall profit of the expedition was no more than 7,824 guilders, a very meagre return indeed<sup>22</sup>. The return load of the 1728 voyage consisted of 4,410 *kotta* or 110,250 lbs cowries, a modest profit having been made on the sale of piece-goods<sup>23</sup>. Another expedition in 1732 resulted in one shipwreck, a fifty percent death rate and only 1,412 *kotta* (35,300 lbs) cowries<sup>24</sup>. Even this failed to deter the Dutch, however. Two further voyages, one in 1734 and another a year later, yielded 2,834 and 2,066 *kotta* (70,850 and 51,650 lbs) respectively<sup>25</sup>. After that, the insalubrious and unrewarding voyages were cancelled.

For the VOC, gross returns on cowries had to be forty to fifty per cent after sale in the Netherlands to be profitable<sup>26</sup>. This reveals the major weakness

<sup>20</sup> *GM VII*, p. 601 (1722 March 31).

<sup>21</sup> *GM VII*, pp. 668-669 (1723 Dec. 3).

<sup>22</sup> *GM VIII*, p. 123 (1727 Oct. 27).

<sup>23</sup> *GM VIII*, p. 184 (1728 Oct. 31).

<sup>24</sup> *GM IX*, p. 393 (1732 Dec. 8).

<sup>25</sup> *GM IX*, p. 591 (1734 Oct. 6).

<sup>26</sup> VOC 348, subject-index on outgoing letters of *Heren XVII*, 1733-1776 (to Ceylon, 1737 Sept. 17); *GM IX*, pp. 766 and 776 (1736 Oct. 24).

of the Dutch Company. On free markets, where it could not set prices or establish a monopoly, profit margins tended to be too low for the Dutch to cover their overhead and fulfil the profit expectations of the directors.

So trade to the Maldives undertaken by the Dutch themselves remained the exception : amounting to only three expeditions in the seventeenth century and six in the eighteenth century. None of them was really satisfactory, profits remaining low, the voyages being a high risk to the crews' lives, and they were met with uncooperative, not to say hostile Maldivians <sup>27</sup>.

The Dutch were far from being the only traders sailing to the Maldives. In 1735, when what was to be the last Dutch expedition to the Maldives arrived in Male, they found that eight ships had arrived there before them that same year, loaded to the gunnels with rice, in exchange of which they had purchased most of the cowries <sup>28</sup>. Competition from other traders to the Maldives, especially the "European" country-traders and Bengalis, clearly precluded any Dutch dominance of the trade.

Almost every trading nation represented in Bengal took to shipping to the Maldives : Bengalis, Armenians, French, English and Ostenders. Before the cowrie boom, the trade had been mainly in the hands of private Bengali traders. As a consequence of the rising demand for cowries by the European companies, these ancient trade relations were intensified during the last decade of the seventeenth century. The number of ships from Balasore increased from an annual three in the 1680s to about seven around 1700, with an additional three or four from Hughli <sup>29</sup>. For the next decade or so, until the mid-1710s, their number decreased, following the slump in cowrie demand in Europe where the economy had been disrupted by wars. It goes without saying that fluctuations in the European markets immediately affected shipping to the Maldives.

The returns on this trade were probably variable. Alexander Hume, head of the Ostend Company factory in Bankibazar, wrote in a survey of intra-Asian shipping in 1729 that only small ships were dispatched to the Maldives, and then the majority of them from Balasore. From his account appears that the profits were subject to fluctuations and that the number of ships employed on this route varied accordingly. The trade was characterized by the lack of participation by Mughal state officials and of competition from the companies. It was the domain of private and country-traders <sup>30</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> *GM IX*, p. 174 (1730 Nov. 30).

<sup>28</sup> *GM IX*, p. 735 (1736 April 6).

<sup>29</sup> Om PRAKASH, "Asian Trade and European Impact : A Study of the Trade from Bengal, 1630-1720", in : Blair B. KLING and M. N. PEARSON (eds.), *The Age of Partnership. Europeans in Asia before Dominion*, Honolulu, 1979, pp. 43-70, esp. p. 58.

<sup>30</sup> Jan PARMENTIER, *De Holle Compagnie. Smokkel en legale handel onder Zuidnederlandse vlag in Bengalen, ca. 1720-1744*, Hilversum, 1992, pp. 40-41 ; PRAKASH, "Asian Trade and European Impact", p. 59.

From 1720 onwards, there was a sharp upsurge in the participation of the Ostenders, French and other Europeans stationed in Bengal in the Maldivian trade link, and the supply of cowries to the markets in Europe derived from an increasing number of sources — much to the annoyance of the Dutch<sup>31</sup>. One of the biggest country-traders in this period was the famous Frenchman Joseph-François Dupleix, who became president of the French post in Chandernagore in 1731. He specialized in the westward trade, to the Maldives, Surat, and Persia. Of the four ships Dupleix sent on country-trading missions in 1731, one went to the Maldives. By doing so, he succeeded, temporarily at least, in wresting the cowrie trade from Bengal out of the hands of the English. During the decade in which he was stationed in Chandernagore, Dupleix sent at least twelve ships to the Maldives. He operated with the money provided by other nations and by individuals in Bengal, including the Ostenders<sup>32</sup>. Although fortune could be fickle, the traders remained active on the Maldives during the whole eighteenth century.

#### THE HEYDAY OF THE CEYLON CONNECTION

As Bengal remained such an important market for cowries, at no time could the Dutch come anywhere near a monopoly on these shells<sup>33</sup>. But the Dutch held one trump card: their establishments nearby in Ceylon. From the point of view of price fixing, Ceylon offered the Dutch far better opportunities than the markets in Bengal, Malabar, and Surat, where purchases could not be guaranteed on account of the fierce competition by the other traders, and where consequently prices tended to fluctuate. Yet the option to concentrate the cowrie trade in Ceylon was not quite so obvious as it may seem at first glance. In the past, Ceylon had never constituted a great market for cowries, although Maldivian boats had called regularly at its ports. If the Dutch wanted the cowries to be brought to Ceylon, they had to lure the traders. As the cowrie trade was the prerogative of the Maldivian sultan, trade relations had to be stimulated through the judicious wooing of that monarch and his courtiers.

<sup>31</sup> For instance, in 1728, the Ostend ship the “Aertshertoginne” imported 55,387 lbs of cowries from Bengal to Ostend. PARMENTIER, *Holle Compagnie*, p. 26. VOC 7000 shows a survey of transports to Europe in 1730-34 by the Dutch, French, English and Ostenders, proving above all the French assiduousness.

<sup>32</sup> PARMENTIER, *Holle Compagnie*, pp. 55-56.

<sup>33</sup> The Dutch monopoly phase which Hogendorn and Johnson place in the 1750s and 1760s decades was in fact a period of international slump in the cowrie market in Europe. The Dutch, using the cowries as ballast, continued to ship shells to Europe from their enormous stores in Ceylon, which were indeed continuously fed by the visits of the annual Maldivian ships, despite Dutch policy of discouragement. See HOGENDORN and JOHNSON, *Shell Money of the Slave Trade*, p. 52.

After 1735 the Dutch Company continued to depend for a large part on Maldivian shipping for the procurement of cowries. This was probably exactly where the sultan wanted the Dutch to be, envisaging a profit from their proximity, but fearing that their commercial overtures might transmogrify into political encroachments. From the point of view of the sultan, understandably there was quite a difference between whether he had to deal with private merchants or with a powerful company. In this respect the Dutch expeditions to the Maldives had probably driven home to him the advisability of organizing a constant supply of cowries for the Dutch factories in Ceylon. The upshot was a cat-and-mouse game, in which the Dutch tried to inveigle the sultan into signing a contract ensuring exclusive sale of cowries to the Dutch, while the sultan did his utmost to secure deliveries of foodstuffs and arms from the Dutch. At one point in history, in 1734, the sultan seemed to be prepared to enter into an exclusive contract with the Dutch, but the deal fell through because of the sultan's vacillations, and because of Dutch unwillingness to undertake to provide the Maldives with ten *last* of rice annually. The Dutch did not pursue the matter, because recently sufficient supplies of cowries had been coming to Ceylon from "these briny islands"<sup>34</sup>.

Prices were the main instrument by means of which the Dutch enticed Maldivian ships to change course for the ports of Galle and Colombo. By a policy of gradually raising prices, they succeeded in attracting the sultan's cowrie ships to Ceylon. Prices were edged up from a 1 1/4 rixdollars per *kotta* in 1688 to 2 rixdollars in 1726 and 2.5 in 1739<sup>35</sup>. When the demand in Europe slumped, and warehouses in Galle and Colombo were chock-full, the Company reacted by lowering their prices to 1.5 rixdollars per *kotta* in 1753, only raising these again when the market recovered in the 1760s<sup>36</sup>. These policies proved successful: in 1762, eleven Maldivian ships arrived in Colombo and Galle, carrying 4,304 *kotta* of cowries, and in the following year this number rose to fourteen ships carrying 7,145 *kotta*<sup>37</sup>.

The annual correspondence and exchange of gifts between the sultan and Colombo, which took root in the first decade of the eighteenth century, was not a token of Dutch suzerainty, as H. C. P. Bell surmises, but a mutual court-

<sup>34</sup> VOC 2337, fols. 1336-1338v, Letter from Governor Van Domburg and council to Sultan Iskandar Ibrahim (1735 March 15); VOC 2352, fols. 790-794, Letter of g&c Ceylon to gg&c Batavia (1735 April 30); *GM IX*, pp. 611 (1734 Nov. 30) and 735 (1736 April 6). One *last* is 3,000 lbs.

<sup>35</sup> *GM V*, p. 279 (1689 Feb. 27); VIII, pp. 85-86 (1726 Dec. 5); Sophia PIETERS (ed.), *Memoir left by Gustaaf Willem baron van Imhoff, Governor and Director of Ceylon, to his Successor, Willem Maurits Bruynink, 1740*, Colombo, 1911, p. 55.

<sup>36</sup> Letter from gg&c in Batavia to g&c in Ceylon (1753 Aug. 31).

<sup>37</sup> VOC 3047, fol. 74, Letter from g&c Ceylon to gg&c in Batavia (1763 Jan. 25); Sri Lanka National Archives, Lot 1 (Dutch Archives), inv. nr. 3069, *Notuulboek 1763*, Note of arrivals and departures of Maldivian ships, 1763 (1763 Dec. 31).

ship aimed at smoothing the path of commercial and political relations<sup>38</sup>. The letters afford incredibly dull reading. As far as the sultan was concerned, efforts to win the friendship of the Dutch was one weapon in his diplomatic armoury for the safeguarding of the independence of his vulnerable kingdom, especially against the ever recurrent threats of his greatest foe, the Ali Raja of Cannanur.

The fear entertained by the Maldivians of being subjugated by the Dutch Company was at no time founded in reality. The Dutch had no interest whatsoever in becoming entangled in the internal affairs of the Maldives. Commercial returns were too modest, the climate too deleterious, and the atolls were almost impossible to defend. This last problem was one which constantly preyed on the mind of the sultan himself. Again and again his sultanate had proved vulnerable to aggressors. Although the capital of Male still retained its Portuguese walls mounted with cannon, the sultan had hardly any fleet to speak of. Dutch intelligence in 1762 stated that the sultan had only two three-masters equipped with cannon, and a small number of unarmed boats<sup>39</sup>.

Of course, it was only natural that the Maldivians should do everything in their power to improve their military situation with the help of their European relations. On several occasions, the governor in Colombo was approached with requests for guns, gunpowder, and at one time even a shipwright, all of which were refused under the sweetest of pretexts<sup>40</sup>. In 1753, when the sultan was captured during an attack mounted by King Ali Raja of Cannanur and was deported, the Dutch did not intervene, biding their time until another sultan had declared himself<sup>41</sup>. A court rebellion put an end to the allegedly brutal government of the Cannanur puppets, and placed the daughter of the exiled sultan on the throne. A request to the Dutch to supply arms and munitions was refused. The VOC was only prepared to supply rice and wood, and to be paid for this in cash<sup>42</sup>.

Other Europeans were more generous in their assistance. The princess had turned to the French in Pondicherry for support against the Ali Raja<sup>43</sup>. In 1754, Colombo received a message stating that Dupleix had planted the French flag on the Maldives, which has echoes reminiscent of nineteenth-century imperialism, and had made the Maldives a French protectorate. It transpired

<sup>38</sup> Cf. BELL, "Dutch Intercourse", p. 240.

<sup>39</sup> E. REIMERS (ed.), *Memoir of Jan Schreuder, Governor of Ceylon delivered to his Successor Lubbert Jan Baron van Eck on March 17, 1762* (Selections from the Dutch records of the Ceylon government, 5), Colombo, 1946, p. 46.

<sup>40</sup> VOC 2795, fols. 779-780, Letter from Sultan Imaduddien to Governor Loten (received 1752 Nov. 23) and fol. 781r-v, Reply by Governor Loten (1753 Jan. 13); VOC 3322, fol. 627, Letter from Governor Falck to Sultan Iskandar (1771 Dec. 30).

<sup>41</sup> REIMERS (ed.), *Memoir of Jan Schreuder*, p. 46.

<sup>42</sup> This episode is described extensively in VOC 2814, fols. 926-930v, Letter from the Counsellors in Male to Governor Loten, 1753.

<sup>43</sup> K. K. N. KURUP, *The Ali Rajas of Cannanore*, Trivandrum, 1975, p. 26.

that the regent, ruling in the sultana's name, had employed twenty French soldiers as a guard. Their presence did not entail any political dominance by the French Company whatsoever. The "occupation" ended five years later in 1759, when the guard was withdrawn <sup>44</sup>.

#### THE FATE OF MALDIVE SHIPPING

This leaves one final aspect of the Maldive connection to be dealt with : the consequences of the commercial developments in the Indian Ocean on Maldivian shipping. With all these various nations sailing to the Maldives, and the official cowrie trade being diverted to Ceylon, one wonders what had become of the once famous Maldivian shipping. At best my remarks can be no more than very sketchy and hypothetical, as information is scarce. Most data concern the eastward trade from the Maldives, and especially that to Ceylon and Bengal.

During the seventeenth century there had been a global reshuffling of the cowrie trade. Monetary changes in the southern Chinese province of Yünnan, one of the important receiving ends of the cowrie trade, caused a fall in demand in the first half of the seventeenth century <sup>45</sup>. Bengal still continued to be the largest customer for the shells. Despite monetary changes in Bengal itself, the outcome of growing bullion imports by the European companies, shells were probably used in small transactions until probably the beginning of the nineteenth century. As former markets either contracted or disappeared, new destinations for cowries created new demands for the shell money. The European demand for cowries rose sharply in the late seventeenth century, which seems to have more than compensated any loss of the Bengal-Yünnan market. At this point Maldivian shipping does not seem to have profited from the rise in the demand for cowries. The bulk of the direct trade between Bengal and the Maldives remained in the hands of Bengal-based merchants <sup>46</sup>.

Even more significant was the Dutch domination of the Ceylon and Malabar coasts, coupled with the Dutch trading policies in the Indonesian Archipelago. Eastbound Maldive shipping increasingly made for Ceylon, not longer venturing any further east to Bengal, Pegu, Aceh, or Melaka ; once all destinations on their trade routes. The VOC succeeded in diverting and

<sup>44</sup> E. REIMERS (ed.), *Memoir of Joan Gideon Loten, Governor of Ceylon, delivered to his Successor Jan Schreuder on February 28, 1757* (Selections from the Dutch Records of the Ceylon Government, 4), Colombo, 1935, pp. 20-21. *Contra* HOGENDORN and JOHNSON, *Shell Money of the Slave Trade*, p. 57 : this strengthening of French interests in the Maldives occurred completely beyond the cognizance and without the cooperation of the Dutch.

<sup>45</sup> See VOGEL and HIERONYMUS, "Cowry Trade and Its Role in the Economy of Yünnan", p. 251.

<sup>46</sup> Om PRAKASH, *The Dutch East India Company and the Economy of Bengal, 1630-1720*, Delhi etc., 1988, p. 29 & n. 12 and p. 233.

concentrating the Maldivian cowrie shipping in Ceylon, which from the 1720s onwards became one of the main destinations for the Maldivian vessels. The cowrie trade being the prerogative of the sultan, he could profit immensely from the boom in the shell trade, and the short-haul transport to Ceylon could yield high profits with a minimal risk to the ships and crews.

The ships arrived in Colombo and Galle with the south-western monsoon, September to November, loaded with cowries and dried fish. The former were traded with the Company, the latter with private individuals on the island, before returning to the Maldives with the change of monsoon in December or January<sup>47</sup>.

One document offers us a unique view on the Maldivian trade to Ceylon in the year 1763. A list of Maldivian ships that reached the island during that year shows just how substantial Maldivian shipping to Ceylon was in the second half of the eighteenth century. No less than fourteen ships dropped anchor in the Colombo roads, thirteen of them between the end of September and the middle of December. The only other one came via Cochin. It called in at Ceylon only when homeward bound to the Maldives and did not carry any cowries. Of the others, seven had their home port in Male, two in Himitti, two in Tiladummati, one was from "Cendeloettoe" and one from "Maboeda" (the last two places have not been identified). Altogether in just this one year, they imported 7,145 *kotta* or 85,740,000 cowries<sup>48</sup>. This is an astounding number, which gives us a hint of the enormous development of the Maldivian shell industry<sup>49</sup>. It is worth taking note of the fact that these ships carried hardly any cargo other than cowries and *kummala-mas*, the dried fish that makes such an essential contribution to the Lankan and southern Indian cuisine. The total amount of fish carried was equally impressive: 536,000. Their return cargo consisted predominantly of areca nuts, rice, sugar and some spices.

It seems that Ceylon did indeed become the principal destination for Maldivian vessels. Yet, there is some evidence that Maldivian ships continued to frequent other ports, mainly on the west coast of India (Malabar), and very occasionally also in Coromandel and Bengal<sup>50</sup>. In 1731, on what seems to be

<sup>47</sup> See f.i. S. ARASARATNAM (ed.), *Memoir of Julius Stein van Gollennesse Governor of Ceylon 1743-1751 for his Succesor Gerrit Joan Vreeland 28th February, 1751*, Colombo, 1974, p. 52.

<sup>48</sup> Sri Lanka National Archives, Lot 1 (Dutch archives), inv. nr. 3069, Notuulboek, Note of arrivals and departures of Maldivian ships, 1763 (1763 Dec. 31).

<sup>49</sup> Several authors noted that shell fishing was undertaken twice a month. H. C. P. Bell wrote that one person could collect a maximum of 12,000 shells (one *kotta*) in a day. The amount mentioned in the Ceylon shipping list would thus entail at least 7,145 man-days of fishing, not to mention the cleaning, storing, packing and shipment to Male. Hogendorn witnessed the cowrie fishing in 1982 and estimated one day's yield at about 50 kilograms by a group of circa 50 fisherwomen, which is far less than a *kotta* per person per day; HOGENDORN and JOHNSON, *Shell Money of the Slave Trade*, p. 81.

<sup>50</sup> F.i. VOC 2491, Minutes g&c Ceylon, fol. 446 (1740 Jan. 9).

a very rare venture a Maldivian ship arrived in Melaka carrying textiles<sup>51</sup>. This was a late, faint echo of a once thriving connection between the Maldives and other ports in the western ocean basin and the Indonesian Archipelago. This connection had been lost to the Maldivians, due to the Dutch control of the Indonesian spice trade and their restrictive maritime policies. By contrast, we can readily assume that the traditional commercial axis with the south-western coast of India continued to function during the eighteenth century, but this must also have been dealt a blow by the changing political and economic situation in the second half of the eighteenth century, and which must have been exacerbated by Dutch attempts to concentrate the Maldivian trade in Ceylon<sup>52</sup>.

In 1742, a Maldivian vessel coming from Calicut was captured in Cochin by the Dutch, who argued that in his contract with them, the sultan had allowed them the exclusive right to buy cowrie shells<sup>53</sup>. The fact of the matter was that no contract had ever been signed and the sultan was free to send his ships wherever he wished. In the second half of the eighteenth century, the sultan annually sent an ambassador to Cochin, who was coldly received by the Dutch commander, but the Maldivian ships were not refused access to trade. Although on several occasions the Maldivians complained about the low price they received from the Dutch in Ceylon and Malabar, the truth was that there were not many alternatives. It is doubtful if this trade link saw anything like the amount of Maldivian cowries carried to Ceylon and Bengal. Cowries reaching Cannanur, for instance, came mainly from the nearby Laccadives<sup>54</sup>.

There is a dearth of information on the northern and western trade of the Maldives, to Surat, the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea and East Africa. Long-distance trade in this area, whether to or from the Maldives, was certainly disrupted. Growing turmoil in the Arabian Sea severely unsettled the old trading network. The fall of the Safavid Empire in 1722, the decline of the Gujarati network and the demise of Surat as a trade centre, added to the burgeoning piratical enterprises of the Omanis had severe repercussions on shipping in this former commercial domain<sup>55</sup>.

Political disturbances in conjunction with the change in the Indian Ocean mercantile system conspired to push the Maldives on to the margins of the European trading network. Long-distance trade increasingly bypassed the

<sup>51</sup> *GMIX*, pp. 302 and 314 (1732 Feb. 14).

<sup>52</sup> Ashin DAS GUPTA, *Malabar in Asian Trade 1740-1800*, Cambridge, 1967, pp. 104-123.

<sup>53</sup> GALLETTI, VAN DER BURG and GROOT (eds.), *Dutch in Malabar*, p. 20 (memoir Stein van Gollenne, 1743).

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 170 (memoir Moens, 1781).

<sup>55</sup> Ashin DAS GUPTA, "India and the Indian Ocean in the Eighteenth Century", in : Ashin DAS GUPTA and M. N. PEARSON (eds.), *India and the Indian Ocean 1500-1800*, Calcutta etc., 1987, pp. 131-161, esp. pp. 136-140.

Maldives. Practically speaking the “hub” function of Male disappeared in the eighteenth century, as the old trans-Indian Ocean trade, which had linked the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf to Melaka and the Indonesian Archipelago, came to a virtual standstill.

#### CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, we can conclude that at no time did the Dutch win themselves a monopoly position in the cowrie trade. A steady supply of cowries carried on Maldivian ships sailing to Ceylon was only established during the 1720s. Until the mid-eighteenth century the Dutch continued to depend on additional purchases in Bengal and Orissa to supplement their stocks in Ceylon.

We are now able to establish a clearer periodization of the VOC policies : first there was an initial period marked by fairly sporadic purchases which continued up to the late 1690s, when demand rose abruptly ; second, there were two decades characterized by a struggle to keep purchases on a par with the rising demand, cut short by a slump during the 1710s ; third, an interval when demands caught up around 1720, and between 1723 and 1735 attempts were made to inaugurate regular trading voyages to the Maldives ; fourth, from 1735 to ca. 1750, there was a reversion to the situation before 1723, with large acquisitions in both Ceylon and Bengal ; fifth, after a slump and subsequent recovery of demand in Europe in the mid-1760s, increasing reliance was placed on Maldivian shipping to Ceylon.

The Maldives, and in particular their sultan, must have profited enormously from the trade boom. But there was another side to this coin. It appears that the Europeans, in a roundabout way, exercised a heavy and adverse influence on the commercial history of the Maldives. In contrast to the Portuguese, the Dutch, and other European powers from the seventeenth century onwards, were only interested in cowries, not in dominating the atolls *per se* and battenning on tribute. Maldivian commerce was forced to rely more than ever before on the export of its cowries. Due to the shift in the demand for cowries from Asian markets to the Atlantic slave trade, the European trading powers tightened their grip on the Maldivian trade and succeeded in tapping the cowrie trade by raising their prices, without having to exert any strong political interference. The Maldives managed to retain their political independence and enjoy a large amount of commercial freedom.

Hypothetically speaking, the changing position of the Maldives was even more affected by the realignment of the Indian Ocean trade system, due to political and commercial developments. Cowrie shipping run by Maldivians themselves concentrated on Ceylon. The other important connection, Bengal, was covered by Bengali merchants, and English, French and Ostend country-traders. Maldivian shipping failed to keep pace with the expanding Bengal trade and lost its advantage in that direction. Although Maldivian trade retained

a foothold on the south-west coast of India, its scope grew more and more limited. Eastward trade from the Maldives, beyond Ceylon, was increasingly crippled and the trade nexus with Melaka disrupted. We are less well informed about the Maldivian activities in the western basin. However, there is no evidence for the continuation of large-scale shipping to Surat and the Red Sea ports. The Maldives were marginalized in the shipping network of the Indian Ocean, which is glaringly apparent when compared to their palmy days between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries.

WILLEM BOLTS  
INDIA REGAINED AND LOST  
INDIAMEN, IMPERIAL FACTORIES  
AND COUNTRY-TRADE  
(1775-1785)

BY

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The Ostend Company, which had been too successful for her rivals, was sacrificed as the peace offering in the cold war between Austria and the anti-Habsburg league. The octroi, initially suspended (1727) for a period of seven years, was finally withdrawn in 1731. Nevertheless a few ships, clandestinely fitted out in Cádiz, sailed under false colours (Prussia, Poland) <sup>1</sup>. In this manner the active trade of the Austrian Netherlands to the East-Indies was provisionally brought to an end <sup>2</sup>. From then on, the Ostend Company confined herself to passive investments, stopping her activities altogether only in 1774 <sup>3</sup>.

She had only just got dissolved, when the so-called "Asiatic Association" was established in Antwerp (1775) <sup>4</sup>. This trading partnership was a truly international organization. Initiator was the Dutch-born Willem Bolts, veteran of the English East India Company in Bengal, but fallen into disgrace because

<sup>1</sup> In spite of all his shortcomings, the most valuable publication about the diplomatic and commercial activity of the Ostend Company still remains M. HUISMAN, *La Belgique commerciale sous l'empereur Charles VI. La Compagnie d'Ostende*, Brussels-Paris, 1902.

<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless the factory of Banquibazar, the Ostend trading post in Bengal, continued his operations until about 1745. J. PARMENTIER, *De holle compagnie. Smokkel en legale handel onder Zuidnederlandse vlag in Bengalen (ca 1720-1744)*, Hilversum, 1992.

<sup>3</sup> L. MICHIELSEN, *Het einde van de Oostendse Compagnie*, in : "Bijdragen tot de Geschiedenis" (Antwerpen), 28 (1937), pp. 137-142.

<sup>4</sup> F. VON POLLACK-PARNAU, *Eine österreichisch-ostindische Handelscompagnie (1775-1785). Ein Beitrag zur österreichischen Wirtschaftsgeschichte unter Maria-Theresia und Joseph II*, Stuttgart, 1927 (V.S.W.G., Beiheft 12).

of his egregious behaviour, especially after the publication in the early months of 1772 of his *Considerations on Indian Affairs...*, a pamphlet in the form of a sustained and copiously documented attack on Clive, his associates and his successor<sup>5</sup>. Bolts now set up a combine with an unscrupulous Antwerp promoter, the merchant-banker Count Charles de Proli, son of a former director of the old Ostend Company<sup>6</sup>. Bearing in mind his own rehabilitation, Bolts sought to reopen an indirect East India trade for the Austrian Netherlands under the imperial flag. The use of Trieste and Leghorn as home ports meant a mere cover-up to by-pass the Anglo-Austrian agreement prohibiting the revival of the Ostend Company.

Bolts intended to integrate the Asiatic Association as quickly as possible under the rivalling European trading companies. His sound experience in the service of the East India Company led him to a double strategy: first he would try to obtain a firm footing in East-Africa (Delagoa Bay), on the Indian West-Coast (Malabar) as well as on the Nicobar Islands; next, from these points of support he was going to participate in the “country-trade”<sup>7</sup>. Meanwhile Bengal and China remained in the background, until further notice anyway.

Fitted out under the imperial flag, the “Joseph & Theresia” left the Toscan port of Leghorn in Sept. 1776. Bolts not only acted as the captain of the ship but also as commander — holding the grade of lieutenant-colonel — to the 25 Austrian soldiers on board. In his rank of imperial officer the Indian princes were supposed to hold him considerably more official respect and he also would be guaranteed a certain diplomatic immunity to the British. François Ryan accompanied them as supercargo<sup>8</sup>.

We do not have a clear picture of the real apparel costs, since in the bookkeeping as such they are combined with accomodation expenses during the voyage. Bolts himself did not provide any capital: he exclusively brought in merchandise supplied by the Austrian government and besides for the greater part guaranteed by the Proli Bank.

The outward cargo — of which there are no invoices to be found — was high diverse: heavy metals (iron and steel, copper, lead in blocks and plates) from the state mines in the Austrian Succession Lands. Firearms were genuine “strategic” merchandise, since they were used as exchange money in order to

<sup>5</sup> N. L. HALLWARD, *William Bolts, a Dutch adventurer under John Compagny*, Cambridge, 1920, pp. 115-131. P. J. MARSHALL, *East Indian Fortunes. The British in Bengal in the 18th century*, Oxford, 1976, pp. 136-138.

<sup>6</sup> H. HOUTMAN-DE SMEDT, *Charles Proli. Antwerps zakenman en bankier (1723-1786). Een biografische en bedrijfshistorische studie*, Brussels, 1983, pp. 136-139.

<sup>7</sup> F. BABUDIERI, *Trieste et les intérêts autrichiens en Asie aux XVIII<sup>e</sup> et XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles*, in: M. MOLLAT (éd.), *Sociétés et compagnies de commerce en Orient et dans l'Océan Indien*, Paris, 1970, pp. 653-657.

<sup>8</sup> HALLWARD, *op. cit.*, pp. 136-140.

obtain concessions from the Indian authorities. The imperial arsenals supplied nearly 14,000 “fusils de garnison” of moderate quality and Bolts laid hand on still another lot of 4,000 rifles and 132 canons, as well as ammunition and gunpowder. At the intermediate stop at Cádiz silvercoins were presumably stocked <sup>9</sup>.

The “Joseph & Theresia”, facing an exceptionally long voyage of 56 months, first headed for Surat. The Cambay Gulf was reputed to be a zone with comparative freedom of trade. However, to Bolts’ detriment the British influence was quite strong, since the E.I.C. had put him on the black list, seeking by all means to boycott his plans. The local “nabab” counted very little and the Maratha’s controled the hinterland. For the time being, they showed a pro-English attitude. Surat however was of some importance as storage yard for calicoes and as bridge-head for the trade with the Persian Gulf.

In Surat, Bolts and his wife were for about five months the guests of the French consul Anquetil de Briancourt <sup>10</sup>, while sick officers and sailors were accomodated in the countriseat, the so-called “French Garden”. Carrying consular letters of recommendation Bolts first took his ship to Gogha (in the Gujarat peninsula) where he was warmly welcomed, making him decide to choose it for his future residence. He concluded a commercial agreement with a certain Ch. Williams, who anyway afterwards deserted to Muscat and Persia, leaving Bolts with a financial bleeding of 200,000 rupiahs. Gogha came under the authority of Ahmadabad, in turn depending upon the Maratha’s. For that reason in nov.-dec. 1777 Bolts travelled to the court in Poona in order to obtain a concession. Since the French too were anxious to possess a factory in Gogha, Bolts negociated in Poona in concertation with the French emissary. Bolts, his mothertongue so to speak being English, was fluent in French, Persian and Urdu as well. So he was able to negotiate personally without the help of an interpreter. However his approach failed and hence he returned empty-handed via Bombay to Surat. Next Bolts sent a delegate (Jean Clément) to the isle of Sandy (southwards from Surat) and this representative obtained commercial rights as well as a territorial concession ; nevertheless these privileges were not valorized.

Now Bolts, after a short halt in Bombay, sailed to Goa. The Portuguese granted him commercial facilities at their key-points Damão and Diu, where Bolts had left some agents. The incident however in the African Delagoa Bay, next to diplomatic pressure by the English, made this agreement null and void.

<sup>9</sup> G. BOLTS, *Recueil de pièces authentiques relatives aux affaires de la ci-devant Société Impériale Asiatique de Trieste gérées à Anvers*, Antwerp, 1787. Municipal Archives Antwerp/Bankrupt’s Assets (SAA/IB), 1717-18, fitting out of “Joseph et Thérèse” (Leghorn, 1776).

<sup>10</sup> The reconstruction of Bolts’ stay and transactions on the west coast of India is mainly based upon the consulate diary and diplomatic correspondance of Briancourt, French consul at Surat (1774-79), published by V. G. HATALKAR, *French records relating to the history of the Marathas*, 2 vols, Bombay, 1976, *passim*.

From now on, Bolts' principal target was the Coast of Malabar, producing spices (pepper, cinnamon), dye-wood (sandal- and sapanwood), ebony, rice and betel nuts. On the coastline there were a few small kingdoms to be found, under the hegemony of Haider Ali Khan of Mysore <sup>11</sup>. This sultan was strongly opposed to foreign preponderance, lived on bad terms with the English and closely superintended the European coastal factories. Bolts nevertheless realised commercial bases were indispensable : factories could stock goods — Indian products delivered by contract and by means of advances — as well as European merchandise, pending a favourable market. Thus the ships had to anchor only for a very short period.

Bolts, having thoroughly prospected the whole west coast between Gogha and Calicut, considered the constellation to be favourable : Bolts and the sultan found the English to be an opponent they had in common. Bolts had fire-arms and ammunition at his disposal, these being highly in demand among the sultan's European mercenaries. Equipped with imperial letters of recommendation and at the invitation of Ali Haider Khan himself, Bolts went to negotiate in Mysore.

The mission turned out to be a success. His "Compagnie allemande" gained three "firmans" (farmans) in which equality with the remaining companies and above all areas for trading posts were granted. Bolts exclusively aimed at commercial concessions and from the very start excluded every possible military garrison. The imperial main factory was set up in Mangalore, a busy town, home port of Haider Ali's navy, a staple for rice and above all supplying the very best of pepper. This trading post was equipped with a warehouse, a chapel and disposed of a small sloop. There was a resident <sup>12</sup> to be found, a writer and a chaplain. The second concession was located at Karwar. It was distinctly larger but further away from the sea ; a house was built there for the resident. The third factory was situated in Baliapatam (south of Mangalore) and it was founded in order to produce cane sugar and rum, for which the necessary presses and kettles were brought over from Europe.

Meanwhile the "Joseph & Theresia", without Bolts on board, had sailed to the Nicobar Isles to take possession of the archipelago <sup>13</sup>. From there she set off for Madras on the Coromandel Coast. Here too the European presence was intensive and highly diverse. Bolts intended to call upon foreign commission merchants. In order to find a convenient return freight he aimed at Pondicherry and further on Chandernagore in Bengal. Exactly like in Surat he drew the

<sup>11</sup> D. FORREST, *Tiger of Mysore. The life and death of Tipu Sultan*, London, 1970.

<sup>12</sup> Recently we discovered the private papers (1781-85) — containing business news, political information and personal accounts — of the main resident on the Malabar Coast. We hope to use it in a forthcoming publication on the imperial factories in Western India.

<sup>13</sup> R. WELLENS, *Un projet de colonisation des Îles Nicobares à la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, in : "Archives, Bibliothèques et Musées de Belgique", 32 (1961), pp. 32-40.

French card. In the course of the years 1779-80 the ship once more touched at Goa, Bombay, Tranquebar, Madras, Calcutta and Madras again, this time with Bolts aboard.

During his stay in India, that lasted over two years, Bolts organized a number of maritime campaigns which roughly spoken covered two fields : on one hand the "country-trade" as such and on the other hand the — sometimes indirect — return-trade to Europe.

In agreement with a Portuguese salaried supercargo and with the help of French and English captains, about five fittings-out were organized from Surat and Bombay to East-Africa (Mozambique and the Baseruto Isles). Rice and brandy were bartered for negro-slaves, sold on Mauritius and in the Cape Colony. From the imperial factory in the Delagoa Bay, ivory, pearls, tortoise- and other shells were brought back to Surat, Bombay or Damão <sup>14</sup>. From Madras a small unit was sent via Pegu to the Nicobar Isles, but this turned mainly out to be a stoeship.

In league with Andrew Reid, former governor of the English factory in Bombay, Bolts sent a big ship (700 tons) to China. After a fake sale and with Reid on board as supercargo, the ship sailed to Canton under the English colours. There the imperial flag was hoisted. The Asiatic Association was only moderately implicated in the operation (10.4% of the fitting-out costs) while nearly 90% was financed by means of bottomry bonds. This money was raised in Bombay by so-called "agency houses" — among which Hunter — specialized in illegal money transfer to Europe <sup>15</sup>. Bolts, in lack for liquid means after the Williams affair and the equipment of the factories, gained 17% freightage on his "port permis" (free transport). Next to that, he probably received bribes. Indeed, the imperial flag was in fact misused to camouflage an English fitting out, in turn repatriating personal capital disguised in bottomry bonds. After an intermediate call in Cádiz of one and a half month, the ship arrived at Leghorn with a load of Chinese and Indian goods, among which calicoes and raw Bengal silk. The enterprise ended with a small deficit (1.5%), but in order to avoid any legal proceedings the Proli group considered it to be necessary to take over all of the bottomry bonds as well as the company share.

A variant of this operation was worked out in Madras, this time the destination being Bengal. Again the Asiatic Association was only moderately interested with a little more than 10% of the return-cargo, consisting of merchandise at freight transported for third parties. Presumably this was just another cover-up for a sophisticated transfer of private fortunes on behalf of

<sup>14</sup> A. SMITH, *Delagoa Bay and the trade of South-Eastern Africa*, in : R. GRAY & D. BIRMINGHAM, *Pre-Colonial African Trade*, Oxford, 1970, pp. 279-280 and 283-283. L. M. PAIVA MANSO (Visconde de), *Memoria sobre Lourenço Marques (Delagoa Bay)*, Lisbon, 1870, pp. 83-85.

<sup>15</sup> Cfr. S. B. SINGH, *European agency houses in Bengal (1783-1839)*, Calcutta, 1966.

“servants” of the Western companies. For her own account the Asiatic Association unloaded in Leghorn Bengal salpetre, piece goods and dye-wood.

Still more suspicious was the fitting out from the Houghly-river, an operation essentially already planned in 1776 under the Toscan colours. By order of Bolts, his supercargo Fr. Ryan sent a former “country-ship” with an English captain and manned by Indian sailors to Europe. The load belonged for the greater part to Bolts, who had borrowed money there for that purpose. Other interested parties were the directors of the Dutch and Danish factories, located respectively in Chinsura and Frederiksnagore (alias Serampore). The home-cargo, consigned to Leghorn and Cádiz, also consisted of saltpetre (used as ballast), calicoes and dye-wood. However the ship was seized into Isle de France (Mauritius) and could only be recuperated after many years of proceedings.

Eventually the “Joseph & Theresia”, together with Bolts, returned to Leghorn. Again the home-freight consisted of saltpetre, calicoes from Madras, ebony and dye-wood, but strangely enough no Malabar-pepper, except for a few drugs (cardamom). And once more the Asiatic Association showed hardly any interest at all (10.8%) and almost the whole of the cargo came at freight for the account of business companies from Leghorn and of English and French firms, among others a house from Pondicherry, with a branch in Lorient. Because of the chaotic accountancy, the ultimate balance can not be figured out at all.

Dissatisfied with Bolts’ performances, the Antwerp stockholders, by common agreement, took over the East-Indian possessions of the Asiatic Association in August 1781. With these they paid their deposit in a remodeled “Asiatic Company”, a bookkeeping trickery so to speak. One year later, at Nantes, a ship was fitted out with China as ultimate destination, but with the mission also to provision on the outbound voyage the factories on the coast of Malabar and the settlement at Nicobar. Among the passengers was an inspector, the military captain Willem Immens, accompanied by about ten new servants, in view of reinforcing the factory-staff. In Mangalore brandy and some Bordeaux-wine was unloaded. However, the larger part was discharged in Goa (brandy, wine, oil and cheese) and Bombay in particular, where bars of iron, clothes, marine stores, gunpowder, ammunition and a few guns were consigned to D. Scott, an Englishman. Immens, who behaved like an inexperienced supercargo, delayed the sale till the rainy season, a decision that costed him three months storage rent and 37% minor value.

Worse still was the situation in the factories as such. In spite of a raise in wages, the staff remained as envious and discontent as before. Some of them even deserted to join the English or the Indian nabab. The final blow occurred when the neutral imperial factories got entangled in the military conflict between, on the one hand, the English troops and, on the other hand, the sultan of Mysore and his son Tipu, together with their French allies. The English

general Matthews occupied Mangalore and seized the firearms found in the factory warehouse. The staff evacuated to Goa. Karwar too was taken in, but here the personnel stuck to their post. Moreover, the factory was reinforced by additional staff, although it repeatedly lacked funds. After Bolts' departure, the Baliapatam post had taken up smuggling, among others for the account of the English and consequently appeared to be left in peace. However, the rajah of Charical looted and demolished the place, while the captured resident was only released for a heavy ransom.

Early 1784 sultan Tipu reconquered Mangalore from the English. Inspector Immens went to negotiate in Caula about the restoration and maintenance of the factories. He reached an agreement with the sultan, at the condition of substantial supplying of arms (300 canons and 600 guns) and the sending of armourers to Mysore. Nevertheless, the maritime traffic under the imperial flag to the Malabar coast remained insignificant, which eventually got to rouse the nabab's suspicion.

In his final report (Dec. 1785) Immens pointed out the poor chances of the factories to survive at all<sup>16</sup>. Therefore he stipulated the following three arguments : because of the English occupation having violated the imperial neutrality, the war situation had been taken little advantage of ; chronic lack of funds and quarreling employees paralysed the efficient functioning ; only the vague prospect of at least two company-ships per year could prevent bankruptcy at all.

Bolts himself had put a lot of energy and money in the acquiring of the trading bases. He considered them to be a springboard for a lucrative "country-trade". However, by applying himself to organizing clandestine transfer of capital in collaboration with English, Dutch and Danish company-servants, he neglected the purely East-Indian commercial activities for the benefit of his own company. Pursuit of gain for himself and lust of revenge regarding the E.I.C. were in fact his main motives. Bolts still fought a couple of rearguard actions against the newly established Asiatic Company, applying herself to the China-trade, but he did not play an active role any more.

<sup>16</sup> Rapport présenté par Mr. Immens de sa commission d'inspecteur dans l'Inde à Messieurs les commissaires préposés à la Compagnie Asiatique de Trieste (Anvers, 18 Déc. 1785).



## II. ASIA



# DUTCH FACTORIES IN ASIA (1600-1800) : BRIDGEHEADS OF POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL INTERACTION <sup>1</sup>

BY

Jur VAN GOOR

A fictitious traveller of extraordinary longevity, who had lived long enough to make the same voyage to the East in the years 1600 and 1800, would undoubtedly have been astonished at the bewildering multitude of changes which had taken place in the interim between his two excursions. The dodo <sup>2</sup> had disappeared from Mauritius, as a result of sailors foraging for meat, and of the importation of pigs and dogs into a predator-free environment ; the north coast of Java around Japara had been deforested to provide materials for the shipyards and the houses of Batavia ; and the traveller's eye would also have been drawn to the magnificent forts of Batavia, Jaffna, Colombo and Galle, and the new settlements they crowned. By 1800 he could have travelled into the interior of Java to visit the splendid estates laid out in places where, two hundred years previously, tigers had roamed. In Ceylon his ear would have caught Dutch loanwords in Sinhalese, like *artapel*, *broeder*, *kelder*, *stoep* and *schoppen* <sup>3</sup>, and in Batavia he could have picked out many other words in Malay of Portuguese and Dutch origin. He would doubtless have been amazed at the multitude of Sunday churchgoers on Amboina, and at the European dress of the chiefs and headman. A visit to the court of Banten or Yogya would have left him surprised at the splendid state such potentates could muster. If he had listened to the *Serat Baron Sakender*, he would have learned that the Dutch had found their way into the Javanese conception of the world order in the guise of a younger branch of the ruling family <sup>4</sup>. He might have been

<sup>1</sup> A first draft of this paper was written at the NIAS (Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study) at Wassenaar in 1992-93.

<sup>2</sup> *Raphus cucullatus*.

<sup>3</sup> P. B. SANNASGALA, *Sinhala Vocables of Dutch Origin*, Colombo, 1976.

<sup>4</sup> SARTONO KARTODIRDJO, *The Baron Sakender story : mythical aspects of Javanese historiography*, in : ID., *Modern Indonesia : Transition and Transformation*, Yogyakarta, 1984, pp. 209-225.

surprised to see Dutchmen depicted in Thai manuscripts and temple paintings, taking part in a battle armed with a telescope and a gun, conspicuously instruments of another civilization<sup>5</sup>. The emulation of Western things is still visible today in the Sultan of Yogya's bodyguard, turned out in 18th century European dress. On his return to Europe, major themes in our traveller's yarns would have been the impact and change wrought by the Dutch.

Yet European factories in Asia in the 17th and 18th centuries were, more often than not, small settlements set in a sea of people from a quite different cultural, religious, linguistic, and political background. Although the Dutch East India Company (VOC, 1602-1796) was a large organization, which during the 18th century had more than 20,000 men on average on its payroll in Asia, that staff was spread rather thinly. The factory was a minority affair<sup>6</sup>. The factory was the result of the interplay between local and European power, and of economic demands from both sides. The cultural impact depended on the political and economic relationship, and on the existing cultural disposition. Only those elements that were new and useful to either society were assimilated.

The use of the word bridgehead has no military connotations. Although the VOC was involved in many wars, first with the Portuguese and other Europeans, and later with Asian peoples, it always remained a trading organization. War was more costly than peace. The term bridgehead has been chosen to indicate another concept: were the factories indeed places in which cultural exchange apart from trade took place? If so, which factors were involved, and how can these processes be understood? Can special local circumstances explain the transfer, or was it the existence of certain cultural patterns? Equally important is the question of which groups or individuals were instrumental in the exchange, and what they achieved by the process. In numerical terms, it was more feasible for Europeans to adapt to local usages, rather than trying to introduce innovations. The VOC first and foremost was a trading company, more interested in regular commerce than in "princely adventures" in alien lands, a phenomenon which underlines the general Dutch inclination to accommodate to local circumstances in the areas they came to trade with. Because of its profit-seeking character, missionary ideals or any eagerness to export European modes of thinkings were not only alien to the Company, but would not have been in accordance with the expectations of its founders.

The establishment of a New Netherlands overseas was not the first aim. Except in the South African Cape, and on the nutmeg-producing island of Banda, nowhere in the entire area which had been granted to the Company

<sup>5</sup> Dhiravat NA POMBEJRA, *Court, Company and Campong: Essays on the VOC Presence in Ayutthaya*, Ayutthaya Historical Study Centre Occasional Paper, No. 1, p. 26.

<sup>6</sup> Holden FURBER, *Rival Empire of Trade in the Orient, 1600-1800*, Minneapolis, 1976, chapter 7; J. VAN GOOR, *De Nederlandse koloniën: geschiedenis van de Nederlandse expansie, 1600-1975*, 3rd ed., The Hague, 1994, chapter 3 and 4.

in its charter did the Dutch found settlement colonies. In time the cities of Batavia and Colombo grew into something akin to settlement colonies, each with a few thousand European inhabitants. Of the range of examples of Dutch adaptability to local circumstances, Japan showed the subtle limits of Dutch compliance. Among the regulations they accepted was a complete abstention from any profession of their religion during their stay in Japan. The Shogunate had laid down strict rules for foreign trade and trading communities, in order to keep a close watch on the ideas and materials which might arrive in the country. Despite the fact that these rules were enforced until the end of the Dutch presence in Japan, the effect of their being there was a gradual infiltration of Western science and technology <sup>7</sup>.

In order to assess the influence of the Dutch East India Company on its Asian surroundings, we shall examine examples of political, economic and cultural interaction. The discussion will start with the factors that explain the emergence of the Dutch as a political power in the Indonesian archipelago. Economic interaction will be dealt with in a comparison of nutmeg cultivation in Amboina with the introduction of coffee to Java. In order to assess the cultural impact, attention will be focussed on the effects of Protestant missionary work in Amboina and in Ceylon. Finally, the factors which enabled or hampered the transfer of new ideas will be discussed. The underlying assumption is that the character of the factory was the result of interaction between the local situation and certain specific qualities of the Dutch East India Company.

#### THE DUTCH FACTORY

In both its formal position and its external appearance, the factory was a mixture of elements taken from both societies. The specifically Dutch qualities lay in the business acumen, the continuity and the longevity of the VOC. Two characteristics of the Dutch factories need to be stressed: first the great variety in their appearance, and second, the fact that the factories were not single, isolated establishments, but components in a vast commercial network that stretched from Basra in the West to Japan in the East. That trade network was the backbone of the Dutch presence, in which the factories formed only the constituent parts. The wide variation in appearance was a consequence of the great differences in formal status. Some factories, such as those at Surat, Hooghly or Japan, depended for their existence on the relationship with princes or rulers. In other areas like Amboina, Banda, Ceylon and Java, where the Dutch had conquered territory, they acted as lords of the land, and exacted

<sup>7</sup> Yoko NAGAZUMI, *From Company to Individual Company Servants: Dutch trade in Japan in the eighteenth century*, paper read to the Van Leur Seminar, Leiden, 26 March 1993.

the fine spices as part of the local taxation system. The factories in India were trading stations for the procurement of export goods like textiles. In Palembang, Jambi and Banten in the Indonesia archipelago the Dutch had obtained monopoly rights for the purchase of pepper.

The size of the factory and the composition of the staff depended on the character of the station. In areas in which the Dutch wielded political power, the staff was much larger, especially on the military side, than in purely trading establishments. The size of the staff complement was not directly related to the factory's profits or losses : trading stations like Deshima in Japan or Surat in India showed a large turnover and high direct profits, but supported only a small staff.

#### LONG-TERM CHARACTERISTICS OF THE VOC

The discussion of the relative merits of the Dutch East India Company has been overshadowed by its financial collapse in 1796, and by the connection between the Company and what is now the state of Indonesia. Liberals in the 19th century attacked the monopoly system ; others considered the VOC's organization into five regional Chambers in the Republic to be an anomaly ; and in this century, serious doubts have been raised about the quality of the book-keeping. It would be a time-consuming task to deal with all these questions, even at a superficial level ; however, it can be asserted that at least part of the criticism reflects contemporary views. Some have judged the Company as just a forerunner of modern Indonesia, others have favoured the introduction of a more liberal economic system, or judged the behaviour of the Company servants by the standards of a subsequent age. If one takes into account the limitations of the period, and the way in which the Company's directors solved the problems of finance, communication, control and market manipulation, then the VOC emerges as being in a class of its own <sup>8</sup>.

In the Netherlands, continuity and stability in the organization was assured by the Permanent Secretary, who functioned as an executive director. The managing board of Seventeen Directors, the *Heeren XVII*, was very well informed and acted in a commercially sensible way to solve problems. Compared to other companies founded in the same period, the VOC stood out for its access to capital, and the way it had solved its need for permanent capital through the introduction of permanent shares. It had been founded by the active involvement of the Republic's central government.

In Asia an even more centralized and permanent bureaucracy had been built up, which was able to collect the necessary information on the availability of goods, the development of markets, the activities of competitors, prices,

<sup>8</sup> Femme GAASTRA, *Bewind en beleid bij de VOC, 1672-1702*, Zutphen, 1989.

and the political situation in Asia as well as in Europe. The establishment in Asia owed its stability to the business routine and bureaucratic practice that had been introduced in the first decades of the 17th century. Central to that organization, introduced by Jan Pieterszoon Coen, was the construction of a trade network based on a string of factories in the main Asian ports along the important trade routes. The network was not only important for the purchase of goods for the European market, but also functioned as a trade organization of its own within Asia. The success of the Asian network was so great that in the 17th century it was the main pillar of the Company's profitability. In the 18th century the profits were mainly made in the sale of Asian goods in Europe. The coherence of the trade network was enhanced by the subordination of all factories to the authority of the Governor-General and his Council of the Indies in Batavia. Company representatives in all outlying stations were obliged to report regularly to Batavia, and as a result the Council of the Indies gained a significant lead in local knowledge over its competitors<sup>9</sup>. At the same time, the book-keeping and all the dealing of the outlying factories were under permanent scrutiny. Regularity, predictability, stability, good organization and financial credit-worthiness were among the main factors which explain the long-standing success of the VOC. All these factors corresponded with business practice in the Republic.

In Asia it was vital to be able to adapt to local circumstances, and in this respect an innovation was the introduction of long-term contracts in economic and political relations. The history of the long-standing Dutch relations with Siam (now Thailand)<sup>10</sup>, Palembang, Perak, Banten, Ternate, Tidore and the central Javanese states offers numerous examples of regular renewal of contracts on the death of the ruler or when circumstances forced a change of terms. Although it is clear that neither party fulfilled the contract to the letter, the main stipulations were observed. Both parties used the contract to make the other honour its promises. The acceptance of the contract was a means of defining respective positions. The relationship also was circumscribed in the respect shown in forms of address: the style of address used in correspondence reflected the formal relationship expressed in the contracts.

#### A MERCHANT BECOMES KING

"They have many castles with much trouble and little profit", wrote an Englishman at the beginning of the 17th century of the Dutch competition

<sup>9</sup> J. VAN GOOR, *India and the Indonesia Archipelago from the Generale Missiven der VOC (Dutch East India Company)*, in: "Itinerario", 1992, no. 2, pp. 23)29.

<sup>10</sup> The Dutch were the only European traders who stayed in Ayuthaya from 1613 till 1765. They were not ejected like the English and the French in 1688, but were allowed to stay, thanks to their support of King Phetracha during the succession struggle.

in the spice trade<sup>11</sup>. These remarks were not exceptional: the Portuguese were subjected to the same criticism in earlier times<sup>12</sup>. Both during its existence and after its demise, the VOC has been blamed for not having stuck to its original plan of remaining a trading company. Within half a century of its foundation in 1602, the VOC had turned from a trading organization into a territorial power in Ceylon, on the Malabar coast and in the Indonesia archipelago. The many forts and the men to defend them were said to consume too large a share of the profits of what was essentially a merchant company. The question raised here will not be whether these critics were right or wrong. The end of the VOC and the end of Dutch power in the archipelago did not coincide. In the eyes of contemporaries the role of the Dutch had not finished in 1796, when the VOC was taken over by the Dutch state: the Indonesian allies only changed sides in 1811, after the British victory<sup>13</sup>. The question therefore should rather be how a relative outsider in such a short time became part of the political landscape of South-East Asia. Was the VOC an exceptional phenomenon, or should its rise and long history be explained by indigenous factors? Or is it the case that there was a combination of both, which made for a new situation?

In a broad vision, C. D. Cowan attempted to interpret the long-term aspects of the history of maritime South-East Asia<sup>14</sup>. In his discourse on the power centres which once dominated the Malacca Straits, Cowan listed in chronological order Srivijaya, Majapahit, the Dutch East India Company and Singapore. Srivijaya's as well as Majapahit's rule consisted of a central core area surrounded by a number of vassal states and allies. In order to maintain their superior position both had to rely on a strong navy. Another characteristic is that, alongside these great powers, a number of smaller states remained intact. After these two, Batavia (here used as a *pars pro toto*) became the new power dominating the states around the Java Sea. In this representation, the relationship between the Dutch and the Indonesian states was more or less comparable to the earlier one under Majapahit. The coming of the Europeans added a new player to the political system, but did not change the rules. Cowan was of the opinion that the presence of the VOC was an addition rather than an innovation. The reactions of the Indonesian princes are in accordance with this

<sup>11</sup> G. N. CLARK and W. J. M. VAN EYSINGA, *The Colonial Conferences between England and the Netherlands in 1613 and 1615*, 2 vols., Leiden, 1940-51, 1, p. 126.

<sup>12</sup> Sanjay SUBRAHMANYAM, *The Portuguese Empire in Asia, 1500-1700*, London/New York, 1993, pp. 68 and 69.

<sup>13</sup> J. VAN GOOR, *Vertraagd machtsverval: de Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie in de Indonésische Archipel*, in: J. AALBERS and A. P. VAN GOUDOEVER (eds.), *Machtsverval in de International Context*, Groningen, 1986, pp. 37-53.

<sup>14</sup> C. D. COWAN, *Continuity and change in the international history of maritime South East Asia*, in: "Journal of South East Asian History", XI (1968), pp. 1-11.

idea. The Company was treated as an important power, interesting for its naval, economic and political potential. At the height of its power the possession of the VOC consisted of a conglomerate of directly ruled territories, vassal states, monopoly rights and alliances. Whether to call this a pre-modern, an Asian or an Indonesian state is a matter of terminology ; in any case it was the most important political entity in the archipelago.

In that archipelago a multitude of new states had emerged during the 15th century along the trading routes from the western tip of Sumatra to the Moluccan islands. Both between and within these states an intensive struggle for power was going on. The straits of Malacca were highly contested between Malacca, Aceh and Johore. The kings of Thailand, Mataram, and the Dutch East India Company all claimed control in that area. The proceeds of trade in many harbour states and river kingdoms were very important for the position of their rulers. To maintain a strong grip on the profits and to prevent others from tapping the source of wealth and influence was a principal stratagem of any king. Therefore, traders were interesting not only for the opportunity they presented of making deals, but also as possible military supporters and allies <sup>15</sup>. The struggle for the proceeds of trade deeply affected the rulers' power. Merchants often rose to eminent positions at court due to their importance for the king as dealers with foreigners, who brought in wealth and status goods. Traders from overseas who did not have a powerbase within the kingdom were much more dependent on the king than were his own subjects. A large outside trading company which brought in cash and could handle large amounts of export goods was attractive for the same reasons. On their first arrival in several harbour principalities, the Dutch were either welcomed as traders or potential military allies, or kept out because of Portuguese intrigues <sup>16</sup>.

Seen from an economic and political point of view, the situations in Ceylon, the Malabar coast and in the Indonesian archipelago were strikingly similar in their structural aspects. In the first two in particular, the Dutch fought a long battle with the Portuguese over who would reap the fruits of the cinnamon and pepper trade. In the archipelago, the Portuguese only possessed strongholds in the Moluccas and in Malacca. The battle for monopoly control of the fine spices was fought with English and Asian traders in the eastern archipelago. In all areas, by the second half of the 17th century, the Dutch had become the first European power. Elsewhere in Asia, on the Coromandel Coast, in Bengal, Persia, Japan and Thailand, they mainly acted as traders.

<sup>15</sup> See for example J. VAN GOOR, *Seapower, Trade and State-Formation : Pontianak and the Dutch*, in : J. VAN GOOR (ed.), *Trading Companies in Asia, 1600-1830*, Utrecht, 1986, pp. 83-107.

<sup>16</sup> This topic has been dealt with more extensively in VAN GOOR (ed.), *Trading Companies*, "Introduction" ; Reinout Vos, *Koopman en koning : de VOC en de Maleise tinhandel, 1740-1800*, diss. Utrecht, 1990 ; an English edition was published in 1993 under the title *Gentle Janus, merchant prince : the VOC and the tightrope of diplomacy in the Malay world, 1740-1800*, Leiden, 1993.

The conquered areas had been part of the Portuguese Estado da India, and also had in common a rather weak and internally divided political structure, highly susceptible and open to outside forces. On the Malabar Coast a host of potentates could be found, waiting for opportunities to enhance their position<sup>17</sup>. In Ceylon, only the King of Kandy had survived the Portuguese intrusion. This relatively backward inland kingdom achieved a major impetus from being the only Sinhalese and Buddhist monarchy remaining on the island. In 1602, its King Vimala Dharma Suriya I offered cinnamon to the first Dutchmen to arrive in order to lure them into an alliance against the Portuguese. The same happened in Malabar, where the Zamorin of Calicut tried to barter pepper for military support<sup>18</sup>. The global battle with the Iberian monarchies during the Eighty Years War (1568-1648) and thereafter was an additional cause of the establishment of Dutch power.

It would be a mistake to assume that offers of economic advantages in exchange for political support ceased after the establishment of Dutch power in the archipelago. Whether in 1700, 1780, 1820 or in 1900, as long as independent states existed in the archipelago, examples can readily be cited in which princes, sultans and rajas offered their country's proceeds to the *Kompenie* (the name often given to the Dutch) in exchange for protection. Offers of a piece of land on which the Dutch were requested to build a fort or stronghold to guard the *kraton* were not uncommon. Because of the political connotations the Dutch did not always accept every proposal. Using economic means to create political relations was a structural element of South-East Asian political life. Trade was subordinated to political goals, a situation that explains the insecure position of merchants in many South-East Asian harbour kingdoms: there were very few laws in existence for the protection of traders<sup>19</sup>.

The repeated renewals of offers of alliance, vassalage and friendship illustrate not only the permanent attraction of the connection with the *Kompenie*, but also the primacy of politics. In island South-East Asia the VOC may have been a trading organization, but it was approached as a political body. The consequences of this peculiar situation in the historical literature have often been described in terms of the Dutch being "drawn into" Indonesian politics<sup>20</sup>. The relation with Mataram is a good example of how this dependence developed. Prior to 1680, Mataram was considered the supreme

<sup>17</sup> H. K. 'S JACOB, *De Nederlanders in Kerala, 1663-1701: de memories en instructies betreffende het Commandement Malabar van de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*, The Hague, 1976, pp. XXIV-XXXV.

<sup>18</sup> H. TERPSTRA, *De Nederlanders in Voor-Indië*, Amsterdam, 1947, p. 80.

<sup>19</sup> J. KATHIRITHAMBY-WELLS, *Ethics and Entrepreneurship in Southeast Asia, c. 1400-1800*, in: Karl Anton SPRENGARD and Roderich PTAK (eds.), *Maritime Asia: Profit Maximisation, Ethics and Trade Structure*, Wiesbaden, 1994, pp. 171-189.

<sup>20</sup> See e.g. COWAN, *Continuity and Change*.

ruler of Java, to whom the Dutch paid tribute. During the incessant succession struggles the Dutch were called upon to help. In exchange for assistance, the Dutch position changed from one of tributary, through alliance, into overlordship. This was by no means a one-sided process, for certain Company officials were active in the extension of Dutch territorial control. Nagtegaal has recently advanced the thesis that the Javanese kingdom of Mataram owed its stability for a certain period to the support of the Dutch. When they were no longer able to maintain the position of the ruler, the kingdom fell apart in two new states, Surakarta and Yogyakarta <sup>21</sup>.

A provisional conclusion falls more or less into line with Cowan's conception of Batavia as a central power around the Malacca Straits. On the face of it, the structure of the political system was not strongly affected. All the larger sultanates which had been in existence in the 17th century, like Aceh, Palembang and Banjarmasin, still survived at the beginning of the 19th century. Of the harbour states on the Javanese northern coast, Banten and Cirebon still were ruled by the descendants of their former sultans. The spice islands are in a special category. The age-old and continued existence of a large number of the more prominent Indonesian states around 1800 seemed to be proof of their vitality, yet several of them crumbled in the early part of the 19th century. On closer inspection, however, it seems that many states had become dependent on Dutch support or protection. The sultanates of Banten and Cirebon were abolished with little opposition in the first decades after 1800. For the central Javanese kingdoms the demise came in stages, but with the Java War (1825-1830) came the end of their political existence. The sultanates on Sumatra, Kalimantan and Sulawesi showed more resilience. The Sultans of Ternate and Tidore, who had accepted Dutch sovereignty in the 17th century, were still independent in the arrangement of the internal affairs of their kingdoms, and in exchange for the nutmeg monopoly they still received their yearly allowance <sup>22</sup>. The amount of money paid for spices and pepper which flowed directly into the rulers' coffers should not be underestimated: during the 18th century the Sultan of Banten alone received 12 million *reals* from the Company for pepper and tin, half of which was for himself, with the rest divided between his chiefs and the producers <sup>23</sup>. Cash payments and protection were evidently the golden chains that bound the parties together.

In terms of changes, much had happened between 1600 and 1800 as a consequence of the coming of the VOC. The spice trade had been monopolized

<sup>21</sup> LUC NAGTEGAAL, *Rijden op een Hollandse tijger: de noordkust van Java en de V.O.C., 1680-1743*, diss. Utrecht, 1988.

<sup>22</sup> F. S. A. DE CLERCQ, *Bijdrage tot de kennis der Residentie Ternate*, Leiden, 1890, pp. 160 and 174.

<sup>23</sup> J. BASTIN, *The changing balance of the early Southeast Asian pepper trade*, in: *Essays on Indonesian and Malayan History*, Singapore, 1961, pp. 32-34.

completely. The trade carried by Asian merchants in the archipelago had not been entirely halted, but had probably redirected itself partly to feeder lines, and partly to other areas and products. Buginese and Chinese traders could be encountered everywhere in the archipelago. Riau became a thriving port in the 18th century<sup>24</sup>. The Chinese trade to Batavia was substantial and had found new ports in Kalimantan: Banjarmasin for the procurement of pepper, and the western coast for tin, gold and diamonds<sup>25</sup>. On Java, the rise of Mataram had been halted after 1680, and apart from the Company no new central power in the archipelago had emerged. And entirely new on the scene was the city of Batavia.

Summarizing the effects of the coming of the Dutch in this period, it can be said that, at the nexus of the sea-roads, a new power had established itself, which was acknowledged as the primary political and economic force in the region. The critical point is that although Batavia was treated as an Indonesian power by its neighbours, it also was a well organized trading company. For many rulers, trade not only dictated a careful policy in respect of other states, but also seems to have been an important source of wealth. The support of the Company maintained the integrity of a number of states. New products such as coffee had been introduced, while the growth of others had been given an added impetus. It is here that the question of the impact of the Company on labour relations arises.

#### POLITICAL RELATIONS AND LABOUR RECRUITMENT FOR THE CULTIVATION OF EXPORT PRODUCTS

Systematic studies of Indonesia labour and slavery tend to be of recent date and much remains as yet unresearched. The following remarks, therefore, can only be tentative. One of the issues is the discussion which took place between the wars on the existence of a dual economy in the archipelago. According to the tropical economist J. H. Boeke (1884-1956), the western capitalist and eastern self-sufficient economies were based on different conceptions of economic behaviour. The rationalism behind western economic behaviour was said to be alien to Indonesians. Western profit maximization had to give way to an "eastern" preference for leisure and social activities, and "Indonesian" social values were considered to be a brake on profit maximization<sup>26</sup>. The other main idea that shaped the picture of the organization of labour was D. H. Burger's model of "top-down" penetration of the European

<sup>24</sup> VOS, *Koopman en koning*, pp. 118-126.

<sup>25</sup> VAN GOOR, *Seapower, Trade and State-Formation*, p. 95.

<sup>26</sup> *Indonesian Economics: the Concept of Dualism in Theory and Practice*, The Hague, 1961.

impact on Java<sup>27</sup>. Around 1800, the Company's influence had only reached the regents, the top layer of society, and in Burger's view, only gradually were the lower ranks of the population drawn into the Dutch orbit. The social relations between the chiefs and the population were hardly affected by the Dutch presence before 1800. In order to obtain the produce of the land, the Company needed the chiefs as intermediaries. Partly in consequence of this the chiefs strengthened their economic and political position. Once again, from Burger's work the picture emerges of the Dutch East India Company making use of the existing structure, without bringing about much change. Several questions arise here. First, it has to be asked whether or not Indonesian peasants reacted to economic stimuli in the way expected in the West, and secondly whether the huge money payments by the Company for pepper, coffee, cloves, nutmegs and other products failed to reach a lower echelon than the chiefs and headmen. Another question concerns the organization of large-scale labour.

The greatest direct impact on the position of labourers and the local population occurred in the regions which the Company ruled directly, namely Batavia and its surroundings, and the spice islands of Amboina and Banda. It has been argued that Batavia shared many of the characteristics of a Chinese city<sup>28</sup>. The workforce in the town (apart from Company personnel) consisted mainly of Chinese and slaves. In Batavia's heyday, half the city's inhabitants were slaves, a quarter were Chinese and the rest were made up of miscellaneous groups including Europeans. The remarkable point is that Batavia was not exceptional: Knaap's analysis of Colombo and Kota Ambon during the Dutch era reveals a strong dependence on slave labour there as well<sup>29</sup>. The census of Makassar and its suburb Vlaardingen in 1670 showed the same ratio<sup>30</sup>. Yet it seems too early to draw the conclusion that the new cities dominated by the Dutch introduced slave labour. In his studies of the South-East Asian harbour cities, Reid has come to the conclusion that the great merchants and worthies in these cities had large slave forces at their command<sup>31</sup>. The implication seems to be that in South-East Asia, apart from the immigrant

<sup>27</sup> D. H. BURGER, *De ontsluiting van Java's binnenland voor het wereldverkeer*, Wageningen, 1939.

<sup>28</sup> J. L. BLUSSÉ VAN OUD-ALBLAS, *Strange Company: Chinese Settlers, Mestizo Women and the Dutch in VOC Batavia*, Dordrecht, 1986, pp. 73-97.

<sup>29</sup> G. J. KNAAP, *Europeans, Mestizos and Slaves: the population of Colombo at the end of the seventeenth century*, in: "Itinerario", 5 (1981), no. 2, pp. 84-101; ID., *A City of Migrants: Kota Ambon at the end of the seventeenth century*, in: "Indonesia", 1991, pp. 107-128. See also Remco RABEN, *Facing the Crowd: the urban ethnic policy of the Dutch East India Company, 1600-1800*, in: "Papers for the Second International Symposium on Maritime Studies", 16-20 December 1991, Pondicherry.

<sup>30</sup> W. Ph. COOLHAAS (ed.), *Generale Missiven der VOC*, The Hague, 1971, vol. IV, p. 138.

<sup>31</sup> Anthony REID (ed.), *Slavery, Bondage and Dependence in Southeast Asia*, University of Queensland Press, 1983.

Chinese, no free labour was available, and one of the causes was the shortage of people in general in the area, which sometimes induced rulers to steal people from other countries in order to settle their own lands. Because slavery and slave-raiding were still rampant outside the direct sphere of Dutch interest during the first half of the 19th century, the provision of labour remained difficult. On Java the availability of “free labour” continued to be a problem. The Cultivation System (1830-1870) was based on the use of more or less traditional patterns of labour recruitment by the chiefs.

The availability of free labour is insufficiently researched to allow generalizations. Company sources suggest that, when large groups of workers were needed, the opportunities were not plentiful. The gold-mining experiments undertaken by the VOC on Sumatra were carried out with slaves bought at Madagascar and German miners recruited especially for the job<sup>32</sup>. However, when the mines proved to be insufficiently profitable, they were let to locals, who worked them themselves. The tin-mining on Bangka was mainly a Chinese affair, as were the gold mines on Kalimantan. If the Company needed craftsmen to repair its buildings, it used mainly its own work force; for certain purposes like tile- and brick-making Chinese could be hired, while for other types of work the chiefs’ subjects were sometimes used, as for example in the cutting of palisades for the factory at Jambi<sup>33</sup>. The sources do not allow a further subdivision into followers, debt bondsmen or subjects. On Java, for the cleaning of the canals of Batavia, the sultans of Cirebon sent their subjects<sup>34</sup>. One can imagine that very few free labourers would have offered themselves for this particular job, because of the health risk. At the same time, the coffee boom in western Java was inducing many to go there and earn a living<sup>35</sup>, and the same was the case in the sugar areas, where *bujangs* (young unmarried men) would come to work in the harvest season. In addition, around the Company settlements on the north coast of Java and in Batavia, a group of free labourers came into existence, working for a daily wage in such activities as shipbuilding<sup>36</sup>.

The two most important export crops during the Company’s rule in the archipelago, coffee and cloves, were founded on a mixture of government involvement and inducements for the population. Nutmeg was different, because after the conquest of Banda it was grown on Dutch-run plantations which were worked by imported slaves. Banda was a world of its own. In

<sup>32</sup> VAN GOOR, *Generale Missiven*, vol. IX, pp. 267, 304, 351 and 437.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 94, 154 and 299.

<sup>34</sup> M. HOADLEY, *Slavery, bondage and dependency in pre-colonial Java : the Cirebon-Priangan region, 1700*, in : REID (ed.), *Slavery, Bondage and Dependence*, pp. 90-118.

<sup>35</sup> G. J. KNAAP, *Coffee for Cash. The Dutch East India Company and the expansion of coffee cultivation in Java, Ambon and Ceylon, 1700-1730*, in : VAN GOOR, *Trading Companies*, pp. 33-51.

<sup>36</sup> NAGTEGAAL, *Rijden op een Hollandse tijger*, pp. 194-196.

Amboina, the cloves were grown by the local population, who were obliged by the government to maintain a fixed number of trees<sup>37</sup>. All cloves were bought by the government at a fixed price. After a period of adjustment, the population grew accustomed to the arrangement, to the point of voluntary production. The attraction was the extra income in cash and the possibility of integrating the work into the subsistence farming culture. The chiefs fulfilled a role in the collection of the harvest and the payment for the produce. Production rose more rapidly than the world market could absorb, and the only way of achieving a reduction was to cut down the clove trees. The prices paid to the producers remained the same, at a level higher than in the days before the monopoly.

Coffee cultivation was most successful in western Java, and here the role of the chiefs was even more important. When the government at Batavia wanted to launch an experiment in growing coffee, they handed out the beans to the chiefs, who distributed them to their subjects. The government offered a good price for all coffee delivered, and left the rest to local enterprise. The success superseded all expectations. Within a short time, Java was outproducing Arabia. The incentive of cash payments for a rural population accustomed to subsistence farming was tremendous. The main problem, just as in Amboina, was to be over-production. After a period in which all coffee beans had been bought for the fixed price, the Company felt obliged to reduce prices in order to cut production. In addition, trees were uprooted. In the second half of the 18th century, coffee production again rose dramatically.

The production of commodities for the world market in Ceylon also gave the producers bargaining power *vis-à-vis* the Company. As Governor van Imhoff during his tenure at Ceylon once remarked, "the chimney should smoke for both sides". The aptness of this statement was reflected in the case of the cinnamon peelers and the *mudaliyar* class in the Dutch-governed territory. Annually, before going to the woods, the cinnamon peelers were received by the Governor in Colombo, during what was called the *paresse*. At this meeting, demands were made and prerogatives granted. These could be of a social character, like the election of high-caste headmen, as well as of an economic nature, like payment in cash, or the right to sell certain products. If the Governor did not comply, as happened a few times, the *Salagama* retreated to the woods and went on strike. Their rise in position within the caste system was due to their being irreplaceable. The advantages of the *mudaliyar* group lay in their access to high authority and, when new areas were opened up, in the availability of land. They easily surpassed the Kandyan nobility in wealth.

<sup>37</sup> G. J. KNAAP, *Kruïdnagelen en Christenen : de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie en de bevolking van Ambon, 1656-1696*, Dordrecht, 1987.

The development of cash crops in Amboina and western Java seems to contradict the ideas of Boeke about the way in which the traditional Indonesian world reacted to profit stimuli. This observation could probably be used in a more general review of the European impact upon the South-East Asian world. In the cinnamon case, the Dutch made use of the traditional obligations to the ruler, the rewards of which lay partly in the traditional sphere, partly in cash payment. Money flows were also linked with the alliances throughout the archipelago between the Company and local rulers. Protection and golden chains held the parties together. More studies of the effects of payment in cash on the willingness of the population to work part of their lives as labourers, or to devote part of their land to the production of a market crop, are necessary to clarify the adaptations and changes which took place during the Company's existence.

#### POLITICAL RELIABILITY AND RELIGION

In the Indonesian archipelago as well as in Ceylon, the Dutch achieved a very great degree of political influence. However, Amboina was the only place in the archipelago in which, in the long term, their religion wholeheartedly was accepted by the local population. In 1821, about 30,000 Christians were to be found in Amboina, which amounted to more than half the population. Among them were a substantial number of full church members, who had made a public confession of faith. Churchgoing on Sundays was a major event, both in the capital Kota Ambon and in the villages, for which people dressed carefully<sup>38</sup>. Although certain ministers cast doubt on the seriousness of the local believers, in Amboina Christianity held a central place in life.

In Ceylon, many of the hundreds of thousands of local Protestants who had been counted in 1796 seem to have melted away soon after the British takeover. Five years after the Dutch departure, of 360,000 Sinhalese and Tamils enrolled as Protestants, only 230,000 appeared to be left. This had been ascribed partly to neglect on the part of the English<sup>39</sup>, and perhaps not all of those registered as Christians were true adherents of Protestantism. The English were astonished at those Sinhalese who professed to be Christians and Buddhists at the same time<sup>40</sup>. Many reasons suggest that the Protestant roll's main importance was to enable some kind of account of the population. The position

<sup>38</sup> I. H. ENKLAAR, *Joseph Kam, "Apostel der Molukken"*, The Hague, 1963, pp. 31-41.

<sup>39</sup> James CORDINER, *A Description of Ceylon*, Aberdeen, 1807, pp. 159-163; London, Public Record Office, CO 54-4, fols. 116-140, Letters of the Reverend James Cordiner to Governor North on the state of indigenous Christianity, Jan.-Feb. 1800.

<sup>40</sup> J. Emmerson TENNENT, *Christianity in Ceylon*, London, 1850, p. 67; London, Public Record Office, CO 54-3, North to London, 18 Feb. 1801, fol. 49v; "Holy Emmanuel Church Moratuwa seventy-fifth jubilee memorials 1860-1935", p. 5.

of Catholicism in Sri Lanka was quite different. Although the Dutch had done their best to eradicate the tenets of this creed among the coastal population, they had made little progress. By the middle of the 18th century, due to a mixture of increasing tolerance and the impossibility of stamping it out, they accepted Catholicism's strong position. The deterioration of Protestantism was halted only temporarily in the 19th century by new evangelizing efforts. The over-aggressive attack on Buddhism by British missionaries provoked a vigorous reaction among the leading *bhikkus*, which eventually led to a strong revival of Buddhism. Several new orders were founded, with their own monasteries.

The fate of Protestantism in both Amboina and Sri Lanka can be explained by the political situation. Although the religious outcomes were highly dissimilar — a high percentage of Protestants among the local population in Amboina, but a return to Buddhism and Catholicism in Ceylon, the cultural effects on both islands seem to have been the same.

Both Amboina and Sri Lanka witnessed the emergence of Protestantism as part of the worldwide conflict between the Dutch and the Portuguese. Amboina was only marginally drawn into the Portuguese orbit. East of Malacca their power was concentrated at first in Ternate, and later on in Tidore. The Portuguese possessed a few forts or strongholds in the Indonesian archipelago, one of which was at Ambon. On Sri Lanka they had sunk their roots much deeper. Colombo, Jaffna, Galle and other fortified cities were inhabited by an extensive Portuguese and mixed Asian-Portuguese population. The missionary orders had been able to convert large masses of the coastal population. Boudens estimated that almost all inhabitants of the Jaffna peninsula had been at least nominally converted to the new religion<sup>41</sup>. The Portuguese were driven from Sri Lanka in a drawn-out campaign between 1638 and 1658, when their last stronghold of Jaffnapatnam fell to the Dutch.

The Portuguese establishment at Amboina fell out with the local population around 1600. In 1605, the Amboinese leaders of Hitu requested the assistance of the commanders of the Dutch fleets in the struggle against the common enemy. In 1607, after the victory and as part of their political realignment, the Amboinese at Leitimor discarded the religious links with the Portuguese as well, and asked for instruction in the creed of the Dutch. The number of Catholics was said to be 16,000. In the following years a Dutch religious and educational structure was established, in which local schools played an important role. Prayers, catechisms and later the Bible were translated into Malay. An important circumstance favouring a successful propagation of Protestantism was the absence of any other world religion, for Islam had struck root only in some parts of the island. During the first half of

<sup>41</sup> W. L. A. DON PETER, *Education in Sri Lanka under the Portuguese*, Colombo, 1978, pp. 27-63 ; Robbrecht BOUDENS, *The Catholic Church in Ceylon under Dutch Rule*, Rome, 1957.

the 17th century, the Dutch became the masters of Amboina and the adjacent islands. They were the first power to control the whole area, and they instituted a central government and a degree of local representation in the *Landraden* or councils, which were mainly judicial bodies. Village headmen were the most important link between the Dutch government in Kota Ambon and the local population. Protestantism provided another connection with the Dutch<sup>42</sup>. The English occupation of Amboina, and the lack of Dutch Protestant ministers between 1794 and 1816, did not affect popular religiosity<sup>43</sup>.

In Ceylon the Portuguese had been much more successful than in Amboina with the introduction of Catholicism. The length of their stay helps to explain this state of affairs, as did the special circumstances of the coastal area in which they had settled. Missionary activities were most successful among the fishermen castes along the coast, who were relative outsiders because of their late coming to the island. Another reason which is often given, namely that their occupation included the taking of life and so made them outsiders, is disputed. It is significant that they lived in the area that had to bear the first Portuguese onslaught on the local religions. Catholicism derived its positive attraction from the ritual and forms, which had much in common with local religious practices like the veneration of saints, religious plays and holidays, pilgrimage and holy places. Although it is impossible to plot the course of the conversions in any detail, or to discover the extent of local knowledge of the scriptures (the lack of which was condemned heavily by the Protestant ministers), the tenacity of the Catholic communities in holding to their faith must be seen as proof of the seriousness of its adherents, right up to this day. Catholicism partly derived its strength from having become part of the group identity, an explanation that also seems to hold true for the Amboinese Christians. The religious affiliation between the Christian Amboinese and the Dutch increased the standing and political influence of the Christians at the expense of the Islamic group, which was reduced to relative insignificance. The expansion of Islam took place only in areas outside intensive Dutch control<sup>44</sup>.

After the expulsion of the Portuguese from Ceylon, religion became a matter of politics to the Dutch. Unlike the situation in Amboina, a strong potential source of conflict in Ceylon was present in the King of Kandy, the interior kingdom. The Kandyan kings were Buddhists and Sinhalese, a combination of the two qualities that made them the religious and political leaders of the population of south-west Ceylon. A complicating factor was the legal status of the East India Company. Officially the Portuguese had been driven

<sup>42</sup> KNAAP, *Kruidnagelen*.

<sup>43</sup> ENKLAAR, *Joseph Kam*, p. 34.

<sup>44</sup> KNAAP, *Kruidnagelen*, pp. 97, 98, 267 and 268.

out on behalf of the King of Kandy. The Dutch were only his representatives as long as the King did not repay the war debt. In 1766, after a Dutch-Kandyan war, the coastal area became Dutch property. Meanwhile the legal problem was not really the major issue, for more depended upon the strength each party could muster. Kandy did not pose a serious threat unless it could find enough support among the Sinhalese people under Dutch rule. Jaffna, which was inhabited by Hindu Tamils, lacked a comparable outside lever. Catholics were viewed with suspicion because they were considered potential members of a fifth column in any Portuguese attack, a threat which never materialized.

Several headmen in the Sinhalese low country were related to or maintained relations with the Kandyan kings. For instance in 1758, the *Maha Mudaliyar* at Colombo, the highest native official in Dutch service, Leander de Saram, was accused of a secret understanding with Kandy<sup>45</sup>. The second way to exert influence was through religion. After the Portuguese persecution of the *bhikkhus* (Buddhist monks), and the migration of a large part of the low-country nobility to the interior, Kandy became the religious and political focus for people looking for inspiration. *Bhikkhus* played a part in stirring up the people against the Dutch in times of unrest like 1730, 1760 and 1790, in which year for instance a Kandyan *bhikkhu* roused popular feelings against a "beef eating *mudaliyar*" in Colombo<sup>46</sup>. A third way of influencing the Dutch was through the permission to peel cinnamon on the king's lands. Each year the Company had to request the king's consent and pay him tribute. Dutch policy therefore could best be summarized under two headings: cinnamon and peace. The cinnamon monopoly had to be maintained at as low a cost as possible, while the political situation required continuing peace and good relations with the local population. Here again we see a direct link with the policy adopted in Amboina: in the interests of keeping the peace, the VOC was willing to settle internal disputes amongst the local population, including religious disagreement among the Moslems<sup>47</sup>.

The disadvantages of a military solution led the Dutch to look for other means to secure the support of the population. The creation of a class of people of mixed descent, the free burghers, was not a serious option. The relatively large number of Dutchmen in Ceylon, normally more than 3,000, was not sufficient to take over the day-to-day administration of the countryside, which therefore had to be left in the hands of the native chiefs and headmen, the people who were susceptible to Kandyan influence. To counteract this, a number of checks and balances were built in. One was the up-

<sup>45</sup> Algemeen Rijksarchief The Hague, VOC 2923, fol. 10, Colombo to Batavia, 3 March 1758. See also Kitsiri MALALGODA, *Buddhism in Sinhalese Society, 1750-1900: a Study of Religious Revival and Change*, Berkeley etc., University of California Press, 1976.

<sup>46</sup> Algemeen Rijksarchief The Hague, VOC 3975, fol. 475.

<sup>47</sup> KNAAP, *Kruidnagelen*, p. 52.

keep of the *tombo* system, a registration of people and land, and of the duties the population were required to fulfil as part of their obligations to their lord. Playing various chiefs and castes off against each other was not uncommon. To forestall difficult reactions, the Dutch tried to keep open lines of communication with all groups of the population, and did not diverge too far from the ideas and opinions of the Sinhalese on social organization and religion. The caste system, although not held in high esteem by many Dutchmen, was left untouched<sup>48</sup>.

The positions of Buddhism, Hinduism and Catholicism were quite different, from a political and religious perspective. Buddhism was not interfered with as long as it did not manifest itself too openly. The government generally was of a more moderate view than the clergy, who urged the rulers to take strong measures against the “heathens”. In 1704 the Council of Colombo laid down the rule that people who always had been Buddhists should not be prevented from practising their religion. Over-zealous ministers of the church, who were prone to attack Buddhist temples, were forbidden to visit the countryside<sup>49</sup>. The same was true of Hinduism. The connection with the Indian mainland, which provided a regular flow of priests, *yogis*, and holy men, as well as the dependence on Tamil brokers, made the Dutch less than eager to act against Hinduism. This explains the answer of a group of Jaffna inhabitants, on being pressed by a Dutch minister to become Christians, that they had no objections to his faith, but that they did not see the need to forsake their own, because Hindus and Catholics had the same chances as Protestants of obtaining office under the Company.

The Catholics posed a different problem, partly because of the war in Europe with the Portuguese and Spanish, and partly because their religion shared some of its origins with Protestantism. The greatest proof of the strength of Catholicism came on Christmas Eve 1689, when in Jaffna several Catholic schools and churches were discovered. The fear of a potential fifth column led the Commissioner Hendrik van Reede tot Drakenstein to react quickly. He attributed the lack of Dutch success in the religious field to the absence of qualified staff for the education of the local people, and to the ignorance of Dutch ministers of the local languages. He therefore founded a seminary to train the sons of local headmen to become translators, headmen, school-

<sup>48</sup> In a few cases the Dutch tried to induce Tamils and Sinhalese to relax the caste rules. For instance, the first group of pupils in the Jaffna seminary in the 1690s were requested to eat together from the same dishes. This was a one-off experience because of the trouble the parents raised afterwards. Governor van Imhoff also disliked the caste differences strongly, but did not take measures to change them. J. VAN GOOR, *Jan Kompenie as Schoolmaster : Dutch Education in Ceylon, 1690-1795*, Groningen, 1978, pp. 21 and 51.

<sup>49</sup> J. VAN GOOR, *Kooplieden, predikanten en bestuurders overzee : beeldvorming en plaatsbepaling in een andere wereld*, Utrecht, 1982, chapter 3 : “Predikanten in de Hindoe-Boeddhistische wereld”.

masters and church ministers. A Sinhalese seminary was founded in Colombo, while a proclamation was issued to the effect that, after an interval of fifteen years, all Company servants would have to write and speak Dutch. A network of rural schools, which had been taken over from the Portuguese, had to be provided with Protestant schoolmasters and books. At the height of its powers, the Company maintained 125 local church schools, and the clergy visited them regularly.

The history of the Jaffna and Colombo seminaries has been related elsewhere<sup>50</sup>; what is of relevance here is the long-term effect on education and social hierarchies in the coastal areas of Ceylon. As the seminaries were part of the Dutch establishment, the effects only can be understood as part of the general impact of Dutch rule. The religious impact, at first impression, seems to have been rather slight. Although thousands of boys and girls learnt the basic elements of Protestantism, only a tiny minority actually took the step of becoming a full church member. The impact was more selective. Some of the boys made use of the opportunity to learn to read and write, one of the pre-requisites for achieving local office. The pupils who visited the seminaries came from the principal families. Some of them went to Europe and became church ministers, while others, especially the Sinhalese, seemed to prefer a civil service career. Due to the introduction of surveying and geography in the curriculum, the Colombo seminary became a kind of secondary school for Sinhalese, Tamil and Burgher boys. Many important officials received their training there<sup>51</sup>. A Tamil and a Sinhalese printing press were set up, to print the many translations made by the ministers and their pupils. After the Dutch departure in 1796, the seminaries were closed, but reopened on the urgent request of a group of prominent Sinhalese and Tamils, all of them alumni of the Colombo seminary. The educational establishments founded by the Dutch can be directly compared to the 19th-century British school system, including the custom of sending sons to Europe for higher education. The schools trained the *mudaliyar* class, which became prominent in the low country under the Dutch.

The rise of the *mudaliyar* class should not be attributed to education only, but seen as part of a much larger process of mutual adaptation. When the Dutch settled in Sri Lanka, they were confronted with the absence of a large part of the low-country chiefs, who had fled to Kandy. They could find few people able to read and write Sinhalese. The laws and customs of the country were insufficiently known. In the long term, some of these problems were solved by the institution of a bureaucracy and by the return of certain population groups. The bureaucracy made use of the existing *tombos* and

<sup>50</sup> VAN GOOR, *Jan Kompenie*.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 149-158, lists of the pupils of the Jaffna and Colombo seminaries.

assembled other pieces of information which eventually made the country more manageable. The most significant strength of the bureaucracy was its institutional memory. Caste positions and tax obligations were noted down. One of the paradoxes was that people of subordinate positions and from the service castes were able to shed part of their obligations by having themselves written into another category, a situation that explains the disappearance of certain groups at certain time, like the military force, and the sub-groups of the *Salagama*, the cinnamon peelers, who actually had to do the work. The judicial problems were overcome by the introduction in the Sinhalese area of certain sections of Dutch Roman law. In Jaffna, which had undergone less turbulent changes, the existing law was codified. The final result was that the demands of the Dutch bureaucracy and the position of the *mudaliyars* became strongly interlocked. The *mudaliyars* were also the group to benefit from the economic advantages connected with the opening up of new lands<sup>52</sup>. Although strongly dependent upon each other, there always remained an element of mutual distrust. To overcome the dependence on one caste or on one family of headmen, the Dutch preferred to use several chiefs from different groups. In the case of malpractice and corruption, they exhorted the people to lodge complaints, whether it was against Dutchmen or against indigenous chiefs. Fair treatment was intended to forestall rebellion or migration to the interior<sup>53</sup>.

One of the unexpected outcomes of Dutch-Sinhalese co-operation was not so much the stability of the position of Buddhism and Hinduism, but the relative rise within the caste system of groups who, before the coming of the Europeans, had held a subordinate position. The fishermen castes and the *Salagama* had an opportunity, due to their importance to the Dutch, to rise economically as well as socially. Around 1800, both groups were able to found monastic orders of their own, which until then had been a privilege exclusive to the *Goygama*. A comparison of the *Salagama* myth of origin around 1600 with the one in use two hundred years later shows a remarkable upgrading of their descent<sup>54</sup>. They also succeeded in improving their status by the election of headmen from the *Goygama* caste<sup>55</sup>.

There were fewer people in Amboina, yet the system of education was comparable to that in Sri Lanka, lacking only a seminary. Religious education was provided at local schools. Reading and writing constituted part of the

<sup>52</sup> For a more intensive treatment of this theme : S. ARASARATNAM, *Elements of social and economic change in Dutch maritime Ceylon (Sri Lanka), 1658-1796*, in : "The Indian Economic and Social History Review", 22 (1985), no. 1, pp. 35-54 ; Michael ROBERTS, *Caste Conflict and Elite Formation : the rise of the Karava elite in Sri Lanka, 1500-1931*, Cambridge, 1982, pp. 75-98.

<sup>53</sup> VAN GOOR, *Jan Kompenie*, chapter 1 ; ID., *Koopliden*, chapter IV.

<sup>54</sup> ROBERTS, *Caste Conflict*, pp. 24 and 91.

<sup>55</sup> Algemeen Rijksarchief The Hague, VOC 2401, fol. 179, Res. Council Colombo, 30 April 1737 ; VOC 3231, fol. 193, Colombo to Batavia, secret, 28 May 1768 ; also see Bryce RYAN, *Caste in Modern Ceylon*, New Brunswick, 1953, p. 108.

general education. In 1680 it was reported that, at Nusa Laut and Saparua, at least 70-75% of the pupils of the highest grade were able to read and write. It meant that the literacy of the local Christians proceeded very satisfactorily. It has also been pointed out by Knaap (from whose work these data are taken) that, due to the lack of incentives to read after leaving school, many will have lost their proficiency<sup>56</sup>. In the long run, one of the effects of the translation of religious texts and the Bible into Malay was an Amboinese lead in the 19th century in teaching and in other jobs for which a Malay and European training was considered necessary. On a smaller scale, a comparable development took place on the small island of Roti. The Rotinese, who had converted in about 1740 to Protestantism in order to prevent the slave raids of neighbouring islanders, got their first training by Amboinese masters<sup>57</sup>. In the 19th century they too found an opportunity which allowed them to exploit these skills.

#### CONCLUSION

In the examples discussed, the emphasis has been on factories in which the VOC held political power. The economic and cultural effects cannot be considered as separate topics, but become comprehensible when studied in connection with political relations. It is also clear that the local situation was of decisive importance for the outcome of the interaction. The comparison of Ceylon and Amboina shows that the presence or absence of a substantial local political force, or of another world religion, affected that outcome. Both areas shared Protestant religious establishments and schools. In Amboina, Protestantism made its impact on popular religion as well as on the education of the elite. In Ceylon it was only the European educational impact which seems to have been important, for in the long run Protestantism won very few converts. Among the long-term effects on the local population was an interest in education as part of a future career. Social advancement was also possible through collaboration with the outsider. Whether they were styled chiefs, headmen, schoolmasters, scribes or *mudaliyar*, middlemen acted as buffers in the accommodation process and were instrumental when it came to the introduction of innovations and the organization of the production of export crops.

In the political field, the Company exerted its greatest influence in areas in which other powers were absent, or at least temporarily weakened. In Amboina, the absence of a higher authority encompassing the whole island allowed the introduction of a Dutch superstructure, overarching the various

<sup>56</sup> KNAAP, *Kruidnagelen*, pp. 94-97.

<sup>57</sup> James FOX, *Harvest of the Palm*, Cambridge Mass., Harvard University Press, 1977.

villages. In Ceylon, political circumstances created the legal fiction of a Dutch stadholdership, that in actual practice, however, operated in a way comparable to the government of Amboina. In both areas the same bureaucratic institutions which gave the Company its longevity and institutional strength were introduced. Being in control of an area, and reporting back in detail to the Company authorities, were essential elements in Dutch rule of the countryside, through which a process became possible of accommodation with local customs and of adjusting the demands from outside, which in the 19th century was to become the basis for building a colonial society. In the Indonesian archipelago the Company assumed with apparent ease the role of the central powers that had preceded it. Eventually, the long-term presence of the Dutch led to the introduction of a new type of government, which again in the 19th century would forge a modern state from the multitude of indigenous states in the archipelago.

# NAISSANCE D'UN PROTECTORAT ANGLAIS ET FRANÇAIS DANS L'INDE DU SUD AU MILIEU DU XVIII<sup>e</sup> SIÈCLE

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Les établissements anglais et français occupent une place restreinte dans l'Inde du milieu du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Des comptoirs importants par leurs activités commerciales, comme Madras ou Pondichéry, ont une superficie territoriale réduite et abritent chacun moins de deux mille Européens, avec une population hindoue quarante à soixante fois plus nombreuse. Toutefois, Anglais et Français sont, dans ces comptoirs, tout à fait indépendants des autorités mogoles. Ils perçoivent pour leur propre compte les impôts traditionnels comme la taxe foncière, les droits de douane et autres droits indirects ; ils peuvent même créer de nouveaux impôts. En outre ils afferment les terres domaniales, battent éventuellement monnaie, exercent la police, rendent la justice <sup>1</sup>.

Entre 1740 et 1750, on assiste à une tentative des Français pour étendre leur autorité sur un territoire plus vaste. L'étude de cette tentative et les répliques anglaises qu'elles provoquent est l'objet de la présente communication.

## 1. LES INITIATIVES FRANÇAISES

Les Européens viennent en Inde pour faire fortune. Tous les témoignages français concordent sur ce point. Ainsi celui du gouverneur Dupleix : «quel chagrin pour un employé (de la Compagnie des Indes) sans bien en Europe,

<sup>1</sup> Titres de concession : A.O.M. (Aix-en-Provence), Série geo. *Inde*, carton 49, doss. 612-614 ; Ch. A. ALEXANDROWICZ, *Le droit des nations aux Indes orientales*, in : «Annales E.S.C.», 1964, pp. 871-884 et ID., *An Introduction to the History of the Law of Nations in the East Indies*, Oxford, 1967.

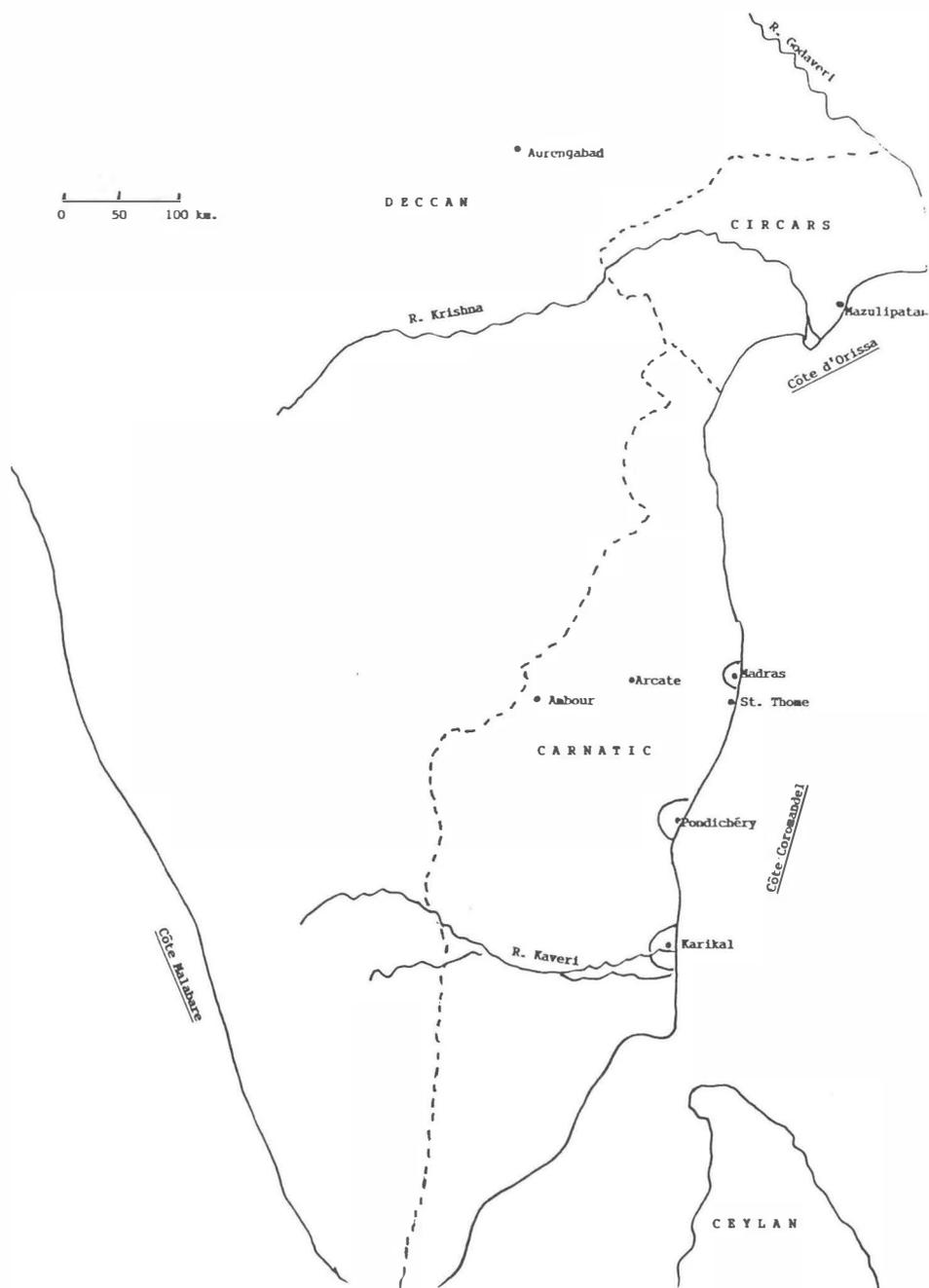


FIG. 1. — Extension de l'influence française dans l'Inde du sud au milieu du xviii<sup>e</sup> siècle.

de ne pouvoir espérer d'y retourner sans courir risque d'y mourir de faim ? Y-a-t-il rien de plus mortifiant que de se voir forcé de passer ses jours dans des climats si contraires à notre tempérament et parmi des nations dont les mœurs et les façons nous sont si étrangères ? Quelle joie, au contraire, ne ressentirait-on pas, si après avoir bien servi et avoir par ménagement ramassé quelque chose, l'on espérait de l'augmenter considérablement ... et de pouvoir par ce moyen finir ses jours avec tranquillité dans le sein de sa patrie»<sup>2</sup>. Ou encore celui de l'officier Nicolas de Vervaine, qui prend en 1740 : «... le party d'entrer dans les troupes de la Compagnie (des Indes), parcequ'il était hors d'état de suivre sa réforme, étant né sans fortune»<sup>3</sup>. Et le gouverneur La Bourdonnais résume ce comportement en une formule lapidaire : «Le bien est considéré comme le seul fruit que l'on rapporte de l'Inde, et le seul aussy où l'on s'attache»<sup>4</sup>.

Les traitements versés par les Compagnies des Indes à leurs employés sont médiocres : «Il est impossible à un conseiller de vivre, de s'habiller et de soutenir les dépenses avec 1.500 à 1.800 livres d'appointements»<sup>5</sup> observe le conseil de Pondichéry. Aussi les Européens installés en Inde consacrent-ils la majeure partie de leur temps à leurs propres affaires, celles des Compagnies étant en outre peu absorbantes. Les trafics les plus rentables sont ceux du commerce d'Inde en Inde ou «country trade» étudié ici même par Madame Catherine Manning<sup>6</sup>. Français et Anglais collaborent étroitement dans cette activité. La Bourdonnais, alors négociant privé installé à Pondichéry, monte sa première société d'armement en 1727 avec des capitaux prêtés par deux négociants de Madras, Cyril Wiche et James O'Friell<sup>7</sup>. Les Français placent des fonds sur des navires armés par des Britanniques, ainsi 10.000 pagodes en 1735 par le gouverneur Benoît Dumas sur le «Saint-Dominique» armé à Madras pour les Philippines<sup>8</sup>, ou encore en 1741, 233.000 livres sterling par le même sur un bâtiment armé toujours à Madras et pour la même destination ; l'ingénieur Charpentier de Cossigny et le chirurgien Cayrefourg placent aussi chacun 17.000 livres sur ce navire<sup>9</sup>. Le négociant français d'origine malouine, Quentin de La Mettrie, engage aussi des fonds importants sur les bâtiments britanniques<sup>10</sup>. Citons

<sup>2</sup> A.N., Col. C<sup>2</sup> 32, f<sup>o</sup>. 42.

<sup>3</sup> A.N., Col. E 362.

<sup>4</sup> Mahé de La Bourdonnais à Peyrenc de Moras, 1733, A.N., Col. C<sup>2</sup> 25, f<sup>os</sup> 172v<sup>o</sup>-173.

<sup>5</sup> *Correspondance du conseil supérieur de Pondichéry et de la Compagnie des Indes*, éd. A. MARTINEAU, Paris, 1926, t. 3, p. 140.

<sup>6</sup> *Supra*, p. 000.

<sup>7</sup> Vente, Pondichéry, 31 mai 1727, A.O.M., Not. Pondi. 31, et Ph. HAUDRÈRE, *La Bourdonnais. Marin et aventurier*, Paris, 1992.

<sup>8</sup> B.N., N.A.F. 9.150, f<sup>o</sup> 98.

<sup>9</sup> *Records of St.-George. Public Despatches to England, 1741-1742*, Madras, 1935.

<sup>10</sup> *Records of Fort Saint-Georges. Letters from Fort Saint-David, 1749*, t. 2, Madras, 1935, p. 85 ; *Diary and Consultation Book of 1749-1750*, Madras, 1931, pp. 1-2.

encore Pierre Duvelaer, employé de la Comagnie française des Indes, qui remet en 1731 «quarante pains d'or» (environ 15 kg.) à deux capitaines anglais, puis en 1738 «soixante-neuf pains d'or» (26 kg.) au commandant du «Sussex»<sup>11</sup>.

Cette collaboration franco-anglaise est critiquée par les directeurs de l'«East India Company», qui, en 1737, mandent de Londres à leurs employés en Inde : «The most particular intelligence procurable concerning those powerful competitors, the French, and their commerce, must annually be communicated to us»<sup>12</sup>. Ces rivalités commerciales connaissent une apogée au milieu du xviii<sup>e</sup> siècle, avec plusieurs initiatives d'origine française.

La première est politique. En 1740, le nabab du Carnatic, Dost-Mohammed, fut tué dans un combat contre les redoutables guerriers Mahrattes. Les débris de l'armée, la veuve du nabab et son trésor, vinrent demander asile dans Pondichéry, dont les fortifications, réputées les meilleures de la côte Coromandel, venaient d'être achevées. Après deux jours de délibération, le gouverneur Benoît Dumas et son conseil acceptèrent d'ouvrir les portes de la ville aux fugitifs. Les Mahrattes vinrent jusqu'à Pondichéry, demandèrent que le trésor leur fut livré, et, devant le refus du gouverneur, étant en outre dans l'incapacité de s'emparer d'une place bien défendue et pouvant être ravitaillée par mer, ils se retirèrent. Le nouveau nabab, Sabder-Ali, fils de Dost-Mohammed, vint quelques semaines plus tard dans le comptoir français pour remercier le gouverneur de son attitude et lui concéder deux aldées ou villages voisins de Pondichéry, ainsi qu'une patente de nabab approuvée par le Mogol. Cette patente donnée au gouverneur de Pondichéry et à ses successeurs dans la fonction est un honneur considérable, faisant du chef des Français un grand seigneur de l'Inde<sup>13</sup>. Benoît Dumas y vit surtout la possibilité d'obtenir des avantages commerciaux dans l'Empire Mogol<sup>14</sup>, mais certains membres de son entourage, ainsi l'ingénieur Charpentier de Cossigny, se prirent à rêver de grands projets d'expansion : «Ce serait, selon moi, par l'extension de son domaine en quantité d'endroits, s'il était possible, de ces vastes pays, que la Compagnie serait au dessus des évènements de la mer, qu'elle pourrait charger tel nombre de vaisseaux qu'il lui plairait d'envoyer en Europe»<sup>15</sup>.

La seconde initiative est militaire et navale. La Bourdonnais, gouverneur des Mascareignes, présent en métropole en 1740, constatant la montée des tensions internationales, proposa au gouvernement royal français d'armer

<sup>11</sup> India Office (Londres), Home miscellaneous 497, f<sup>os</sup> 13 et 215.

<sup>12</sup> Arch. de Madras, Public despatches from England, 30 dec. 1737, cité par H. DODWELL, *Dupleix and Clive*, Londres, 1967, p. 3.

<sup>13</sup> Concession des aldées, B.N., N.A.F. 9.227, f<sup>o</sup> 214 ; patente de nabab, A.N., Col. C<sup>2</sup> 80, f<sup>o</sup> 20 (traduction dans C. GUYON, *Histoire des Indes*, Paris, 1744, t. 3, p. 357).

<sup>14</sup> B.N., Fr. 8.982, f<sup>o</sup> 202.

<sup>15</sup> Charpentier de Cossigny au contrôleur général, Pondichéry, 25 janvier 1740, A.N., Col. C<sup>2</sup> 79, f<sup>o</sup> 68.

quatre vaisseaux et une frégate et de les envoyer dans l'Océan Indien pour contrôler les routes maritimes et faire éventuellement des prises en cas de guerre. Ces bâtiments appareillèrent de Lorient en avril 1741. Les directeurs de la Compagnie anglaise des Indes, immédiatement alertés, demandèrent l'envoi urgent de quatre vaisseaux de guerre dans l'Océan Indien, ajoutant : «It would be in our interest in all events to get men-of-war there ... as the French ships are now loaden richly»<sup>16</sup>. L'escadre britannique arriva en Inde en 1743, au moment où le gouvernement français décidait de rappeler en Europe sa propre escadre dont la présence dans les mers d'Asie ne lui paraissait plus nécessaire. Il s'en suivit une véritable catastrophe pour les Français à la fin de 1744 et au début de 1745, lorsque la déclaration de guerre entre la France et la Grande-Bretagne fut connue dans les comptoirs de l'Inde. Tous les bâtiments d'Inde en Inde armés par les Français et plusieurs vaisseaux venus d'Europe furent pris ou contraints de se brûler pour échapper à la capture<sup>17</sup>. Les pertes des armateurs privés et celles de la Compagnie française des Indes furent très élevées.

Les Français conservaient des possibilités d'initiatives militaires terrestres. La Bourdennais et Dupleix décidèrent d'attaquer le comptoir de Madras et s'en emparèrent en 1746. L'année suivante Anaverdi-Khan, devenu nabab du Carnatic en remplacement de Sabder-Ali avec l'appui des Britanniques, s'approcha de Madras avec l'intention avouée de prendre le comptoir, dont les Français, disait-il, s'étaient indûment emparés. Le commandant des forces françaises décida d'attaquer l'armée du nabab avant qu'elle n'entame le siège ; il la surprit et la défit complètement près de Saint-Thomé, le 24 octobre 1747. C'est, une fois encore, un retournement de situation considérable. Pour la première fois, une petite troupe européenne bien encadrée l'emportait facilement sur une armée indienne nombreuse. Dans les semaines qui suivirent, les seigneurs indiens de précipitèrent à Pondichéry pour chercher une entente avec le nabab Dupleix, d'autant que la mort du Mogol, survenue en 1748, annonçait dans toute l'Inde des troubles favorables aux nababs plus agressifs et plus intrigants que les autres.

Les Français multipliaient alors des opérations militaires. Ils commencent par contrôler le Carnatic en donnant leur appui à Chanda-Sahib, candidat malheureux à la nababie contre Anaverdi-Khan. Ce dernier est battu et tué à Ambour par une troupe française le 1<sup>er</sup> août 1749. Chanda-Sahib, devenu nabab, exprima sa gratitude en remettant aux Français la grande aldée de

<sup>16</sup> British Museum, Add. Ms. 35.906, f<sup>o</sup> 178.

<sup>17</sup> Capture de 3 bâtiments appartenant à Dupleix, Déclaration, Pondichéry, 26 janvier 1745, A.O.M., Col. C<sup>2</sup> 200, p. 58, f<sup>o</sup> 3v<sup>o</sup> et *Corr. du conseil sup. de Bourbon et de la Cie. des Indes...*, éd. A. LOUGNON, t. 4, St-Denis-de-la-Réunion, 1939, p. xxxv ; le «Favori» est pris en rade d'Achem en déc. 1744, B.N., N.A.F. 9.144, f<sup>o</sup> 34 ; l'«Hercule», le «Jason», le «Dauphin» venants de Chine sont pris dans le détroit de Banka le 5 février 1745, B.N., Vp. 20.572.

Villenour, près de Pondichéry, et trente-six aldées près de Karikal<sup>18</sup>. Ensuite la soubabie du Deccan est placée sous l'autorité française, car Muzafer-Singh, ancien soubab, écarté par son frère, Nazer-Singh, vint demander l'appui du nabab Dupleix. Un petit corps français attaqua par surprise le camp du soubab durant la nuit, Nazer-Singh fut tué, son armée défaite, et Muzafer proclamé nabab. En remerciement il s'empessa de remettre au gouverneur français une centaine d'aldées autour de Pondichéry et Mazulipatam<sup>19</sup>. Puis il se mit en route pour sa capitale, Aurengabad, sous la protection de 300 soldats français et de 1800 cipayes commandés par l'officier Charles de Bussy. Au cours du voyage Muzafer-Singh mourut brutalement et Bussy fit immédiatement reconnaître comme soubab Salabet-Singh, neveu du précédent. Puis il poursuivit sa route pour Aurengabad où il entra le 20 juin 1751. Les Français s'installèrent dans la citadelle, d'où ils pouvaient surveiller, sans trop y paraître, le nouveau souverain.

Pour payer ces troupes, le soubab leur affecta les revenus des quatre *circars* ou provinces de la dépendance de Muzalipatam sur la côte d'Orissa, pouvant s'élever à 800.000 livres tournois par an, et il donna aux Français la propriété des terres domaniales. Bussy adressa alors un véritable bulletin de victoire à Pondichéry : le soubab, dit-il, «... a voulu attacher à sa personne et au Dekan les troupes françaises d'une manière qui soit à l'abri des révolutions. Pour cela il vient de donner aux Français un royaume opulent, les terres et provinces contigues aux domaines que la Compagnie possède déjà à Mazulipatam. Il y aura un bénéfice considérable, et la Compagnie, pour le faire entrer dans ses coffres, n'aura d'autres dépenses, ni d'autres embarras que le soin de les recevoir»<sup>20</sup>.

Ainsi, en à peine trois ans, les Français parviennent à contrôler un vaste territoire comprenant la majeure partie du Carnatic et de la province de Mazulipatam. Il s'agit de contrôle, non d'annexion. C'est une pénétration militaire, reposant sur des alliances et sur l'occupation de quelques points d'appui. C'est en même temps une ébauche de protectorat, un ensemble politique compliqué, au centre duquel se trouve le gouverneur de Pondichéry.

## 2. DÉVELOPPEMENT ET ÉCHEC DU PROTECTORAT

La pénétration française repose d'abord sur l'engagement des cipayes, troupes musulmanes commandées par leurs propres officiers, mais placées sous

<sup>18</sup> A.N., Col. C<sup>2</sup> 82, f<sup>o</sup> 234 et E. GAUDART, *Catalogue des manuscrits des anciennes archives de l'Inde française...*, t. 4, Pondichéry, 1924, p. 15.

<sup>19</sup> A.N., Col. C<sup>2</sup> 83, f<sup>o</sup> 4 ; firman du Mogol pour confirmer les concessions, 14 mai 1753, A.N., Col. C<sup>2</sup> 102, f<sup>o</sup> 39 ; E. GAUDART, *Catalogue des manuscrits...*, t. 1, pp. 12-13, n<sup>o</sup> 40 et t. 6, pp. 1-2, n<sup>o</sup> 5098.

<sup>20</sup> B.N., N.A.F. 9.359, f<sup>o</sup> 83.

l'autorité supérieure d'officiers français. Tous les établissements européens utilisent, depuis leur création, les services d'un personnel commercial et administratif assez nombreux et recruté sur place, mais l'engagement de soldats dans le pays même est plus tardif. Les Français semblent être les premiers à l'avoir pratiqué et les cipayes apparaissent dans les revues des troupes de Pondichéry à partir de 1746. En 1755, 3500 fantassins cipayes et 300 cavaliers sont régulièrement soldés par les Français, soit un nombre d'homme à peu près égal à celui des troupes européennes. Le commandant en chef à Pondichéry, à la demande de Dupleix : «... les divisat par compagnies, leur apprit l'exercice qu'il fit traduire en leur langue, les assujettit à une certaine discipline, sous l'inspection d'un officier européen major»<sup>21</sup>. Tous les officiers français s'accordent à reconnaître les bonnes qualités militaires des cipayes et leur bravoure<sup>22</sup>.

La personnalité de Charles de Bussy, commandant en chef des troupes placées près du soubab, est un autre élément important de l'influence française. Ce jeune officier, arrivé à Pondichéry en 1746, est passionné par les choses de l'Inde. Son «... premier soin fut d'apprendre la langue, d'étudier les mœurs et de s'instruire des intérêts politiques du pays ... (se donnant) la peine d'(en) étudier le génie pour s'y conformer dans l'occasion»<sup>23</sup>. Plus tard, le gouverneur Duval de Leyrit se dira surpris par : «... le haut point d'estime et d'autorité où M. de Bussy est parvenu. Il est étonnant qu'un étranger prenne ici l'ascendant au milieu d'une nation aussi fière et aussi jalouse de domination que le sont les Asiatiques. Le général français est l'oracle que chacun veut se rendre favorable et dont on respecte les décisions. Tous les suffrages réunis lui défèrent une autorité entière, en sorte qu'il balance à son gré les intérêts des diverses puissances dans le Décan. Pour en venir là, il a fallu et il faut encore que M. de Bussy passe les journées entières à discuter les affaires les plus épineuses qui demandent une adresse et une prudence consommées»<sup>24</sup>.

La domination territoriale remplace le commerce d'Inde en Inde comme source de revenus. Les gratifications versées par les princes indiens sont considérables. Après la victoire d'Ambour en 1749, il y eut : «... une gratification de 50.000 roupies sicca (soit environ 120.000 livres tournois) pour la troupe, dont moitié pour le soldat, 4.000 à chaque capitaine, 2.000 au lieutenant et 1.000 à l'enseigne»<sup>25</sup>. En 1750, sur ordre du nabab, «... 6.000 roupes sont distribuées entre les premiers lieutenants, 4.000 aux seconds lieutenants et 3.000 aux enseignes»<sup>26</sup>. La mention des actes de munificence de Salabet-Singh revient

<sup>21</sup> A.N., Col. C<sup>2</sup> 105, f<sup>os</sup> 255-256.

<sup>22</sup> Ainsi Mac Gregor en 1756 : A.N., Col. C<sup>2</sup> 91, f<sup>o</sup> 67v<sup>o</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> B.N., 4<sup>o</sup> Fm. 4.820.

<sup>24</sup> Pondichéry, 1<sup>er</sup> sept. 1755, cité par A. MARTINEAU, *Bussy et l'Inde française*, Paris, 1935, p. 196.

<sup>25</sup> B.N., Fr. 12.087, p. 84.

<sup>26</sup> A.N., Col. C<sup>2</sup> 83, f<sup>o</sup> 4.

régulièrement dans la correspondance de Dupleix. Le 15 janvier 1751 : «La libéralité de ce seigneur s'étendit sur tout le monde, il donna aux troupes quatre cent mille roupies (environ 950.000 livres tournois), accorda aux principaux officiers des jaguirs ou pensions sur le trésor de la province»<sup>27</sup>. Ainsi les officiers Louis de Combault d'Autueil et Nicolas Devaux reçurent-ils les rentes annuelles de respectivement 9.600 livres<sup>28</sup> et 12.000 livres<sup>29</sup>. Un mois plus tard, il mentionne : «Près de quatre cent mille roupies ont été distribués aux officiers et aux troupes dans le moment...»<sup>30</sup>. Ainsi les fortunes des principaux officiers deviennent-elles considérables. Dupleix écrit à son gendre en octobre 1751 : «Nos Messieurs qui sont à Aurengabad ont fait des fortunes immenses. Vincens possède au moins deux lacks (480.000 livres tournois) et Bussy et Kerjean de quatre à cinq lacks. Ces fortunes sont aussi extraordinaires que vraies. Celles-ci existent en bonnes espèces sonnantes et rendues dans la colonie où il est entré depuis un an des richesses immenses»<sup>31</sup>.

Le personnel civil participe à cet enrichissement, car il assure la perception des impôts dans les territoires concédés. Ainsi Bussy écrit-il à Moracin, envoyé dans les Circars : «Il faut, Monsieur et ancien ami, mettre à côté les usages européens pour se conformer à ceux du pays. Quant au surplus que le bon gouvernement produira, ainsi que tous les présents ou nazers qui vous seront faits tant par la suite que dans la prise de possession, et tout ce qui vous sera offert pour les places que vous accorderez et que vous ne devez pas hésiter un moment de recevoir, nous les partagerons par moitié vous et moi. Je suis convenu aussi avec Ibrahimkan que tout ce qu'il recevra de nazers ainsi que tout ce qui excédera le revenu actuel de la province où vous le placerez sera partagé par tiers, un tiers pour vous, un tiers pour moi et un tiers pour lui»<sup>32</sup>. Dupleix, pour sa part, reçoit à titre personnel, stipulé dans l'acte de donation, les revenus de l'aldée de Valdaour, qui s'élèvent à 350.000 livres par an<sup>33</sup>.

Quelques-uns des directeurs de la Compagnie française des Indes en métropole sont intéressés dans ces opérations. L'un d'entre eux, Michau de Montaran, écrit à Bussy, dont il est le fondé de pouvoir : «Je n'ai pu finir le marché du Marquisat du Bouchet, sa situation de moitié chemin de Paris à Fontainebleau, et le voisinage de ma terre de Beaurepaire me faisoit désirer ardamment cette acquisition. Nous traitons actuellement celle du Marquisat de Sandricourt, objet de 400 et tant de mil livres à 10 et 11 lieux de Paris, et celle de la tour

<sup>27</sup> A.N., Col. C<sup>2</sup> 199, p. 5, f<sup>o</sup> 3.

<sup>28</sup> E. GAUDART, *Catalogue de quelques documents des archives de Pondichéry...*, Pondichéry, 1931, p. 72.

<sup>29</sup> B.N., N.A.F. 9.225, f<sup>o</sup> 343.

<sup>30</sup> A.N., Col. C<sup>2</sup> 199, p. 5, f<sup>o</sup> 5.

<sup>31</sup> A.D. Yvelines, E 3749, f<sup>o</sup> 7.

<sup>32</sup> Aurengabad, 28 nov. 1753, cité par A. MARTINEAU, *Bussy...*, p. 310.

<sup>33</sup> E. GAUDART, *Catalogue de quelques documents...*, p. 79.

de Montlévrier et dépendances dans l'Anjou. Cette dernière peut aller à un million ou environ. Si nous nous déterminons à cette dernière, qui est belle et solide, cela ne nous empêcherait pas de chercher par la suite quelque petite terre d'agrément aux environs de Paris. Nous songerons peut-être ensuite à une maison, mais faites-nous passer des fonds, parcequ'ils seront toujours mieux ici qu'ailleurs»<sup>34</sup>.

L'accroissement de l'autorité territoriale des Français donne à Dupleix l'idée d'une nouvelle politique commerciale. Au départ, les interventions françaises relèvent de la volonté de se concilier les autorités locales, attitude traditionnelle de tous les gouverneurs européens. Ensuite le comportement de Dupleix répond à un souci proprement commercial de sécurité des approvisionnements de Pondichéry en cotonnades ; dans les territoires concédés, le gouverneur met en place une administration «juste, solide et uniforme»<sup>35</sup> et les tisserands hindous reçoivent avec soulagement cet ordre nouveau qui leur paraît plus supportable que les tyrannies militaires antérieures. À partir de 1753, la pensée commerciale de Dupleix prend une nouvelle ampleur. Il ne s'agit plus seulement de se procurer des cotonnades, mais il faut donner à la Compagnie des nouveaux revenus en percevant les impôts. Ceux-ci permettront de faire les achats sur place, sans avoir besoin des métaux précieux venus d'Europe. «Toute compagnie de commerce, écrit-il, doit éviter quand il luy est possible l'exportation des matières d'or et d'argent ; c'est une maxime depuis longtemps établie que plus ces matières sont communes dans un État, plus il est florissant...»<sup>36</sup>. Il faut donc obtenir en Inde même un «revenue constant et abondant», en percevant les impôts et en affermant les terres domaniales dans les territoires «protégés» par les Français. C'est donc bien la naissance d'un protectorat.

Mais ce projet n'est absolument pas compris en métropole. Dès le 24 décembre 1751 une vive opposition s'exprime dans l'assemblée générale des actionnaires, au témoignage du marquis d'Argenson : «M. le procureur général de la Cour des Aides s'est élevé comme grand actionnaire ..., et a demandé que l'on rende compte à l'assemblée des grandes entreprises de m. Dupleix en Asie : «Quoi donc, a-t-il dit, on nous engagera à des guerres si considérables contre le Mogol, on nous fera dépenser en armements, en flottes, en armées et nous n'en saurons rien ! Le garde des sceaux s'est montré fort embarrassé de cette interpellation si hautaine»<sup>37</sup>. Des incidents analogues se produisirent durant les mois suivants, et en juillet 1753 les directeurs de la Compagnie des Indes décidèrent de rappeler Dupleix en métropole, en donnant ordre à son successeur de faire rentrer à Pondichéry les corps de troupes cantonnés à l'intérieur du pays. Les directeurs justifiaient leur attitude par un manque d'obéissance

<sup>34</sup> Février 1755, A.N., Col. C<sup>2</sup> 86, f<sup>o</sup> 5.

<sup>35</sup> Règlement, Pondichéry, 7 août 1751, A.N., Col. C<sup>2</sup> 290bis, f<sup>os</sup> 50-51.

<sup>36</sup> Mémoire du 16 oct. 1753, B.N., N.A.F. 9.335, f<sup>os</sup> 343-347.

<sup>37</sup> R. DE VOYER D'ARGENSON, *Journal et mémoires*, Paris, 1859, t. 6, p. 64.

des officiers, avançant : «Toutes les opérations militaires sont subordonnées à des vues particulières de lucre...»<sup>38</sup>. Très peu de voix s'élevèrent pour défendre Dupleix et la politique de protectorat lorsque celle-ci fut abandonnée, la majeure partie de l'opinion publique «éclairée» pensant avec Voltaire que ces affaires de l'Inde sont des «querelles de commis pour de la mousseline et des toiles peintes»<sup>39</sup>.

Quelle est alors l'attitude des Britanniques ? Les employés supérieurs de l'«East India Company» s'étaient montrés, dès le début, fort hostiles à la politique de Dupleix, y voyant un projet destiné à les écarter des marchés d'approvisionnement en toiles et à les isoler territorialement<sup>40</sup>. En janvier 1753, les directeurs généraux de l'«East India Company» se plaignirent vivement des agissements français, dans une lettre adressée au secrétaire d'État Holderness : «The troubles in those parts cannot subside so long as Mr. Du Pleix is suffered to continue and if the French court do support Mr. Du Pleix measures, or even if they do not disavow them, we apprehend it will be impossible for the East India Company to carry on their trade or even keep a footing upon the coast of Coromandel where the principal settlement now is»<sup>41</sup>. Holderness répondit en annonçant l'envoi d'une dépêche à l'ambassadeur de France à Londres. Peut-on dire que cette démarche est à l'origine du retour de Dupleix ? Non, sans doute, puisque le rappel de Dupleix semble avoir été décidé avant la demande anglaise. Mais le plus important est peut-être que Robert Clive s'est manifestement inspiré de l'exemple français pour établir le protectorat britannique sur l'Inde. Dès 1754, le gouverneur de Madras sollicite et obtient le titre de nabab<sup>42</sup>, et quelques années plus tard, après la bataille de Plassey, l'«East India Company» met la main sur la ferme des impôts du Bengale, obtenant ainsi, en Inde même, des rentrées d'argent considérables.

<sup>38</sup> A.N., Col. C<sup>2</sup> 43, f<sup>o</sup> 143.

<sup>39</sup> *Fragments sur l'Inde*, s.l., 1773, art. 12 et Ph. HAUDRÈRE, *La Compagnie française des Indes au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris, 1989.

<sup>40</sup> India Office, Home miscellaneous 93, f<sup>o</sup> 76.

<sup>41</sup> India Office, *French in India*, 1/1/3, f<sup>o</sup>. 3.

<sup>42</sup> *Records of Fort Saint-George. Diary and consultation book*, Madras, 1935, p. 43.

# PORTO NOVO AND THE SHIPPING IN THE BAY OF BENGAL IN THE MID-18th CENTURY <sup>1</sup>

BY

Bhaswati BHATTACHARYA

By the 18th century European forts and factories in the Indian Ocean, which owed their origin to the Portuguese, had come a long way from the original purpose which lay behind their creation <sup>2</sup>. On the Indian subcontinent, many of the European trading posts had acquired independent power and wealth, and with the help of their sophisticated military technology started exerting influence beyond the bounds of the coastal enclaves <sup>3</sup>. While at a later stage European factories paved the way for colonisation, they also remained centres of lucrative trade so far as the country trade was concerned. There were, however, some ports which were not “European” in the sense that they were not under the control of the Europeans. These ports continued to be ruled by the indigenous authorities. Yet, they formed a part of the network of trade developed by the Europeans. They also provided the base for the remnants of the indigenous independent shipowning merchants. One such port on the Coromandel coast was Porto Novo. Situated in the midst of European settlements, the port housed Tamil Muslim Marakkayars, Telugu Chetties who were joined by the Dutch, English, French, Portuguese and other European nations. Around the middle of the 18th century Porto Novo was a busy centre of commercial activity on the Coromandel coast.

The trade of Porto Novo in the 18th century is not very well covered in the existing literature. Sinnappah Arasaratnam, who has extensively worked

<sup>1</sup> Research for this article was funded by the International Institute of Asian Studies (IIAS), Leiden.

<sup>2</sup> C. R. BOXER, *The Dutch sea-borne Empire 1600-1800*, 1965, repr. 1990, p. 209.

<sup>3</sup> J. F. RICHARDS, *European city-states on the Coromandel coast*, in : “Studies in the Foreign Relations of India from the Earliest Times to 1947, Prof. H. K. Sherwani felicitation volume”, Hyderabad, 1975, pp. 508-521.

on Coromandel, informs us in a recent paper on Coromandel's overseas trade in the 18th century that "there was of course trade outside the Dutch system from ports such as Nagore, Porto Novo, Pondicherry and Cuddalore. This is not reflected in any of the evidence that has come down to us"<sup>4</sup>. This lack of evidence has led him to draw some major conclusions with regard to Coromandel's overseas trade in that period. One of the conclusions he draws is that, after the early years of the 18th century, Coromandel-Aceh trade, so far as it was carried on by the Indian merchants of Coromandel, was disrupted. Most of the Indian shipping during the middle decades of the 18th century was directed to ports of mainland South-East Asia. He also tells that there was a revival of this trade towards the end of the century. The other conclusion he comes to is with regard to the commodities traded. He maintains that import of horses from South-East Asian states like Aceh was something new in the overseas trade of Coromandel in the late 18th century<sup>5</sup>. This paper intends to show that there is some evidence on the trade carried on at Coromandel ports outside the Dutch system, though the nature of this evidence is fragmentary. It will be argued that there seems to have been no such disruption in the Coromandel-Aceh trade in the course of the 18th century as Arasaratnam would want us to believe. In fact, throughout the 18th century Aceh remained an important stronghold of Indian merchants sailing from Coromandel<sup>6</sup>. Also, import of horses was not new in the late 18th century. It was a fact known already in the previous centuries and by the middle of the 18th century, horses seem to have formed a regular part of the cargo brought from South-East Asian ports, especially Aceh.

A brief introduction on the rise of Porto Novo as a place of commercial interest is in order here. Located in the Killai Bay at the mouth of the Vellar river, this port is stated by Tapan Raychaudhuri and Arasaratnam to have been a major port of Coromandel in the second half of the 17th century. Sanjay Subrahmanyam's position, however, is that the port started gaining importance towards the end of the 17th century after Dutch activity at Nagapatnam had resulted in a shift of the base of operation on part of the merchants, particularly the Portuguese, of that place<sup>7</sup>. It is interesting to note that in his description

<sup>4</sup> S. ARASARATNAM, *Coromandel's Bay of Bengal trade, 1740-1800. A study of continuities and changes*, paper presented to the International Seminar on the Bay of Bengal in the Asian marine trade and cultural network, 1500-1800, New Delhi, 16-20 December 1994.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> For the important role played by the Tamil Marakkayars of Coromandel in the court of Aceh in the 18th century, see B. BHATTACHARYA, *Marakkayar merchants of Coromandel in the eighteenth century: a case of continuity*, paper presented to the International Seminar on the Bay of Bengal in the Asian maritime trade and cultural network, 1500-1800, New Delhi, 16-20 December 1994, forthcoming.

<sup>7</sup> S. SUBRAHMANYAM, *Staying on: the Portuguese of southern Coromandel in the late seventeenth century*, in: "The Indian Economic and Social History Review", 22 (1985), 4, pp. 445-463.

of the coast of Coromandel, François Valentyn already noted that Porto Novo came to prominence after the Portuguese, chased away from Sri Lanka and other settlements in the neighbourhood (by the Dutch), were compelled to look for another place. They came to settle at Porto Novo with their entire household. The town, Valentyn continued, was beautiful though not big and was very conveniently located on the sea. The port, which was initially a haven for the indigenous merchants (“in ’t eerst maar een inlands nest”), soon grew into a large and well-built town and, within a short time, flourished to such an extent that the Portuguese did not have to go to any other place. They built here their vessels which they sent to Sumatra, especially Aceh, and also to Malacca, Siam, Manila among many other places. Consequently, the Danes, English, Armenians and many powerful Muslims settled down at Porto Novo and carried on trade with many regions in the Indies, partly together with the Portuguese and partly with the indigenous people <sup>8</sup>.

Why was Porto Novo so important for the trade in the region in the 18th century ? Together with the ports of Tegenapatnam, Cuddalore, Tirumulasal and Devikottai, Porto Novo enjoyed a rich hinterland producing rice. Different types of textiles were manufactured in the weaving villages lying near the coast as well as deep in the hinterland. A few miles inlandward from Tegenapatnam, which lay about five miles north of Porto Novo, there were hundreds of villages inhabited by many weavers and painters. Indigo required for dyeing was manufactured in the region. The textiles exported by the Dutch East India Company from Porto Novo in the 18th century included guineas, salemwares, baftas, parcallas, bethilles, various kinds of tapi, canary sucartons, muris, brandams and bulangs. Most of the coarse cloth exported from Porto Novo came from the famous weaving centre of Salem, lying about 120 miles west of the town. Cloth from that place and also from Udaiyarpalayam was brought to the coast by pack-bullock <sup>9</sup>. The other weaving centres in the region were Dindivanam, Chennamanaikpalayam and Naidapet. The market at the well-known temple-town of Chidambaram also was a source of textiles. Consequently, the port soon attracted the attention of the North-European companies, who were expanding their trade in the 17th century. By the 1680s, both the Dutch and the English had set up their factories at Porto Novo, while Danish and French company ships also appeared before the port now and then.

During the period from the early 17th century till the beginning of the 18th, the political control over Porto Novo changed several times. In the early 17th century the port was under the control of the rulers of Jinji. Later, in

<sup>8</sup> F. VALENTIJN, *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën*, Dordrecht/ Amsterdam, 1724-1726, vol. 5, p. 8.

<sup>9</sup> *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai, dubash to Joseph François Dupleix*, translated from the Tamil and edited by Sir J. F. PRICE, assisted by K. RANGACHARI, 12 vols., vol. 8, p. 342.

the 1640s, the region was conquered by the rulers of Bijapur who controlled the region till the 1670s. In 1677, the Maratha ruler Shivaji attacked the Carnatic and the coastal areas of the southern Carnatic passed under the control of the Marathas who had a governor at Porto Novo <sup>10</sup>. Mughal interest in these parts was reflected in the conquest of the kingdom of Golconda in 1687. Aurangzeb appointed Zulfiqar Ali Khan the *nawab* of the Carnatic, with his capital at Arcot. The subsequent march of the Mughal army towards the south resulted in a Maratha-Mughal conflict that would continue into the 18th century. The Mughals established their authority over Jinji in 1698. Porto Novo was retained as *khalisa* land to be ruled by a *faujdar* <sup>11</sup>.

By the middle decades of the 18th century, Porto Novo was one of the very few ports still flourishing under the indigenous administration. "Whoever carries ready money to Porto Novo", noted the Council of Fort St. George in 1740, "will have goods" <sup>12</sup>. This was echoed by the Dutch governor at Nagapatnam a few decades later: "Porto Novo is such a trading mart that helps all its inhabitants in earning bread ('zodanig een handelsplaats is die alle hare inwoonders aan het brood kan helpen)" <sup>13</sup>. During the Anglo-French war, when trade at Madras and Pondicherry was interrupted, at Porto Novo it was noted to be brisk <sup>14</sup>. It is therefore no wonder that the port was often the target of neighbouring powers. When the Marathas fell upon the Carnatic in 1740, they attacked Porto Novo. The port would be devastated at least twice more in the 18th century — in 1769 and again in 1780, both times by Hyder Ali. A contemporary source estimated the value of the Maratha plunder of the Dutch factory in 1740 at 100,000 pagodas and that of the town at 500,000 pagodas <sup>15</sup>. The Dutch factory was abandoned after the Maratha attack on the port in 1740. All the trading activity was carried on from their base at Tegeneapatnam till December 1745. Already in 1743, the *nawab* of Arcot wanted the Dutch to come back to Porto Novo. The Dutch were trying to obtain a concession on the customs duty payable at the port. Finally, in 1745, they received a *parwana* from the *nawab* granting them the privilege to pay 1% on the value of their export from that post, while the normal rate was 2.5% <sup>16</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> S. ARASARATNAM, *Merchants, Companies and Commerce on the Coromandel Coast, 1650-1740*, Delhi, 1986, p. 43.

<sup>11</sup> S. J. STEPHEN, *Port administration and maritime trade of Porto Novo under the Mughals, 1733-1767*, paper presented to the Second International Symposium on Indian Maritime History, Pondicherry, 16-20 December 1991.

<sup>12</sup> Records of Fort St. George, Despatches to England, vol. 12, 15 January 1740.

<sup>13</sup> Algemeen Rijksarchief (henceforth A.R.A.), Overgekomene Brieven en Papieren (henceforth OBP), Report submitted by the governor Pieter Haksteen on his visit to all the Dutch factories on the Coromandel coast in the year 1767, Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (henceforth VOC) 3197, p. 461.

<sup>14</sup> Private Diary..., *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 126.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 141-144.

<sup>16</sup> A.R.A., OBP, Resolutions of the Nagapatnam Council, 13 April 1745, VOC 2652, pp. 527-528.

Before the Dutch left Porto Novo, they maintained a close check on the incoming and outgoing vessels. It was necessary to check the traffic at the port as Nagapatnam could not attract private European and indigenous traders who avoided it and sailed to Porto Novo and Nagore, among other ports. Every year the ships and vessels arriving at the port and leaving it again were recorded. These records are available for 11 years from 1729 to 1740 (no list is available for the year 1733). It is interesting to note that the lists recorded the type of the vessel, the name of the owner, the port of origin, the name of the port from where the ship was coming and the cargo it brought. Similarly, when the ship was leaving the port, all these particulars would be noted down again along with the name of the port of destination. In both cases the route of the journey was often mentioned. Much has been said about the problems related to the using of these lists in reconstructing the nature of the movement of shipping from a port. While keeping this critique in mind, these lists can still be used as “inclusive” and not “exclusive” source of information<sup>17</sup>. An entry like the following one : “One brigantine, formerly belonging to Mamud Salim, the Muslim merchant of Porto Novo, but now a property of the Chulia Nellabocho Marakkayar, the factor of the Danish East India Company at Porto Novo, sailed for Kedah with 44 packs of textiles and 90 bahars of indigenous tobacco”<sup>18</sup>, says a lot to the historian of Indian maritime trade. But though the shipping lists are rather informative, they are far from complete. The lists were prepared some time between August and October, and thus the lists prepared in August must have left out the ships that sailed after that period<sup>19</sup>. The arrival list for the year 1735, for instance, did not register the French, Danish and the four Asian ships (which, according to the departure list), left the port during the same year. Similarly, the lists of departure are also often incomplete in the sense that, for some years at the end of the list, one sees a few vessels under the heading “ready to sail”. In such cases only the destination of the vessel is mentioned. Again in 1732, it was noted in the arrival list that one ship and one brigantine belonging to the Kedah merchant called

<sup>17</sup> A. DAS GUPTA, *Indian Merchants and the Decline of Surat c. 1700-1750*, Wiesbaden, 1979, Appendix A, pp. 280-292 ; Om PRAKASH, *Asian trade and European impact : a study of the trade from Bengal, 1630-1720*, in : B. B. KING and M. N. PEARSON (eds.), *The Age of Partnership*, Honolulu, 1979 ; S. SUBRAHMANYAM, *Staying on...*, *op. cit.*, p. 457 ; S. ARASARATNAM, *Coromandel revisited : problems and issues in Indian maritime history*, in : “The Indian Economic and Social History Review”, 26 (1989), 1, pp. 101-110.

<sup>18</sup> A.R.A., OBP, VOC 2351, Porto Novo shipping list, pp. 4409-4415.

<sup>19</sup> The list for 1727 was prepared on 11 September, that for 1731 on 27 August and the one for 1737 on 17 October. It should be remembered that during October to December, when the north-east monsoon reaches its peak, the coast of Coromandel was closed to all shipping. The ships of the Dutch East India Company taking cargo from the coast had to leave by October 15 at the latest. For a discussion on the seasonal monsoons in the Indian Ocean and their influence on shipping in the region, see S. ARASARATNAM, *Maritime India in the Seventeenth Century*, Delhi, 1994, chap. 1.

Ali Mia came to Porto Novo after they had disposed of cargo consisting of elephants and tin at Alambaram and San Thome ; they would take in textiles and other goods, and sail for Kedah. The departure list noted that these two vessels sailed back with textiles, indigenous steel, iron nails, salt and some earthenware, but the destination is not mentioned. For preparing table 1, I have used the information available in the departure lists <sup>20</sup>.

TABLE I  
Recorded shipping from Porto Novo, 1729-1740

Destination	1729	1730	1731	1732	1734	1735	1736	1737	1738	1739	1740
Aceh	2	3	3	3	4	4	2	3	3	2	4
Kedah	2		5	3	1	4	6	1		2	2
Malacca	2	1		3	1		1	1	1		
Perak			2		1		1	1	2	1	
Junk Ceylon								1		1	
Pegu										1	
Manila	1			1		1					1
Bengal						1		1		1	
Goa			2								
Surat		1			1						
Basra				2							
Mocha	1	1	2	2	1	1	1				
Lisbon					1				1		
Total	8	6	14	14	10	11	11	8	6	9	7

It is clear from these lists that, around the middle decades of the 18th century, Porto Novo was very much a part of the structure of the high-seas trade of Coromandel. Together with San Thome, Tegenapatnam, Pondicherry, Tranquebar and Nagore, it formed a cluster of ports closely connected through regular movement of vessels. It should be mentioned here that in most cases the shipping lists did not give detailed information about the small coasting vessels coming from neighbouring ports in order to collect textiles at Porto Novo. Such vessels were listed at the end of the shipping lists mentioning the cargo — mainly textiles — they took. But sometimes, as in 1740, ships and vessels coming from and leaving for other Coromandel ports were recorded. Apart from the coastal trade carried on between these ports, they played a complementary role to each other so far as the high-seas trade

<sup>20</sup> These records are to be found in A.R.A., OBP, VOC nos. 2135, pp. 126-127 ; 2197, pp. 511-513 ; 2243, pp. 634-637 ; 2244, pp. 689-696 ; 2349, pp. 591-594 ; 2351, pp. 4409-4415 ; 2412, pp. 334-339 ; 2442, pp. 354-359 ; 2443, pp. 235-239 ; 2471, pp. 1179-1180 ; 2538, pp. 1195-1198. Vessels coming from one Coromandel port and leaving for the same or another port on the coast and thus engaged in coastal trade have not been included in the table. When the destination is known, vessels noted as "ready to sail" have been included ; also, when the arrival list mentioned the destination which was left out in the departure list, the information in the arrival list has been taken into consideration.

was concerned <sup>21</sup>. A shipowner at Madras would have his vessel sailing from San Thome to Malacca via Porto Novo. Similarly, the Achenese merchant Baba Talim's (alternatively written as Babalmi) Coromandel bound ship would first sail to Ganjam, from where it would come to Porto Novo. While sailing back, it would go via Pondicherry and thus make a round trip (shipping list for the year 1730). Another ship, belonging to the French private merchant Dutertre, coming from Batavia, came first to Nagore, then to Tranquebar and then to Porto Novo. It sailed back via Pondicherry. One comes across plenty of examples like this. Due to the monopolistic regulations imposed by the Dutch on trade to and from Coromandel, the ports under their control mostly remained outside the structure of this trade though, on the other side of the Bay of Bengal, Malacca was often visited. Some non-VOC trade, however, passed through Nagapatnam after the relaxations made by the Dutch with regard to the trade in the Bay of Bengal. But it was not important compared to the trade at Nagore and Porto Novo.

It can be seen from the shipping lists that every year at least two ships left Porto Novo for Aceh during the years 1727-1739. Four ships sailed for Aceh in 1734, 1735 and 1740, while during 1730-1732 and 1737-1738 annually three ships left Porto Novo for Aceh. One important feature of Coromandel's trade with ports in South-East Asia was that this trade received encouragement from rulers of South-East Asian states, who often took part in this trade. Among the ships that traded between Aceh and Porto Novo, ships belonging to the king of Aceh featured regularly. We shall come back to this point later. It is likely that indigenous merchants based at other ports on Coromandel also sent ships to Aceh, among other ports in the region. Sala Pillai and Sayyid Pillai, two Marakkayar merchants brothers of Nagore who moved to Dutch Nagapatnam in the 1740s, for instance, had regular trade contacts with Aceh. Textiles were sent from Porto Novo to Nagore on small coasting vessels for their ships bound for Aceh. When Sayyid Pillai died at Nagapatnam in 1755, the value of the merchandise loaded into his ships destined for Aceh, Batavia and Ujang Salang amounted to 31,407 pagodas <sup>22</sup>.

That Coromandel's trade with Aceh continued into the later decades is evident from other kinds of sources too. In 1764, for instance, the Dutch at

<sup>21</sup> See ARASARATNAM's *Coromandel revisited...*, *op. cit.*, for similar observation. In the year 1735, just to give one instance, 122 bales of textiles and 60 packs of steel were dispatched to Madras for the Armenian merchant Coja Parsedan's ship sailing for Malacca, 202 and 224 bales of textiles to Alamparwa and Covelong respectively for two ships of the Ulema at Alambaram, 231 bales of textiles to Pondicherry for France, 48 bales to Cuddalore for an English ship sailing for the west coast of Sumatra, 15 bales to Carical for the Malacca bound ship of Murad Marakkayar, 29 bales to Nagore for a ship of the Marakkayar merchant Sala Pillai bound for Aceh, and 65 bales of textiles to Tranquebar for the Danish Company's ship returning to Europe.

<sup>22</sup> B. BHATTACHARYA, *The Marakkayar merchants...*, *op. cit.*

Nagapatnam reported that 20 vessels had arrived at Porto Novo that year from Pegu, Kedah, Malacca and Aceh<sup>23</sup>. Also important in this connection is the account left by Thomas Forrest. The journal of this free merchant is of particular interest because he made a few voyages to the Mergui Archipelago between the 1760s and the 1780s. He gave a detailed list of the imports and exports of Aceh and described the traders at that place. According to Forrest, Chulias were the most important trading group in Aceh, where he came across 12 Chulia vessels in 1762 and again 7 Chulia vessels in 1783<sup>24</sup>. Thus, it would be wrong to say that Coromandel's trade with Aceh was disrupted in the middle decades of the 18th century; this trade was continued by merchants of Coromandel and the king and merchants of Aceh.

Coming back to Porto Novo, the question that we face is, who were the merchants trading at this port? Here the indigenous merchants based at Coromandel ports should be mentioned first. If one goes by the shipping lists, the Tamil Muslim Marakkayars were the only shipowning merchants of Porto Novo around this time. The Marakkayars, descendants of Arab settlers on the coast who had intermarried with the Tamils, were settled at different ports on the coast, especially on the southern part of it. By the mid-18th century they seem to have been the only major indigenous group of merchants engaged in sea-borne commerce. From the lists mentioned above, we get the names of 14 Marakkayar merchants: 9 of them were from Porto Novo, one from Madras, Carical and Cuddalore each, while two were from Nagore. It is known from the works of Arasaratnam, Subrahmanyam and Susan Bayly that the Marakkayars had ethnic contacts with people in the coastal regions of Sri Lanka and the ports in South-East Asia, where many of them had settled. Their trade was confined for the most part to the ports in the Bay of Bengal. Merchants from Coromandel seem to have sailed to the ports on the eastern littoral of the Bay of Bengal, Aceh and Kedah being their two favourite destinations in the 18th century. The other ports they visited were Malacca, Perak, Ujang Salang or Junk Ceylon. Though the shipping lists do not say much about the trade to Sri Lanka, it is evident from other records and the shipping lists of Colombo and Caits in Sri Lanka that Porto Novo merchants traded to the ports in that island too.

<sup>23</sup> A.R.A., OBP, Nagapatnam-Batavia, 14 October 1764, VOC 3107, pp. 251-252.

<sup>24</sup> T. FORREST, *A Voyage from Calcutta to the Mergui Archipelago lying on the East Side of the Bay of Bengal*, London, 1792; compare: "The Chulias of Porto Novo and Nagore send ships to Achin, Mergui, Siam and the Eastern coast...", G. T. F. RAYNAL, *A Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies*, 5 vols., tr. J. JUSTAMOND, London, 1776, vol. 1, p. 279. The term "Chulia" refers to Marakkayar merchants of Coromandel sailing to ports in South-East Asia, many of whom had settled at those ports over the years. For a detailed discussion on these merchants see ARASARATNAM, *Merchants, Companies...*, *op. cit.*, and BHATTACHARYA, *op. cit.*

The fact that only a few Hindu merchants were engaged in overseas trade is noted also for the 17th century<sup>25</sup>. From the shipping lists we get the names of only two Hindu merchants, one based at Madras and the other at Pondicherry. This, however, does not mean that there were no other Hindu merchants. The Hindu merchants based at European ports like Madras, Pondicherry and Tranquebar, while supplying textiles to the European companies, also took part in overseas trade.

The disappearance of “portfolio capitalists” or “political merchants” from maritime commerce in the early 18th century is a subject much discussed in the literature. The terms refer to political elites who in the earlier times, to quote Arasaratnam, “utilised their political positions to further their commercial interests”. With strong links to the government, they often engaged in diversified economic activities including revenue or customs farming, inland trade and overseas commerce. Withdrawal from maritime commerce on their part is a feature noted in both Bengal and Coromandel<sup>26</sup>. There is some evidence to show that a few of such political figures still took part in maritime trade. One such person was Imam Sahib or Ghulam Imam Hussain Khan. Formerly a slave, Imam Sahib was a follower of the Navait *nawabs* of Arcot. He was appointed the *faujdar* of Alambaram by Sadatullah Khan. Imam Sahib was reported to have obtained the grant of the revenues of San Thome under the “Charitable Pretence” of fitting out two ships from that port to carry pilgrims to Mecca<sup>27</sup>. In 1734, one of his ships arrived at Porto Novo from Mocha with six chests of silver specie, some coffee beans, dates, raisins and rose-water. The ship sailed back for Mocha the same year with 86 bales of textiles and 21 packs of indigenous saffron<sup>28</sup>. Again in 1736, one ship belonging to him left Porto Novo for Kedah with 40 bales of textiles and 10 bahars of indigenous tobacco<sup>29</sup>. Imam Sahib seems to have had a good relationship with the French whom he held in high esteem<sup>30</sup>. He also owned the ship “Maure” in partnership with the French governor Dumas which sailed from Pondicherry for Mocha in 1736<sup>31</sup>. This ship made a voyage to Mocha again in 1739, when it carried some goods belonging to Ananda Ranga Pillai, the *dubash* to Duplex at Pondicherry<sup>32</sup>. At least one of Imam Sahib’s ships

<sup>25</sup> S. SUBRAHMANYAM, *Staying on...*, *op. cit.*

<sup>26</sup> S. ARASARATNAM, *Merchants, Commerce...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 222-224 ; S. SUBRAHMANYAM and C. A. BAYLY, *Portfolio capitalists and political economy in early modern India*, in : “The Indian Economic and Social History Review”, 25 (1988), 4, pp. 242-265.

<sup>27</sup> India Office Library & Records (IOLR), Public Consultations, Fort St. George, January 1733-1734, P/240/1, p. 6.

<sup>28</sup> Shipping list, Porto Novo, 1734, VOC 2349, pp. 591-594.

<sup>29</sup> Shipping list, Porto Novo, 1736, VOC 2412, pp. 334-339.

<sup>30</sup> C. MANNING, *French interests in Asian trade*, in : “Moyen Orient & Océan Indien”, 7 (1990), pp. 145-146.

<sup>31</sup> *Private Diary...*, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 11.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 99.

continued to sail in the 1740s<sup>33</sup>. A ship belonging to the *nawab* of Bengal and another belonging to the King of Cannanore would also often come to Porto Novo<sup>34</sup>. But except for these few instances, the ruling elites remained largely out of sea-borne trade<sup>35</sup>.

Many of the ships visiting Porto Novo belonged to merchants of the ports in south-east Asia. As it has been said before that Coromandel trade was encouraged by the rulers of South-East Asian states who themselves took part in this trade. Every year, one or two ships belonging to the king of Aceh visited Porto Novo<sup>36</sup>. Chulia influence at the courts in the states of South-East Asia is a fact well-known. Descendants of Chulia Muslims settled in the ports of the region figure regularly in the shipping lists. Their ships also touched more than one port on Coromandel.

Occasionally, ships owned by indigenous merchants of other regions in India would also appear before the roadstead at Porto Novo. Among these were the Aceh-bound ships of Surat merchants. In 1730, one such ship came from Aceh with three horses, some *bhang* leaves<sup>37</sup>, benzoin and camphor, and sailed back to Aceh with 460 large bales of piecegoods, 14 packs of indigenous steel, 60 packs of tobacco and salt as ballast. In 1734, the Bengal ship of the "Moorish" merchant Abdullah Kariman of Surat came to Porto Novo on its way from Bengal to Surat<sup>38</sup>. The three ships that came from Malabar in 1730, 1731 and 1735 respectively, also fell under this category.

Unlike what Subrahmanyam has shown for the late 17th century, the role played by North-European private traders in the shipping at Porto Novo was rather important in the middle decades of the 18th century. It was the time when the Calcutta fleet was undergoing an expansion and English private traders often avoided Madras and visited the indigenous ports including Porto Novo in the south. Bengal ships coming to Porto Novo belonged to two categories: some were the ships meant for the trade in the western Indian Ocean; they came from Basra or Surat, touching one or two Malabar ports

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 145 (12 January 1741) and 266 (10 February 1745).

<sup>34</sup> Porto Novo shipping lists, *op. cit.* n. 20; ships belonging to the *nawab* of Bengal sailed to ports in Sri Lanka too, see e.g. Colombo shipping list, 1737-1738, VOC 2431, pp. 1966-1969.

<sup>35</sup> Towards the end of the 18th century, the *nawab* of Carnatic was taking part in the trade in the Bay of Bengal, ARASARATNAM, *Coromandel's Bay of Bengal trade...*, *op. cit.*

<sup>36</sup> Porto Novo shipping list, *op. cit.* n. 20; compare: "Six or seven ships belonging to the king of Achin and others were about to return from Porto Novo, Nagore and Negapatnam and five or six ships belonging to the king of Kedah were sailing as well", *Private Diary...*, vol. 5, pp. 104. It is possible that all these ships did not belong to the king of the respective countries but were coming from their dominions.

<sup>37</sup> *Bhang* refers to hemp, some varieties of which are used for making rope and others for producing the drug cannabis.

<sup>38</sup> Another Bengal ship, belonging to Mullah Kamal of Surat which reached Porto Novo in 1731, was sunk along with many other ships north of Porto Novo due to a heavy storm in March of that year. VOC 2243, pp. 634-637.

on the way. Some were sailing to ports in Coromandel only. English private ships arriving at Porto Novo often came from other regions too. In 1729, one Madras ship, on its way back from Junk Ceylon, disposed of 100 bahars of tin at Porto Novo. Two private ships which arrived at the port in 1731, owned by Joseph Lowel and John Parson respectively, disposed of some dried ginger and wheat, and sailed back northwards<sup>39</sup>. The following year, three English ships arrived at the port. One ship, belonging to Perceval Gooding of Madras, collected textiles and some other goods at Porto Novo, and sailed for Malacca via Pulicat and Aceh. Another ship, the owner of which was one Mr. Hurst, came from Goa and went to Bengal via Madras. The third ship, which was from Madras (owner not known), took in textiles and sailed for Basra. In 1734 again, four privately owned English ships appeared before the port : two of them were Bengal's Surat ships touching the port on the way back ; the third one was also from Bengal, coming via Tranquebar ; the last one was from Pegu. This apart, every year a number of coasting vessels carried from Porto Novo to Madras the piece-goods required for the English company's trade.

French shipping — both company and private — at Porto Novo was more important than their English counterpart. Not only that, there was a close relationship between the French at Pondicherry and the Marakkayar merchants of Porto Novo. Marakkayars were often called to sail on board French ships as supercargo ; French ships would carry goods freighted by the Marakkayars<sup>40</sup>. Every year at least one, if not more, French ship came to Porto Novo to take in textiles before sailing for an overseas port. French company ships would usually sail to Porto Novo from Pondicherry and then sail for Aceh. Elsewhere in this volume, Catherine Manning has shown that the French East India Company was heavily dependent on private investments for its trading ventures in Asia. Due to lack of finances, the French company had to combine public and private enterprise and this was clearly reflected in the Mocha trade where the French company was trading in partnership with company servants and Indian merchants. It is therefore understandable that the shipping lists of Porto Novo often did not make any distinction between the French company and private ships. In 1731, for instance, the list recorded five French ships leaving Porto Novo : one for Aceh, two for Mocha and two for Goa. Together, these ships took as many as 1624 bales of piece-goods from the port<sup>41</sup>. In 1732 again, three ships and one brigantine from Pondicherry carried 1525 bales for Mocha, Basra and Aceh<sup>42</sup>. One private merchant whose name appears on the shipping lists was Jean Dutertre, an inhabitant of Manila.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> BHATTACHARYA, *Marakkayars merchants...*, *op. cit.* ; C. MANNING, *op. cit.*

<sup>41</sup> VOC 2243, pp. 634-637.

<sup>42</sup> VOC 2244, pp. 689-696.

His ships also would touch different ports on the coast like Tranquebar, Nagore, Cuddalore and Pondicherry in addition to Porto Novo, doing some buying or selling at all these places<sup>43</sup>. Another privately owned ship from Macao called at Porto Novo and, after taking in some tin and sandalwood, went to Pondicherry<sup>44</sup>.

Almost every year at least one Danish ship would come to Porto Novo and sail directly, though some times via Tranquebar, for Aceh. Armenian traders do not figure often in the shipping lists — they seem to have concentrated at Madras and Pondicherry. We come across the names of three Armenian merchants at Porto Novo. One of them, called Coja Marian, was an inhabitant of Manila. His ship brought 112 bahars of powdered sugar, 20 bahars of resin, and 14 chests of Spanish silver mats<sup>45</sup>. The other person, Coja Alias, was an important inhabitant of Pondicherry. The list mentions one of his ships sailing from Porto Novo for Malacca<sup>46</sup>. Another Armenian ship based at Madras came to Porto Novo in 1740 and sailed for Manila with 383 bales of piece-goods<sup>47</sup>.

The near-disappearance of Portuguese merchants from Porto Novo shipping lists is remarkable. In the late 17th century, Portuguese participation in Porto Novo's shipping, as Subrahmanyam has shown, was quite considerable. It is not that they withdrew from the trade in the region in the 18th century. Researches by G. B. Souza have shown that the Portuguese trade very much continued into the 18th century. The network of their trade extended from the Malabar coast in the West to Manila in the East. From their base at Macao they regularly visited Malacca and both the east and west coasts of South India. On the Coromandel coast, they were now trading mostly at the English port of Madras<sup>48</sup>. But they also traded at Nagapatnam and Porto Novo. Their trade consisted principally in collecting piece-goods in Coromandel for Malacca, Macassar and Manila, and bringing back gold, cloves and China sugar. The only Mestico recorded as an inhabitant of Porto Novo was Gabriel da Costa. Portuguese ships sailing on routes other than the Madras-Macao route also came to Porto Novo. One such route was the Lisbon-Bengal route. In 1734, one Portuguese ship came from Bengal to Porto Novo on its way to Lisbon. In 1737, one fregate belonging to Laurenço Velasco of Lisbon came to Porto Novo. The ship had brought 16 chests of silver, 2 chests of coral and 1 chest of gold valued approximately at 50,000 pagodas, to be invested

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* ; also VOC 2197, pp. 511-513.

<sup>44</sup> VOC 2412, pp. 334-339.

<sup>45</sup> VOC 2351, pp. 4409-4415.

<sup>46</sup> VOC 2412, pp. 334-339 ; Malacca shipping list, 1736, VOC 2383, p. 377.

<sup>47</sup> VOC 2538, pp. 1195-1198.

<sup>48</sup> G. B. SOUZA, *The Survival of Empire : Portuguese Trade and Society in China and the South China Sea, 1630-1754*, Cambridge, 1986, p. 78.

in the collection of piece-goods. Tempest Milner, the supercargo of the ship, sailed on board for Bengal; Belchor de Argue, the second in command, and another Portuguese stayed back at Porto Novo with six soldiers. This ship sailed back in 1739 and came to Porto Novo in 1740 via Pondicherry, and left for Lisbon via San Thome<sup>49</sup>.

The “Moorish” merchant mentioned as distinct from the Chulias seems to have referred to the Pathans. The Pathans had played a dominant role in the trade of Masulipatnam in the 17th century. After the decline of that port, these merchants dispersed to San Thome, Covelong, Porto Novo and ports on the Gingelly coast<sup>50</sup>. By the 1730s, the Pathans seem to have concentrated at San Thome, Covelong, Alambaram and Madras. The English at Madras noted with anxiety that: “Cobelong and Allumbrum are Grants from the nabob to some of his favourites who by their Interest and influence with the Rich men in the country and by Grants of particular Privileges at those Ports have prevailed on them to employ the Patans to carry on a trade there and the contract the Patans for the most Part are under is to have  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the proffit for their Expençe & trouble in going the voyage the other two thirds with the Principal they are to Account for with those who Supply them with money”<sup>51</sup>, and that, so long as the Pathans were supplied with money and were supported by men with influence with the administration, they would continue to import at such places as they were directed to do<sup>52</sup>. Only one ship belonging to a “Moorish” merchant of San Thome is mentioned in the lists. This ship came from Aceh and brought as many as 104 horses<sup>53</sup>. But some of these traders continued to receive the patronage from the ruling elites. In 1746, for instance, the *nawab* Anwar-ud-din Khan wrote to the French governor at Pondicherry on two occasions, requesting for passes for four vessels sailing from Covelong — three for Chittagong and one for Tenasserim. The same year, one Mamrez Khan of Mylapore also asked the French for a safe conduct for his ship bound for Kedah and Tenasserim<sup>54</sup>.

<sup>49</sup> See B. BHATTACHARYA, *The Dutch East India Company on the Coromandel Coast 1740-1780, a study of its decline*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis submitted to the Visva Bharati University, 1993, chap. 3. Portuguese ships came to Nagapatnam too; see for instance the Nagapatnam shipping lists for the years 1762 and 1769 in VOC 3043 and 3260 respectively.

<sup>50</sup> S. ARASARATNAM, *Merchants, Companies...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 166 and 169-171.

<sup>51</sup> IOLR, Public Consultations of Fort St. George, P/240/1, 1733-1734, p. 6.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>53</sup> The goods imported by this ship were 360 ammonums of areca nuts, 100 packs of gansja leaves (cannabis), 10 bahars of benzoin, 10 bahars of sappan wood, 2 packets of fragrant leaves and 30 packs of sulphur, VOC 2443, pp. 235-239. The other occasion when a Moor merchant was mentioned was in 1735, when one brigantine belonging to Mahmud Salim of Porto Novo was noted to have arrived from Malacca; see note 14 above.

<sup>54</sup> *Private Diary...*, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 179-180, 182-183 and 214; also see vol. 9, p. 107 for Pathan merchants trading at Porto Novo.

The number of vessels as registered in the Porto Novo shipping lists during 1729-1740 (except the year 1733) was : Marakkayars from Coromandel : 44, opposite port traders : 21, French : 21, English : 17, Danish : 9, Portuguese : 5, indigenous ships from other parts of India : 8, political merchants : 3, Coromandel Hindu : 3, Armenian : 3, Coromandel Moor : 1. It can be questioned if all the ships registered as belonging to Indian merchants were actually owned by them and if at least some of them were not European owned vessels operating in partnership with Indian merchants, and thus sailing under indigenous names. The latter possibility cannot be completely rejected ; but given the fact that the Marakkayars had a long tradition of trade with ports in South-East Asia which continued into the 19th century, there is no reason to reject the information given by the shipping lists as baseless. It has been shown above that the shipping lists in fact corroborate the evidence on the activity of Marakkayar merchants available elsewhere and confirm the hypothesis with regard to the continuity of indigenous trade in the face of changes brought about in the Indian Ocean trade in the 18th century.

So far as the movement of commodities was concerned, piece-goods remained the single most important item carried from Porto Novo. In addition, there were other indigenous products like steel, iron nails, tobacco, earthenware and salt which were taken to markets in South-East Asia. Production of one of the New World crops, tobacco, was introduced in the Tirunelveli region and the Krishna-Godavari region around the year 1600<sup>55</sup>. As regards iron and steel, the centres of production were in interior Andhra and western Mysore. In the 17th century, there was a regular iron nails manufacturing industry in the region around Narasapur in Andhra<sup>56</sup>. Goods imported to Porto Novo often featured among the exports from the port. The ship of Sesadri Chetti in 1734, for instance, carried 50 bales of textiles, some wheat, rice, 700 bundles of ordinary porcelain, 2 Achinese horses and 5 packets of indigenous saffron or turmeric to Galle<sup>57</sup>. European company ships employed in intra-Asian trade, if coming to Porto Novo from their base on Coromandel to collect textiles, usually did not import anything. But when they were coming back from an overseas port and touched Porto Novo first, they brought the usual items. The Danish ship coming from Aceh in 1729, for example, imported horses, benzoin and rattan. One commodity among these imports, viz. horses, deserves special mention. Though Subrahmanyam mentions trade in horses, it is not evident from his works if horses were being imported to Coromandel from South-East Asian ports in the 16th and 17th centuries. Ramaraya, the brother-

<sup>55</sup> S. SUBRAHMANYAM, *The Political Economy of Commerce : Southern India, 1500-1650*, Cambridge, 1990, p. 28.

<sup>56</sup> Private communication from Selma Lowe, March 1994.

<sup>57</sup> Shipping list, 1734, VOC 2349, pp. 591-594.

in-law of the Vijayanagara emperor Sadavisa Raya, had a positive attitude towards the Portuguese because he wanted to import Arabian and Persian horses from Goa <sup>58</sup>. Arasaratnam, on the other hand, has shown that Persian horses were transhipped from Masulipatnam to Aceh in the second half of the 17th century <sup>59</sup>. But import of horses from Aceh seems to have been common in the 16th and 17th centuries <sup>60</sup>. The indigenous horses of Sumatra were small and known as *batak* horses. It seems that the export of horses from Aceh increased in the 18th century, when a special tax was introduced on the export of horses <sup>61</sup>. It is evident from the shipping lists of Porto Novo that horses were regularly imported there from South-East Asian ports, especially from Aceh. Some horses were brought from Malacca and Kedah too. During the period 1729-1739, as many as 389 horses were listed to have been brought to Porto Novo. Certainly, this is the tip of the iceberg as the lists perhaps did not cover all the horses brought to the port and Porto Novo was not the only port where horses were imported <sup>62</sup>. It appears from Ananda Ranga Pillai's diary that, by the middle decades of the 18th century, horses were regularly imported to Coromandel from South-East Asia and it was not uncommon for Indian merchants to buy a few, perhaps in order to give away as a gift, or to resell at a higher price. When Chinna Uddandi Mudali, the chief *dubash* at Madras, visited Pondicherry in 1743, Ananda Ranga presented him with four jewelled ornaments and an Achenese horse <sup>63</sup>. In 1740, one ship coming back from Manila was noted to have returned with 250 Achenese horses <sup>64</sup>. By the early 1750s, the price of horses brought to Pondicherry was noted to have considerably increased — whereas earlier one horse could fetch Rs. 200 at the most, now they were selling at a price between Rs. 300 and 600 each. A pair of good carriage horses would cost Rs. 610. The pair would afterwards be broken and the horses would be sold separately at a higher

<sup>58</sup> S. SUBRAHMANYAM, *Improvising Empire : Portuguese Trade and Settlement in the Bay of Bengal, 1500-1700*, Delhi, 1990, p. 56 ; ID., *Political Economy...*, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

<sup>59</sup> ARASARATNAM, *Merchants, Companies...*, p. 119.

<sup>60</sup> Private communication from Prof. Denys and Prof. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, Delhi, December 1994 ; also *Voyages and Discoveries by William Dampier*, with introduction and notes by C. WILKINSON, London, 1931, p. 89.

<sup>61</sup> I owe this information to Ticia Rueb, Leiden, who is working on Aceh.

<sup>62</sup> The number of horses brought by the Danish ship in 1729 is not known, for instance. In 1735, the two ships of the king of Aceh imported 48 horses to Porto Novo, while his ship in 1738 brought none. It is possible that, since this latter ship came via Jaffna and Nagore, it disposed of the horses at any of those two places or at both. Horses were imported to Nagapatnam too ; see BHATTACHARYA, *Marakkayar merchants...*, *op. cit.* ; also Nagapatnam shipping lists, VOC 3043, p. 199 and 3260, pp. 669-670.

<sup>63</sup> *Private Diary...*, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 226 ; in 1753, Naganna Nayakan, the *gumastah* of Vallabhu Sundara Das, himself a *gumastah* of the Gujarati banker Kashi Das Bukkanji, purchased horses, vol. 8, p. 306.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 144.

rate<sup>65</sup>. Still, the horses obtained from ports in south-east Asia seem to have been cheaper compared to the horses from Central Asia reaching South Indian markets through overland routes. A good cavalry horse brought overland to the temple town of Tirupati cost about 150-200 pagodas or 500-700 rupees in the 1770s<sup>66</sup>. It has to be remembered though that horses coming from Central Asia were mainly war-horses, whereas those coming from Aceh, for instance, were of an inferior quality and were purchased, as it appears from the account left by Ananda Ranga Pillai, by wealthy people, perhaps for riding. The number of horses coming from South-East Asia must have remained small in comparison with the horses brought to Coromandel overland, but their import from this end reflects their demand in Coromandel.

To conclude, we can summarise the features that become evident from the account of trade and shipping at Porto Novo sketched above. This port, which came into prominence in the second half of the 17th century, continued to play the role of an entrepot in the 18th century. Much of the trade of Porto Novo, so far as it was carried on by indigenous merchants, was directed to ports in the Bay of Bengal. Throughout the 18th century, Aceh, together with a few neighbouring ports, remained a stronghold of indigenous merchants sailing from Coromandel. The shipping at Porto Novo, as recorded in the 1730s, was little less than what it had been in the 1680s<sup>67</sup>. Portuguese traders, who had played a considerable part in the trade of the port in the late 17th century, had moved away from the port. Tamil Marakkayars were now the only shipowning merchants Porto Novo could boast of. Together with the merchants from ports in South-East Asia, they dominated the trade in the Bay of Bengal in the middle decades of the 18th century. On the other hand, Porto Novo's trade with the ports in the Western Indian Ocean was mostly in the hand of the North-European traders with the exception of the few ships coming from other regions and the ones owned by Imam Sahib. North-European traders were now playing a more important role in the trade of the port. From their settlements on the coast and elsewhere, they regularly came to Porto Novo in order to collect textiles. So far as the commodities traded were concerned, import of horses from ports of South-East Asia, though known in the earlier period, seems to have been more regularised in the 18th century, as is reflected in the introduction of a duty on the export of horses from Aceh. Unfortunately, we have no shipping lists from the port for the later decades of the 18th century, but other kinds of sources suggest that much of the trade of Porto Novo continued into the later part of the century.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 8, pp. 305-306. Unfortunately, it is not known what happened to the horses after they were disembarked at Porto Novo.

<sup>66</sup> J. GOMMANS, "Horse Trade in eighteenth century South Asia", in: *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, v. 37, pp. 228-250.

<sup>67</sup> S. SUBRAHMANYAM, *Staying on..., op. cit.*

# THE FACTORIES \* AND HONGS OF THE OSTEND COMPANY : AN ASSESSMENT

BY

Karel DEGRYSE

The Asian trade of the Ostend Company (1722-1732) was mainly concentrated on Bengal and on Canton in China. In the trade with China it invested 5 million guilders (exchange money) which yielded an average net profit of 139% for each venture. The investment in the trade with Bengal came to 5,280,000 guilders but the yield was much lower as it only averaged 10% for each venture<sup>1</sup>. The enormous success of the trade with Canton can of course be explained by the booming of the profitable tea-trade, but it also owed a lot to the trading-system which was followed there. In China the central authorities had strict control of the foreign trade and as permanent factories were not allowed, all the companies were obliged to hire a “hong” during their stay in Canton. These “hongs” were a kind of warehouses, all situated outside the city walls on the banks of the Pearl river. Such a centralised trading-system was very advantageous for newcomers like the Ostenders, as all foreigners were treated in the same way. They had to pay the same taxes, had to hire the same kind of “hongs” and had the same opportunities to trade with some selected Chinese merchants<sup>2</sup>.

\* The word “factory” has to be understood here in the narrow sense : a permanent, fortified trading centre, possessed by trading companies, from where overseas trade was organized. According to broader definitions of the word even a “hong” could be considered as a factory. However, it will be clear from this paper that there is a large and important difference between “hongs” and what we consider as a factory.

<sup>1</sup> K. DEGRYSE, *De Oostendse Chinahandel (1718-1735)*, in : “Tijdschrift voor Filologie en Geschiedenis”, 52 (1974), pp. 340-343.

<sup>2</sup> On the Ostend trade with China : K. DEGRYSE, *De Oostendse Chinahandel*, pp. 306-347 ; ID., *The origins of the growth of West-European tea-trade in the 18th century*, in : K. FRIEDLAND (ed.), *Maritime Food Transport*, Köln, 1994, pp. 483-488 ; K. DEGRYSE and J. PARMENTIER, *Maritime aspects of the Ostend trade to Mocha, India and Chine (1715-1732)*, in : J. R. BRUIJN and F. S. GAASTRA (eds.), *Ships, Sailors and Spices. East India Companies and their shipping in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries*, Amsterdam, 1993, pp. 139-175. — On the western trade with

The little success in the Ostend trade with Bengal can partially be explained by the loss of one ship and the capture of another, but the most important reason was the fierce competition between the western companies that were active on the banks of the Ganges. This ruthless rivalry was inherent in the trading-system which was used there. Thanks to the crumbling of central political power in the Indian subcontinent all western companies could establish and possess permanent factories, which they turned into strongholds from where all trade was organized and competitors were crossed in their activities. In Bengal the most important factories were Chinsura (near Hugli), Fort William (Calcutta) and Chandernagore, owned respectively by the Dutch, English and French East-India Companies. The Ostend Company also managed to build a fortified factory in Banquibazar, situated between Chandernagore and Calcutta. Banquibazar, however, turned out to be a very costly affair. Of the 5,280,000 guilders invested in the company trade with Bengal almost 800,000 (or 15%) were absorbed by the purchase, building, maintenance and manning of the factory during the years 1724-1734<sup>3</sup>. These heavy factory costs were of course also one of the major reasons for the little success of the trade with Bengal by the Ostend Company. It is therefore surprising to find that some private Ostend ventures in the Bengal trade, undertaken before the establishment of the Ostend Company and without the support of a factory, were by far more profitable than the undertakings of the Company. The "Stadt Weenen", the first Ostend East-Indiaman that came to Bengal (1720-1721) realized a net profit of 56.6% and the "Carolus Sextus" (1723-1724) even yielded 104.4%<sup>4</sup>. So we can wonder if a Bengal factory was really necessary and cost-effective for the new and rather small Ostend company which for instance had no monopoly position to defend like the Dutch. What were the reasons why the Ostend directors eventually decided for the factory-system ?

To gain insight in the divergent opinions in the Southern Netherlands about permanent factories and territorial possessions in Asia, it is necessary to return to the private ventures which preceded the Ostend Company. Between 1715 and 1723 34 ships, financed by different syndicates of private merchants

China in general : L. DERMIGNY, *La Chine et l'Occident. Le commerce à Canton au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle (1719-1833)*, 4 vols., Paris, 1964 ; C. J. A. JORG, *Porcelain and the Dutch China trade*, Den Haag, 1982, pp. 46-90.

<sup>3</sup> R. BAETENS, *Investerings en rendement bij de Generale Indische Compagnie : de handel op Bengalen vergeleken met de Chinahandel*, in : "Album Charles Verlinden", Ghent, 1975, p. 30. On Banquibazar in general : N. LAUDE, *La Compagnie d'Ostende et son activité coloniale au Bengale (1725-1730)*, Brussels, 1944 ; J. PARMENTIER, *De holle compagnie. Smokkel en legale handel onder Zuidnederlandse vlag in Bengalen*, Hilversum, 1992.

<sup>4</sup> K. DEGRYSE and J. PARMENTIER, *Maritime aspects...*, pp. 168 and 171. We have to append here that the investment period was almost the same for the private as for the company ventures. It was about two years on average.

and bankers, sailed from Ostend to China, India and Mocha<sup>5</sup>. The trade with China could in those days also rely on the “hong”-system and caused little problems. India-trade on the other hand had to be managed without factories and the Ostend Indiamen mainly sailed to Surat, the largest emporium of the Mughal empire, and other trading centres on the Malabar or Coromandel coast to fill their cargoes. The financial syndicates which invested in these private ventures certainly had no plans for permanent factories as those syndicates were too temporary and could not afford such a high expenditure. There were nevertheless some participants in these early voyages who held other opinions on this matter.

When in July 1720 the “Carolus Sextus” returned in Ostend after a long journey to the Malabar and Coromandel coast, the directors of this ship learned much to their surprise that the French captain, Godefroy de la Merveille, had spent part of his silver cargo to obtain the concession for a factory at Kovalam (Cabelon) on the Coromandel coast. Completely on his own initiative he had taken possession of this place in the name of the Austrian emperor and had left there a mere handful of men to defend the imperial standard. The directors were not pleased at all with this initiative and as the Frenchman had furthermore done bad business in India — the “Carolus Sextus” suffered a loss of 50% — he fell into total disgrace. De la Merveille was sued and he could definitely say goodbye to a career in the Ostend East-India trade. His bold actions were however not immediately repudiated by the Austrian government in Vienna. The emperor decided that Kovalam could be of use for the company that was to be established soon, and so it indeed became one of the two company factories. The directors who had shifted their attention to Bengal almost did not use Kovalam and let it languish<sup>6</sup>.

Some legal proceedings concerning the De la Merveille case put his undertakings in different and clarifying light. According to these documents he spent in 1719 a lot of time dealing with some inhabitants of the nearby French factory of Pondicherry. As a result of this and being short of cargo, the “Carolus Sextus” had brought a considerable load of East Indian goods for the account of a certain Agnes Desprez, widow of Claude d’Hardincourt, chevalier de Saint-Lazare and governor of Pondicherry. The widow had agreed to pay 20% of the auction price to the directors of the ship as a kind of freightage. The goods were indeed auctioned in Ostend, but she never payed the freight rate<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 165-175. This appendix gives a complete survey of all Ostend East Indiamen (1715-1732).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 166 ; M. HUISMAN, *La Belgique commerciale sous l'empereur Charles VI. La Compagnie d'Ostende*, Brussels, 1902, pp. 147-154 ; J. PARMENTIER, *De holle compagnie...*, pp. 11-12 ; S. ARASARATNAM, *Merchants, Companies and Commerce on the Coromandel Coast, 1650-1740*, Oxford, 1986, pp. 22-23 and 173.

<sup>7</sup> Rijksarchief Gent / Raad van Vlaanderen, 25, 976.

This incident clearly shows who benefitted the most from the factory-system. It were the company merchants and officials who, during their long stay in the factories, had all the time to engage in the Asian trade for themselves. One of the problems for these officials yet was the repatriation of their — mostly illegal — fortunes which they had accumulated by private country trade. Factories and merchants of other companies could be a great help here and Kovalam (Cabelon), situated between the French factory of Pondicherry and the English of Madras, certainly would have played an important part in this business if the plans of De la Merveille had gone through <sup>8</sup>.

Confronted in the early 1720s with the Kovalam case and considering at the same time the establishment of an East-India company in Ostend, the Austrian government asked some of the directors of the early private ventures (like Cloots, De Pret and Maelcamp) for their advice. Their advice was that factories were not indispensable, very expensive and that it would cause the envy of the competing companies. Those merchants had found a partisan in the Marquis de Prié, the Austrian minister in Brussels, but their adversaries were still more formidable. Councillors at the court in Vienna like the Marquis de Rialp were for political and prestige reasons pleased with the idea of some imperial factories in India and they succeeded in convincing the emperor of their ideas. The Marquis de Rialp also received strong support from merchants and supercargoes (like Alexander Hume, supercargo of the “Stadt Weenen”) returning from India with the private ships. They all insisted that factories were really necessary and not so difficult to acquire, but we know already from the De la Merveille case that such an advice was not always unselfish. The court in Vienna however believed those supercargoes, whereas the opposition from the Marquis de Prié, Cloots, De Pret and Maelcamp was brushed aside with the assertion that they were in fact adversaries of a new company and therefore prejudiced against it. It is true that Jacomo de Pret and Jacobus Maelcamp hoped for a while that the emperor would grant them a charter for a private company, but that does not necessarily imply that their advice on the factories was wrong <sup>9</sup>.

The pro-factory lobby made it and the Ostend Company eventually disposed of two factories in India : Kovalam (Cabelon) and Banquibazar. De Pret and Maelcamp, who were appointed as directors of the company, could not prevent this. Their initial reserve against permanent factories yet quickly turned out to be correct. Kovalam was of very little use and Cobbé, the first governor who was sent to Bengal, really made a mess of it. He was a military man with

<sup>8</sup> See also J. PARMENTIER, *De holle compagnie...*, *passim* ; F. S. GAASTRA, *De geschiedenis van de VOC*, Leiden, 1991, pp. 94-101 ; H. FURBER, *Rival Empires of the Trade in Orient, 1600-1800*, Minneapolis, 1976, *passim*, on the importance of country trade and fraude in the East-Indies.

<sup>9</sup> M. HUISMAN, *La Belgique...*, pp. 152-154.

little sense for diplomacy and trade, and he soon started a war with the local nabob in which Cobbé was killed <sup>10</sup>. His successor, Alexander Hume, was an experienced merchant and much abler than Cobbé. He developed Banquibazar into a substantial factory, but even he did not succeed in making the Bengal trade really profitable again <sup>11</sup>.

The incidents in Bengal were of course not such that the directors De Pret and Maelcamp changed their initial opinion on factories. Their aversion for it was even reinforced. When in 1733 Jacomo de Pret was asked for some advice concerning a new East-Indian Company that was to be established in Spain ("The Philippine Company"), he answered: "Je crois le commerce de la Chine plus lucratif et plus facile que celui de Bengale. Il est aussi plus à la portée des Philippines. Si dans la suite vous voulez entreprendre celui de Bengale, je ne scaurois vous conseiller de prendre aucune factorie. Je parle par experience. La factorie est fort frayeuse, elle donne de la jalousie aux autres nations, et le commerce que nous avons fait avant d'avoir la factorie nous a mieux réussi. On n'a qu'à aller jusqu'à Hougly ou les principaux marchands et courtiers demeurent, qui vous fourniront assez de marchandises. Vous avez pardessus la factorie des Français à Chandernagor, qui ont rendu des bons services aux Ostendais et n'en rendront pas moins aux Espagnols" <sup>12</sup>. When the same Jacomo de Pret and Jacobus Maelcamp tried — in vain — to reanimate and reshape the Ostend Company in 1734-1735, they also proposed that the company in its new form would give up all its factories <sup>13</sup>.

One can of course discuss the simple solution of De Pret to forget the factories and to confine the Bengal trade to direct voyages to Hugli. The other western companies had indeed left Hugli and established new factories. The main reason for this was military: Hugli was difficult to defend and separated from the sea by a long and dangerous river journey <sup>14</sup>. These drawbacks, however, especially concerned wartime and was it not always hazardous to trade in such a period, even if one possessed a real stronghold? Was it not much wiser for small companies to simply cancel the voyages in wartime?

Another objection to the solution of De Pret could be the fact that permanent merchants were indispensable as ordering and delivering of goods took much time in Bengal <sup>15</sup>. But was it not possible to leave some agents in

<sup>10</sup> On Cobbé: F. PRIMS, *De oorlog van Mijnheer Cobbé*, Antwerp, 1927.

<sup>11</sup> On Hume: F. PRIMS, *De stichting van Banquibazar*, Antwerp, 1930.

<sup>12</sup> Stadsarchief Antwerpen / Insolvente Boedelskamer, 1680: June 26th, 1733. This Philippine Company never really got off the ground.

<sup>13</sup> J. PARMENTIER, *De holle compagnie...*, pp. 64-65. The factory of Banquibazar was then still existing!

<sup>14</sup> S. CHAUDHURI, *Trade and Commercial Organisation in Bengal, 1650-1720*, Calcutta, 1975, pp. 50-51.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

Hugli or in Cassimbazar (an important production centre of Bengal silk) to prepare the cargoes for the ships and to co-ordinate the ordering and delivering of goods? That kind of agents only needed some warehouse and could probably do without a real factory.

The advices and directions of Jacomo de Pret were of course in the first place meant for small and new East-Indian companies, like the Ostend, the Philippine and the Scandinavian companies. Old-established ones, like the Dutch and the English could have other priorities and therefore good reasons to maintain their factories. But even for these companies it was a constant struggle to restrict the ever expanding number of costly factories<sup>16</sup>. The only reason why the English East-India Company decided to keep a series of loss-making factories was, as K. N. Chaudhuri pointed out, “the future expectation of a large business organisation and an oligopolist’s fear of competitors”<sup>17</sup>.

Some of the new companies, on the other hand, seem to have followed a policy which resembled very much the advices of De Pret. The Swedish Company for instance especially traded with China and for the few ships it sent to India it never established a factory<sup>18</sup>. The Danish Company was also a tea-company, but as the Danes possessed an old-established factory in Tranquebar (Coromandel Coast) they also yearly sent a ship to India. The profits made there were however almost completely swallowed up by the factory costs, an outcome that De Pret surely would have had predicted<sup>19</sup>.

We can maybe conclude with the suggestion that the antagonism in the Ostend Company between the real merchants (like De Pret) and the pro-factory lobby (politicians and supercargoes) — an antagonism which surely also existed in other companies — was a foreshadowing of the conflict between free-traders and empire-builders which dominated 19th-century colonialism.

<sup>16</sup> F. S. GAASTRA, *De geschiedenis van de VOC...*, pp. 56-57; S. CHAUDHURI, *Trade and Commercial...*, pp. 43-44; K. N. CHAUDHURI, *The Trading World of Asia and the English East-India Company, 1660-1760*, Cambridge, 1978, pp. 65-66.

<sup>17</sup> K. N. CHAUDHURI, *The Trading World...*, pp. 65-66.

<sup>18</sup> C. KONINCKX, *The First and Second Charters of the Swedish East India Company (1731-1766)*, Kortrijk, 1980, pp. 53-55.

<sup>19</sup> E. GÖBEL, *The Danish Asiatic Company's voyages to China, 1732-1833*, in: “The Scandinavian Economic History Review”, 27 (1979), p. 1.

# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CHINESE AND THE DUTCH IN 18th-CENTURY CANTON

BY

C. J. A. JÖRG

In this paper, I will begin with a short survey of the Dutch China trade, then I will shift to personal impressions and memories of Company servants engaged in the China trade, thus giving some idea of how Dutch people reacted to living and working in a culture, so different from what they were used to in Europe or Batavia. Of course, the information we have is one-sided and European-centered as we have no similar notes from the Chinese partners. Furthermore, our sources are haphazard and scanty: private opinions and problems seldom found their way into Company papers and private correspondence is almost non-existent. So we have to do with what we have, but nevertheless a general picture can be sketched<sup>1</sup>.

## THE CHINA TRADE

During the first half of the 17th century, the Dutch East India Company (VOC) was eager to secure her part of the profitable trade in Chinese products. After a period of trying to get a foothold on China's coast, the Company had to be content to use the island of Formosa, present-day Taiwan, as her centre and staple for the China trade. The Formosa factory operated from 1624 till 1662, when Ming loyalist Cheng Chenggong conquered the island and forced the Dutch to leave.

War raged in China in the years thereafter and Chinese products were difficult to obtain, but when Qing emperor Kangxi had established his order

<sup>1</sup> The information in this paper is largely based on C. J. A. JÖRG, *Porcelain and the Dutch China trade*, The Hague, 1982. For specific information and quotations I will refer to the original documents in the VOC archives (referred to as VOC), preserved in the *Algemeen Rijksarchief* (ARA, General State Archives) in The Hague.

in the whole country early in the 1680's, the China trade could flourish again. Soon the Company realised that new and better opportunities were offered than before. There was no need anymore to sail to China with her own East-Indiamen, because Chinese junks brought everything the Dutch would buy to Batavia. There, in the centre of the Dutch commercial network, Chinese merchants offered tea, silks, nankeens, porcelain, iron cooking pans, vegetables, medicines and a great variety of other items for daily life and for luxury. And what the junks did not bring, could be ordered by the Dutch and was brought by the Chinese during their next trip <sup>2</sup>.

Not only the Company made use of this situation, but private traders in Batavia as well. About 1700, this private trade had become so extensive that, for instance, the Company abandoned her own trade in porcelain and left the supply of the market in Europe completely to individual merchants <sup>3</sup>. Far more important for the Company was tea, the new drink that had become so fashionable in Europe, and here she defended her monopoly with all the power she had, competing with other European Companies who had discovered this highly profitable tea-trade as well.

In the early 18th century the French, the English, the Danish and the Ostend Companies sailed to China and bought tea on the spot. The city of Canton, since centuries a centre for maritime trade, now became the centre for trade with the Europeans as well. Only the Dutch did not join and relied on the Chinese junks coming to Batavia. In the 1720's this system was failing. The European competitors trading in China got better quality tea and shipped it quicker to Europe, where it arrived fresher than the tea arriving via Batavia. Profits for the VOC dropped, and at last *Heren XVII* decided to start a direct trade on Canton, taking the risk that fewer junks might come to Batavia, much against the opinion of the Batavian government. Thus the first Dutch ships straight from Holland arrived in Canton in 1729 and from then on till the end of the 18th century the Company had three, four, sometimes even six ships yearly in Canton. Soon, Batavia managed to get her hold again on this trade which proved to be very successful and profitable. From 1736 onwards, the ships to China sailed via Batavia, while on the homebound-voyage they went straight from Canton to the Netherlands. For the Dutch, as for all other European Companies, tea was by far the most important commodity, giving gross profits of over one hundred percent or, in cash, several millions of guilders a year, thus largely contributing to the upkeep of the Company.

<sup>2</sup> L. BLUSSÉ, *Strange Company. Chinese settlers, mestizo women and the Dutch in VOC Batavia*, Dordrecht/Riverton, 1986, chapter VI, pp. 97-155.

<sup>3</sup> C. J. A. JÖRG, *Chinese porcelain for the Dutch in the seventeenth century: trading networks and private enterprise*, in: R. E. SCOTT (ed.), *The Porcelains of Jingdezhen, Colloquies on Art & Archeology in Asia*, No. 16, London, 1993, pp. 194-197.

## THE DUTCH IN CANTON

In Canton the Dutch, like all other Europeans, were confined to a stretch of land along the Pearl River, outside the City walls, where they rented their factory from a Chinese owner. The Dutch factory, next to the English, was one of the largest and since the 1740's it had acquired a front in typical western style, including a veranda on columns and a flag flying from a pole. Thus it was very different from the surrounding Chinese architecture, demonstrating how the Dutch — and all other Europeans — differentiated themselves from the Chinese and promoted their group-feeling and identity. In this, they followed the age-old behaviour of minorities and it will be no surprise that the same attitude shows in many other ways as well.

In the factory, thirty and sometimes even forty merchants, officers, assistants, and others — not to mention their servants and slaves — had to live together for a couple of months and some house-rules were indispensable. The “Rules and Regulations” of 1789, for instance, has eleven articles, telling the inhabitants of the factory not to smoke in the warehouses, not to swear, to keep good company, not to drink too much, to dress correctly and being home at ten in the evening <sup>4</sup>. Two articles fire the imagination : article 4 : “The servants must not write all sorts of obscene and offensive words on the glass of the doors and windows”, and article 7 : “Everyone must take care not to engage in any rowdiness such as playing French horns or clarinets, much less drumming or letting off firecrackers because such behaviour is very disturbing and damaging and harmful to the sick and bedridden”.

Even more than in Europe or Batavia, social status and rank were important and this served, again, to maintain the Dutch identity in a foreign city. It was strictly observed, during board-meetings, at visits to European colleagues or when distributing commercial responsibilities among each other. It was also the base for behaviour in daily life. For instance, at noon and at supper, meals were served in three rounds. First, the supercargoes and high-ranking ship officers were served. When they had finished, the other merchants, assistants and officers had their meal, while the third group, consisting of the steward, the watch and the servants got the left-overs. Being invited to a higher table was a sure sign of forthcoming promotion.

The cook and his assistants were Chinese but food was prepared in the European way. Meals were abundant, and offered a great variety of fresh local products : meat, fish, poultry, vegetables, fruit and rice. Butter and wine came from the ship's reserves, arrack was made locally. For the food-historian, the factory records must be a treasure, as almost all cash books, noting for every

<sup>4</sup> VOC 4442, “Rules and Regulations for the servants of the trade”, n.d., included under the Judicial papers of 1789-1790, preserved in the “Letterbook from China 1790”.

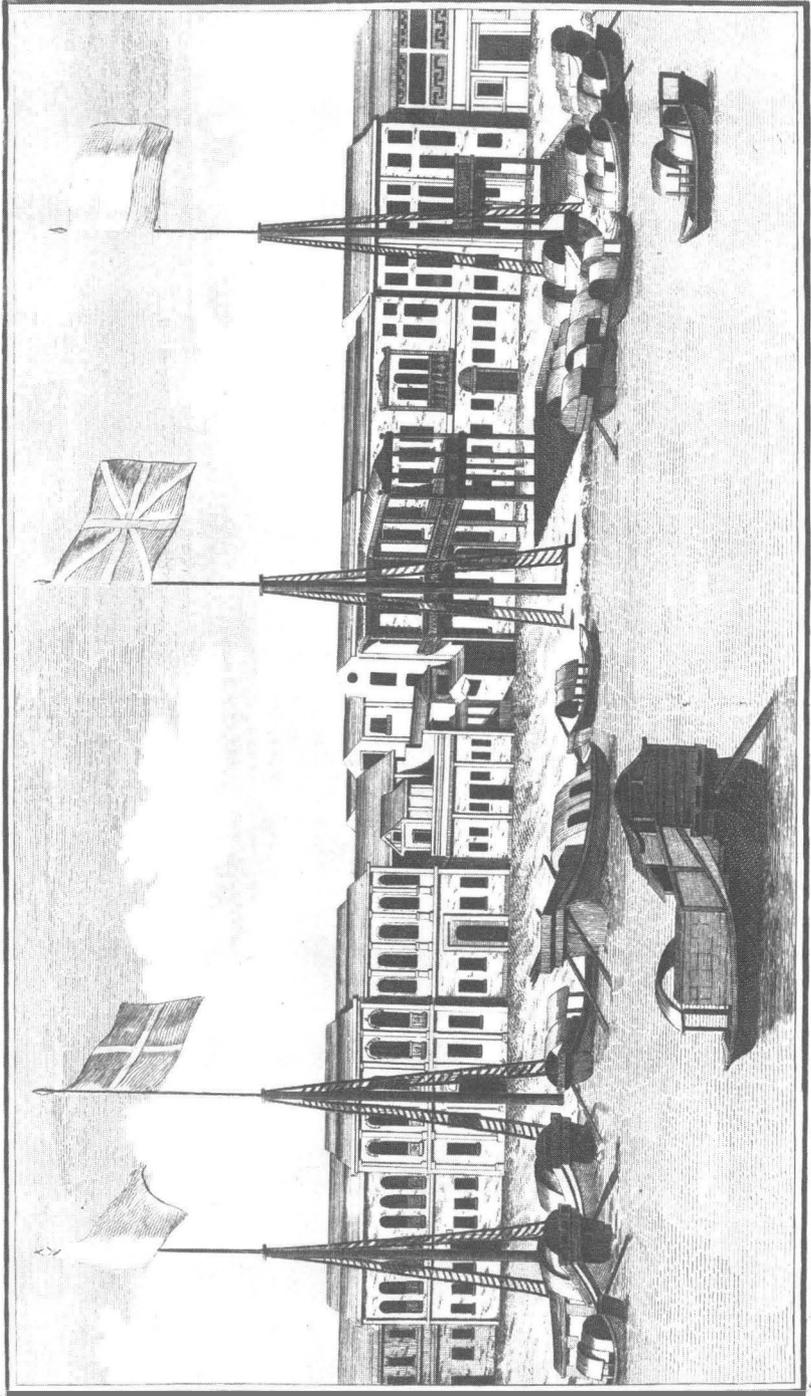


FIG. 1. — The European factories at Canton about 1778. Engraving after a sketch made in Canton by P. SONNERAT, published in his *Voyages aux Indes Orientales et à la Chine etc.*, Paris, 1782.

day which food was bought at what price have been preserved, spanning a period of more than 70 years.

Besides the cook, there were other Chinese in the factory: a barber, a watercarrier, a carpenter and a brick-layer, but the most important man was the *compradore*. This Chinese was appointed by the Chinese merchant who did most dealings with the Dutch and the *compradore* had to make sure that everything went smooth. Usually, he spoke some Portuguese, pidgin-English or even Dutch and served as an official interpreter. He also was the man to arrange things with, either Company matters, either private business, so everybody was keen to keep on good terms with this man. The Dutch also had strict orders not to mingle with the Chinese, and even less to hit them or insult them, but to take a complaint to the *compradore*. This proved to be an effective rule, because in all the years that the Dutch stayed in the factory, no serious problems arose between the two groups. After ten in the evening all Chinese had to leave the factory, the gate closed and the watch, consisting of a few Dutch soldiers, safeguarded people and goods.

Outside the factory, however, things could not always be kept in hand so easily. The crew of the ships, for instance, often gave the supercargoes a splitting headache. In theory, the crew remained on board of the ships anchored at the roadsted of Whampoa, but of course people needed a break now and then and thus got leave to visit the shops in Canton and to buy their souvenirs and private merchandise. The Company, however, was held responsible by the Chinese officials for the behaviour of all Company servants, including sailors and soldiers. So there arose a severe problem when in 1743 a sailor named Jacob Poot had a quarrel with a Chinese shopkeeper on the price of a bow and arrows. He felt threatened by the crowd of onlookers and stabbed the shopkeeper with his knife, who died on the spot. The sailor fled to the factory, but was handed over to the Chinese officials when they threatened the Company to put a ban on trade with the Dutch. The criminal was sentenced to jail for a couple of years but he came free in 1746 "by the mercy of the Emperor" although he still had to stand in the pillory for 30 days in front of the factory entrance. This, however, was too much a loss of face for the Dutch and the director successfully asked the Chinese authorities to place the man a bit further away. Finally, Poot got fifty strokes with the cane and then was handed back to the Dutch, who put him on a ship to Batavia<sup>5</sup>.

Other clashes with the Chinese often implied a similar loss of face, loosing status. For instance, in 1791 three officers of the ship "Blitterswijk" were caught by Chinese guards because they had been "in the company of Chinese females". Now Chinese officials had strictly forbidden to bring European women to

<sup>5</sup> The whole episode is described in the Trade Reports of January 6, 1744 and February 10, 1747, VOC 2682.

Canton or to contact Chinese women, so the Europeans had to find ways to escape from this enforced celibacy. A good relationship with the *compradore* was useful in these matters, too, if only to know how to make one's choice of the many red pavilions and floating flowerboats that were such a famous attraction of Canton. However, such things should be done discretely and in this case the three officers apparently had been careless. The Company had to buy them off at 620 guilders each, the equivalent of about one year's salary. This was deducted from their wages, making it a rather expensive escapade <sup>6</sup>.

#### A TRIP INTO THE CITY

Keeping close together as a group and emphasizing their own rules and social codes did not stimulate interest in another society and culture. The Dutch came to Canton as traders, and of course they bought exotic souvenirs like porcelain, ivory fans, lacquerwork and Chinese paintings, but their interest in China usually did not go further <sup>7</sup>. Characteristic of this attitude is the reaction to the questionnaire of the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences, asking the Dutch merchants in Canton for information on the country and its inhabitants. The director wrote in 1779: "It is well-known that in China the Europeans reside on the edge of the Empire that is in the suburb of Canton, without their being allowed to enter the country or even the city itself, so that one is not in a position here to answer these questions". A notable exception are the diaries kept by A. E. van Braam Houckgeest and I. Titsingh when travelling as VOC ambassadors to the court in Beijing in 1795 <sup>8</sup>. But in comparison to other nations, the Dutch stayed behind in publishing travel diaries and general books on China, based on their stay there. The reports and *Dagregisters*, too, seldom contain more specific or detailed information on the city of Canton, the inhabitants, the customs and the strange and interesting things that could

<sup>6</sup> VOC 4447, *Dagregister* (Journal) for December 29, 1791.

<sup>7</sup> Private purchases of Chinese "souvenirs" or trade items were extensive, but are, of course, rarely mentioned in the official VOC records. Sometimes, however, a tip of the veil is lifted, for instance when someone died and a list of his possessions was made. Thus assistant F. H. van Eijmbeek in 1768 left 46 small coloured pictures in lacquered frames, 6 little portraits of women painted on glass, 2 Chinese glass flutes and a great variety of Chinese porcelain items: VOC 4403, Papers concerning the estate of Van Eijmbeek. See also JÖRG, *op. cit.* (note 1), pp. 140-147 (porcelain of and for private individuals).

<sup>8</sup> A. E. VAN BRAAM HOUCKGEEST, *Voyage de l'Ambassade de la Compagnie des Indes Orientales Hollandaises vers l'Empereur de la Chine dans les années 1794 et 1795* etc., 2 vols, Philadelphia, 1797 (French edition: Paris, 1798; English ed.: London, 1798; German ed.: Leipzig, 1798; Dutch ed.: Haarlem, 1808). The diary by Titsingh has never been published; the ms. is preserved in the ARA, Archives of the East Indies Possessions and the Cape, East Indies Committee, no. 238; a copy is in the University Library, Leiden, BPL 2177; a French translation is in the British Library, Add. 18102. See also J. J. L. DUUVENDAK, *The last Dutch Embassy to the Chinese Court (1794-1795)*, in: "T'oung Pao", XXXIV (1938), pp. 1-137, 223-227 and XXXV (1940), pp. 329-353.



FIG. 2. — Dutchmen and Chinese engaged in the weighing of tea chests, marked for the Chamber Amsterdam (VOC-A), each holding 50 pounds of Bohea tea. Chinese gouache on paper, 35.5 × 30.5 cm, c.1780. National Library of Austria, Vienna.

be observed. So a lively account of a visit to the “Foeyuun”, the provincial Governor, dated October 24, 1779, comes as a surprise and is worth quoting here <sup>9</sup>.

There had been serious problems between the Chinese officials and the English <sup>10</sup> and representatives of all European Companies were invited to present themselves to the Governor and make a statement.

<sup>9</sup> VOC 4419, “Letterbook from China 1780”, *Dagregister* for October 24, 1779.

<sup>10</sup> See for the so-called Captain Panton affair and the problems regarding the huge Chinese debts to the English: H. B. MORSE, *The Chronicles of the East India Company trading to China 1635-1834*, vol.II, Oxford, 1926, chapter XXXIV, pp. 39-49.

The report of the Dutch representatives goes as follows.

In the morning at half past eight, the director (Cornelis Heijligendorp) and supercargo Van Karnebeek went to the city of Canton in separate palanquins to defend the interests of the Company at the Foeyuun and Hoppo. We were carried for more than half an hour through several narrow alleys, all lined with shops and workshops, until we reached the gate. Here, the palanquins of the representatives of all nations came together. In front of the gate, all the Europeans had to descend from their palanquins in order to enter the city on foot, it being forbidden that any European is carried through the gate. At the entrance of the city some Chinese soldiers were gathered under the arch of the gate, and we had to wait for a while before the Foeyuun sent order to come to his office, which order was brought by one of his servants riding a horse. Having entered the city, we all got into our palanquins again but having covered some distance we had to get out once more when passing the house of some important mandarin which Europeans should pass on foot only in order to pay him honour. When we had got into the palanquins again, we were carried to the house of the Foeyuun. Here we entered through a gate, coming into a courtyard where there was an armed military force of about 700 or 800 men with all their banners and shields, Chinese and Tartar soldiers, wearing iron helmets and armed with bow-and-arrows. These men were grouped in rows of five and six, from the entrance of the courtyard up to the entrance or stairs of the house. On arrival, the representatives got a separate apartment for each nation with their own *lingua* or interpreter. Having waited for quite a while, audience was first given to (the English) Captain Panton. When he entered, three light cannon shots were fired from the city wall, which was repeated when the last representative left. After him, the one after the other followed (...). The audience was held in a spacious room. At the end was a higher part, with two, three steps and here the Foeyuun and the Hoppo were seated, each at a small square table with a red silk cover. Before the steps, at the left and right side, several mandarins in official gowns were gathered while on the left side were standing all the merchants or hangists who do trade with the Europeans. Some other important people were there, too, while at the left side were placed two daughters of the Foeyuun, together with some court ladies or Chinese women.

When the representatives had neared the steps they stopped and were addressed by the merchant Poan Keequa, he being one of the oldest and most important merchants, who asked us on behalf of the Foeyuun and Hoppo what we had to say, speaking in broken or bad English as is usual among those merchants. We answered as is recorded in the request, kept in our papers, which sealed request we handed over to Poan Keequa. While explaining our request, he gave it to the Foeyuun and he gave it to the Hoppo, who opened it and wrote some Chinese characters on it, meaning he gave order to the *lingua* to translate it into Chinese. Then one of the mandarins who stood near the Hoppo took the request and handed it over to the *lingua* of our Company, who was lying face-down before the seat and accepted it with this deep reverence. At the same time, the Foeyuun assured us by means of Poan Keequa that our

trade would not be hindered, nor the merchants in their deliveries, and that everything would continue as usual. Satisfied with this answer the representatives went back, doing the usual politenesses after the European manner, and each nation was led to his apartment. After we had stayed there for a while, we crossed the courtyard, mingling with a crowd of onlookers who had come together, apparently out of a curiosity to see Europeans. Outside we each got into our palanquin and were carried through the city by another route than we had come to the gate, where we had to get out once again to leave the city on foot. At noon, the representatives were back at the factory. A council was held in which they gave their account and they were complimented and thanked for their labour and communication.

#### TRADE — A MUTUAL GOAL

For the Dutch, the only reason to come to China was trade, and this was also the only reason for the Chinese to tolerate these western barbarians.

And exactly in this context, these two so different cultures could meet, united by their intention to make as much money as possible. In order to achieve this aim without too much problems, the Chinese had developed a clever system to organise the trade with foreigners, at the same time avoiding social tension and making sure the government got its share in taxes and tolls.

One official, the so-called Hoppo, was appointed by the Emperor to deal with all matters of trade and to act as the representative of the Governor of the province. This Hoppo issued licenses and raised taxes, but as a scholar he could not interfere with the actual trade. For that, he made use of so-called Hongs, a kind of Chinese merchant-houses in which merchants specialising in tea, or salt, or silks *etcetera* had joined forces. The Hoppo selected the most powerful and richest Hong merchants and appointed them as a group to deal with the foreigners, giving them freedom to buy and sell as they liked, but also holding them responsible for an untroubled business, for the proper behaviour of the Europeans and for the payment of all taxes and duties. This group of merchants is called the Co-Hong, and soon it monopolised the trade in all important commodities. In theory, the Europeans could deal with all members of the Co-Hong separately but in fact every nation had its "own" merchant. All Co-Hong merchants were held responsible for each other, too, so if one went bankrupt, the others payed his debts. They guaranteed quality and took back damaged cargoes indeed, even after two years. They gave loans, they took care of all taxes, advised, solved problems, and also appointed the compradore in each European factory, thus creating their intelligence network. Given their power and the support of the Hoppo, it is not surprising they tried to fix prices for buying and selling, but the Europeans could make a



FIG. 3. — Ivory plaque, representing three Dutchmen engaged in loading Chinese goods in a sloop. Remains of red and blue painting. Canton, first half of 18th century, 7 × 16 cm. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.

front, too, so on average this worked out not too badly. Competition among the Hong merchants also helped in keeping the balance <sup>11</sup>.

The Dutch for many years worked with a Hong merchant they named Tsja Honqua and apparently this man knew how to handle the Dutch, because in reports to *Heren XVII* he is often praised as “our best friend, giving good prices, extremely helpful” and so on. No wonder, when one reads in one of those very rare documents that give us a real insight in matters of trade, that the amount of money which was actually paid to the Chinese was twenty percent less than the amount booked in the ledgers or that the prices they got for their merchandise were higher than they stated, a difference which was shared in cash among the supercargoes <sup>12</sup>. Not amazing that so many Company servants were keen to be sent to China and not amazing that many came back home after two or three years as very rich men. On the other hand, a prolonged stay in Canton not always was regarded as a blessing. The desillusions and home-sickness are well worded by the 70-year old director A. F. l’Heureux who requested permission to retire and wrote :

It is hard and discouraging for an honest and faithful servant to find that Divine Providence has afflicted him with illnesses incurable in these parts... It is hard and discouraging for such a one to find himself deprived of his reward, perhaps the last reward for all his labour. And may there not be other reasons

<sup>11</sup> H. B. MORSE, *The Gilds of China. With an account of the gild or Co-Hong of Canton*, London, 1909.

<sup>12</sup> JÖRG, *op. cit.* (note 1), p. 23.

that force us, however unwillingly, to quit these lands and the service of your Honours ? Are there no ties with our society, no ties forged by nature, or are we tied wholly and solely to the Company ? <sup>13</sup>.

It is perhaps a disappointing, but I think rather realistic and human picture I sketched : the Dutch clustering together, not very much interested in their exotic surroundings, sticking to what they were used to, meeting the Chinese only on equal level and on equal terms in pursuing profits. Thus, recognising and justifying each other's greed, they worked-out, in close harmony, a trade system beneficial to all parties involved.

This is all history now. The tea has been drunk, the silks are decayed, the money is spent, the actors are dead. Only small objects, cheap souvenirs, still tell the story : a porcelain plate or a teacup and saucer, a lacquer box, an ivory figure, a small gouache of butterflies and flowers on pith-paper, kept in a museum or private collection... Testimonies of the relationship between the Chinese and the Dutch in 18th century Canton.

<sup>13</sup> VOC 4411, "Letterbook from China 1774", General Report, December 20, 1773, fols. 62-63.



# MISSION AND TRADE : THE MEP IN 17th CENTURY SIAM

BY

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The study of European trading activities in Asia in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries has mostly been limited to one or two main actors. One is the European trading companies — the Dutch VOC, the English EIC, the French CIO or even the small Danish EIC. The second one is the private trader (or “country trader”) who plied his trade in defiance of the regulations laid down by the regular companies, and some of whom returned to Europe rich in gold and honours — the 18th century “nabobs” who had amassed a fortune by, as the saying went, “shaking the pagoda tree”<sup>1</sup>.

Lately, however, other European actors have been the subject of scrutiny. Sanjay Subrahmanyam and Maria Cruz have turned their attention to the renegades, European soldiers who had come to Asia as part of the European military establishment, but who for various reasons ended up fighting in the armies of Asian princes<sup>2</sup>. Other examples were the European fugitives from justice (soldiers, servants, and other subaltern groups of the European colonial powers) who fled from the jurisdiction of their own countrymen and threw themselves on the mercy of rival European powers or on Asian rulers.

These examples are, however, all of them people who left “their own” countrymen, and who had no interest in a concept of national honour.

<sup>1</sup> The private trade is still a comparatively unexplored area in the research of European trade in pre-modern Asia. See however H. W. VAN SANTEN, *De Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie in Gujarat en Hindustan, 1620-1660*, Leiden, 1982 (Proefschrift), pp. 11-13, where the private correspondence of VOC-employees is used to determine the volume and character of private trade. Further Holden FURBER’s classical account *Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient, 1600-1800*, Minneapolis, 1976, pp. 131-138 and 264-297, is still of value.

<sup>2</sup> Sanjay SUBRAHMANYAM, *The Portuguese Empire in Asia 1500-1700 : A Political and Economic History*, London/New York, 1993, pp. 249-256. Maria Augusta Lima CRUZ, *Exiles and Renegades in early sixteenth-century Portuguese India*, in : “Indian Social and Economic History Review”, XXIII (1986), 3.

Quite a different attitude is apparent in the Roman Catholic missionaries. One of these missionary societies, the French *Société des Missions Étrangères de Paris* (the MEP) was active in Siam and South India in the late 17th century. The MEP and its cooperation with the French trade is the subject of this paper.

It is well worth emphasizing that the French missionaries were not the first to arrive in Asia. When Vasco da Gama dropped anchor at Calicut in 1492 and was asked what the Europeans were doing in Asia, he answered — according to the legend — “We came to look for Christians and spices”<sup>3</sup>. And indeed missionaries and traders worked hand in hand in Portuguese Asia in the 16th century. Portuguese Jesuit missionaries attached themselves, so to speak, to the Portuguese colonial enterprise. They did not concern themselves with the Lusitanian population in and around Goa, but established missions in areas of South India not yet under Portuguese control<sup>4</sup>. In the last decade of the 16th century they had managed to get most of the Syrian Christian population (the Mar Thomas Christians) under control, and had established the Inquisition in Goa.

Robert de Nobili founded a mission in the temple city and pilgrimage center of Madurai; John de Britto converted large flocks in the eastern coast of South India, and Francis Xavier himself spent two years in South India, preaching for the pearl divers of Tuticorin<sup>5</sup>. Later, Xavier went to Malacca, the main commercial entrepôt of South East Asia in the 16th century. From there he went on to establish Christian communities in Japan and China, dying, however, before he ever put foot on Chinese soil<sup>6</sup>.

The Portuguese missionaries acted throughout in accordance with the Portuguese crown. Sometimes they even acted as traders. The most well-known example of this is the Jesuit missionaries in Macao, who handled the trade in Chinese silk in return for Japanese silver up to 1614, when all Christians — including the Jesuit missionaries — were expelled from Japan<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> *Roteiro da primeira viagem de Vasco da Gama*, ed. Alvaro VELHO, Lissabon, 1987, pp. 54-55. See also the discussion in SUBRAHMANYAM, *Portuguese Empire*, pp. 59-62.

<sup>4</sup> See among others Susan BAYLY, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings: Muslims and Christians in South Indian Society, 1700-1900*, Cambridge, 1989, pp. 257-272.

<sup>5</sup> BAYLY, *Saints*, pp. 326-330 and 389-405.

<sup>6</sup> See Fr. SCHURHAMMER's impressive biography of Xavier, *Franz Xaver, sein Leben und seine Zeit*, 1973, vol. II.3, pp. 7-8 for a description of Xavier's work in Malacca.

<sup>7</sup> Iwao SEIICHI, *Japanese foreign trade in the 16th and 17th centuries*, in: “Acta Asiatica”, XXX (1976), pp. 1-18; C. R. BOXER, *The Christian Century in Japan, 1549-1650*, 2nd ed., London, 1967, pp. 100-103; Kato EIICHI, *Unification and adaptation. The early Shogunate and Dutch trade policies*, in: L. BLUSSE and F. GAastra (eds), *Companies and Trade*, Leiden, 1981, pp. 208-224.

The French *Société des Missions Étrangères de Paris* was founded in 1659 by the *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*. This was the Papacy's answer to a growing uneasiness with the Jesuit missionaries, Spanish, Italian and French, and their strong position overseas. The pope wished to grant missionary rights to other orders as well, but this was difficult because of the strong links between the Portuguese crown and the Jesuits. In 1585 the Jesuits had obtained a brief from pope Gregory XIII which forbade all regular and secular priests to enter Japan and China in order to carry out missions. This strict monopoly for the Jesuits was somewhat neutralized by a bull from 1600, requiring all missionaries going to India, China, Japan and Africa to sail from Lisbon on Portuguese ships. Even though the mendicant orders were eventually allowed access to India, China and Japan, the Papacy still found itself under pressure from Spain and Portugal.

The establishment of the MEP in 1659 was a signal to the Iberian powers that the Pope now wished to have firmer control with the missions in Asia, and that the Papacy from now on should have closer ties with France, which by now was emerging as the major European power <sup>8</sup>. The French king was positive towards the mission and to the Church in general, as was to become evident with the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. Colbert was eager to have France gaining access to the Asian markets. The French East India Company (*Compagnie des Indes Orientales*) was established in 1665, after a number of minor companies had blossomed briefly since 1600 <sup>9</sup>. The Company at once tied in with the French missionaries working in Asia. This was not a new development, even an earlier company undertaking trade in New France (Canada), the *Compagnie des Cent Associés de la Nouvelle France* (1628-1663), was established with the triple intent of colonizing, trading and conversion <sup>10</sup>.

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The first French missionaries sailed to Asia in several groups between 1660 and 1662. To avoid the Portuguese, English and Dutch the missionaries travelled overland from the Levant to Persia, and from there by ship to Surat. From Surat they travelled across India to Masulipatam, where they, in the

<sup>8</sup> See Donald F. LACH and Edwin J. VAN KLEY, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, vol. III, *A Century of Advance*, Book 1, *Trade, Mission, Literature*, London/Chicago, 1993, pp. 222-223.

<sup>9</sup> For instance the Saint-Malo company, established in 1600, and the Dieppe company, established in 1604, both of which were organized by local merchants rather than, as the *Compagnie des Indes Orientales* was to be, a national enterprise. See LACH and VAN KLEY, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, III.1, pp. 93-98, and Pierre BULLE, *French mercantilism, commercial companies and colonial profitability*, in: L. BLUSSÉ and F. GAASTRA (eds), *Companies and Trade*, Leiden, 1981, pp. 100-105.

<sup>10</sup> BULLE, *French mercantilism*, pp. 103-104.

summer of 1664, boarded a muslim vessel for Tenasserim. The primary idea was to advance to China or to Vietnam, where Alexandre Rhodes had been active as a missionary since 1624<sup>11</sup>. However, for various reasons it was decided to remain in Siam, where the Portuguese did not hold much power, and only a few Jesuit missionaries were stationed. The Dutch watched this development with some unease. In Batavia there was no doubt that the French mission was tied to French political aims in the area<sup>12</sup>.

In Ayuthaia, the capital of Siam, the French missionaries settled down and established not only a church but also a seminary for the education of native priests. The missionaries made an effort to learn the language quickly — i.e. not only Thai but also Pali, which was considered essential for the proper understanding of Siamese culture and religion<sup>13</sup>.

In 1665 the French bishop Mgr. Pallu once again undertook the long and tedious voyage overland from Siam to Europe, where he first conferred with the pope about the jurisdiction of the French missionaries in the east, and then went to Paris where he was received by the king and Colbert. In 1670 he left for Siam again, taking with him presents from the French king to the Siamese king, and a letter from the pope. Most of the gifts to king Narai were seized by the Dutch when Mgr. Pallu arrived via Bangkok in 1673; this was a severe set-back for the mission which was continually short of funds<sup>14</sup>.

The three French bishops in Ayuthaia were received by the king in a manner worthy of the representatives of the French king — and there is no doubt that the bishops perceived themselves as much as emissaries of Louis XIV as representatives of the Roman Catholic Church. They were led into the third and fourth inner court of the royal palace. In the most important room, where, as the bishops themselves described it<sup>15</sup>, “... the entrance of any foreigner is forbidden, as much as the entrance of most of the people in the realm; where never any ambassador has hitherto been received. This was however the room where the king wished to receive the Bishops, which caused no small consternation at court”.

The bishops had refused to greet the king in the Siamese manner, i.e. prostrate with their faces to the ground. Instead they compromised, and, seated

<sup>11</sup> See the careful description of the long voyage in Jacques DE BOURGES, *Relation du voyage de M. l'Évêque de Beryte, par la Turquie, la Perse, les Indes, etc., jusqu'au Royaume de Siam et autres lieux*, Paris, 1666.

<sup>12</sup> *Generale Missiven van Gouverneurs-Generaal en Raaden aan Heren XVII der Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie, 1610-1698*, ed. W. Ph. COOLHAAS, The Hague, 1960-1975, vol. III, pp. 437-438 (from now on : GM).

<sup>13</sup> *Relations des missions et des voyages des Evesques (1672-1675)*, Paris, 1682, pp. 59-60; E. W. HUTCHINSON, *Journal of Mgr. Lambert, Bishop of Beritus, from Tenasserim to Siam in 1662*, in: “Selected Articles from the Siam Society Journal”, VIII, “Relationship with France, England, and Denmark”, Bangkok, 1959, pp. 91-96.

<sup>14</sup> *Archives des missions étrangères de Paris*, vol. V, pp. 479-480.

<sup>15</sup> *Relations des missions et des voyages des Evesques (1672-75)*, Paris, 1682, p. 112.

cross-legged in the Indian fashion on a Persian carpet, they inclined their heads three times for the king <sup>16</sup>. Then the letters from the pope and the French king were read aloud to king Narai.

The missionaries acted as ambassadors, as representatives of the French East India Company. But did they carry out any trade themselves ? The sources are vague on this point. The pope had long ago prohibited the missionaries to engage in trade, even though, as we have mentioned, the Jesuits in Macao did carry on a trade with Japan for several years. Another point is that the mission in Siam was continually short of money. Sometimes the funds sent out from Paris were lost at sea and never arrived in Siam ; sometimes the money was seized by Dutch or English vessels. When the French East India Company had been established and had erected a factory in Ayathaia, money was sent to the mission on the French ships. But what happened in the years before that ?

In 1674 bishop Pallu, who had recently arrived in Siam after an absence of eight years and had just had time to be received by the king as we just heard, decided to leave for Tonkin. Pallu boarded a ship belonging to a private French merchant, who had offered to equip the vessel for the bishop. Even though they all wanted to leave in May, departure was delayed by two Dutch ships blocking the harbour until the end of the monsoon. Then, in bad and stormy weather, the ship set sail for Tonkin, but was blown off course and had to seek shelter in Manilla. This was a grave mistake. The captain of the vessel and all the sailors were put in jail, where they spent several years. The vessel and all the merchandise and money on board was seized by the Spanish authorities. The bishop himself was eventually sent to Mexico and, proceeding overland, finally managed to get a passage on a cross-atlantic voyage <sup>17</sup>.

Did the vessel really belong to a private French merchant, as the missionaries claimed ? Or did it belong to the mission itself ? We do not know. But we do know that apart from the dishonour of having a French bishop in jail in Manilla, the events hit the MEP hard for economic reasons. The money on board was intended for the mission in Tonkin, and was now lost forever.

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<sup>16</sup> François Martin in far-away Pondicherry told the same story about M. Deslandes' visit to the Siamese king in 1680. See *Memoirs of François Martin (1670-1694)*, ed. Lotika VARADARAJAN, 1983, vol. I, part 2, pp. 708-711 (15 December 1680).

<sup>17</sup> LACH and VAN KLEY, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, III.1, pp. 247-249. See also MARTIN, *Memoires*, I.2, pp. 481-482 (March 1675) and pp. 567-568 (April 1677), as well as the comments of the Dutch in Batavia, GM, IV, p. 22 (28 February 1675).

In the 1680s the situation in Ayuthaia became extremely complicated. The Siamese political scene was characterized by the large number of foreigners both in the armed forces and in the administration and trade. The Dutch had established a factory in Ayuthaia in the 1630s, then came the English, the Danes and a number of private traders. Merchants from Persia and India had for a long time enjoyed special privileges, the Persians even in the capacity of Phrakalang or prime ministers<sup>18</sup>. The European traders were not very successful, as they were encumbered by a heavy administrative apparatus. The Asian merchants were therefore in a far better position to control the flow of commodities and precious metals. In 1680 the first Siamese diplomatic expedition had set sail for France on the "Soleil d'Orient", laden with presents for the French king. However, the vessel was lost in sea somewhere off Madagascar. In 1684, another expedition set off, reaching France safely in November. The Siamese were accompanied by French missionaries, who ensured their presentation at Versailles. The missionaries assured Louis XIV and his ministers that the conversion of King Narai not only was a distinct possibility but was imminent, and that the French in one stroke could bring about both the Christianization of Siam and the firm establishment of French trading activities in Asia. In consequence, an expedition was sent out from France in 1685. Aboard the ships were not only the Siamese ambassadors and the French MEP missionaries, but also a number of Jesuit missionaries who were sent out in the capacity of a "scientific expedition". The aim of this expedition was to find out about Siamese mathematics, astrology and chemistry.

Thus there were several groups of persons arriving in Siam at the same time, all of them claiming to speak on behalf of the French king: the *military* and naval personnel under the command of the Chevalier de Chaumont including the well-known abbé de Choisy, a personal friend of Louis XIV, who acted as a second-in-command to the ambassador; secondly the *Jesuit* scientists, among whom were de la Chaise, Gui Tachard and Joaquim Bouvet. These Jesuit scientists refused to promise to obey the MEP missionaries in Siam, claiming they were emissaries of the king, and were sent out as scientists rather than as missionaries<sup>19</sup>. Thirdly, there were the *members of the MEP*, who had been responsible for bringing the Siamese ambassadors to France. These included Vachet, the leader of the expedition.

Returning to France with a second Siamese embassy in 1686, the change in power was complete. The MEP priests no longer had the monopoly on

<sup>18</sup> David K. WYATT, *Thailand: A Short History*, New Haven/London, 1984, pp. 107-112; SUBRAHMANYAM, *Portuguese Empire*, pp. 20-24; Jean AUBIN, *Les Persans au Siam sous le règne de Narai (1656-1688)*, in "Mare Luso-Indicum", 4 (1980).

<sup>19</sup> See among others Father Bouvet's journal, ed. by P. GATTY, Leiden 1963, on the disputes and arguments between the Jesuits and the MEP priests during the entire voyage from France to Siam. See also J. DE BOURGES, *Relation du voyage*, 1666, *passim*.

channeling the views of the Siamese court to the French court and vice versa. The Jesuit Gui Tachard took care of everything, presented the Siamese ambassadors at court, negotiated with the French ministers, and ensured a new and enlarged French return expedition in 1687<sup>20</sup>.

This expedition had as one of its members Simon de La Loubère who had been charged with the post of ambassador to the Siamese king. Upon his arrival in Siam, La Loubère set out to write what was to become the most famous 17th-century description of Siam<sup>21</sup>. He drew heavily on the earlier accounts by Van Vliet, Nicolas Gervaise and Joost Schouten, but managed to infuse his own “scientific” views and evaluations along the way. He was, as his Jesuit fellow-travellers, especially interested in Siamese astronomy and mathematics. His report was written on the basis of a four-months stay, and is the last purely “ethnographic” description of Siam which manages somehow to avoid all political issues. He confines himself to the themes which most travel descriptions covered: a geographical description, marriage customs, trade, science, art, law, kingship, administration and religion.

In 1688, when king Narai died, a rebellion against the king’s trusted adviser, the Greek Constantin Phaulkon (or Gerakis), broke out. Phaulkon was executed, and his attempts to secure an alliance between the French and the Siamese king were in vain<sup>22</sup>. Most Europeans in Siam — who had relied on Phaulkon to secure their relations with the king — had to leave Siam, leaving behind all hopes and aspirations for a French Batavia in Siam. Only the representatives of the Dutch East India Company and the French MEP-missionaries were allowed to stay on, the only Europeans in a country which might have been the center of a French colonial empire in Asia.

<sup>20</sup> For a positive and thorough description of Father Tachard’s work, see Raphaël VONGSURAVATANA, *Un jésuite à la Cour de Siam*, Paris, 1992, esp. pp. 79-88.

<sup>21</sup> The most recent edition is Michel JACQ-HERGOUALC’H, *Étude historique et critique du livre de Simon de La Loubère «Du Royaume de Siam»*, Paris, 1987. A reprint of the English translation of 1693 is edited by David K. WYATT, *The Kingdom of Siam by Simon de La Loubère*, Oxford, 1969.

<sup>22</sup> See the detailed discussion in Dirk VAN DER CRUYSE, *Louis XIV et le Siam*, Paris, 1991, pp. 441-470.



# EUROPEAN SOLDIERS IN THE SERVICE OF TRAVANCORE IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

BY

Mark DE LANNOY

## I. INTRODUCTION <sup>1</sup>

The kingdom of Travancore in the southern part of India in the second half of the 18th century gradually achieved an ascendancy on the Malabar coast. My aim is to study the role the Europeans played in the growing military strength of Travancore after 1740. But before we will study the role of those Europeans serving in the Travancore army, we will have a look at the situation before 1740.

Martanda Varma became king of Travancore in 1729. Before that time he had acted as adviser of his uncle Rama Varma. The latter had great difficulties with the eight most important noble families, the so-called Ettuvittil Pillamar. These nobles were in continual struggle with the king over the ascendancy in Travancore. Both nobles and king had their own client system which consisted of both nayars or warriors and merchants. The latter were important to finance warfare and to buy arms. They also acted as intermediaries between the European East-India Companies and their respective masters who stood at the apex of the client system <sup>2</sup>. It often happened that the merchants and nayars shifted from one lord to another one, especially when he was able to protect them better. The lord himself derived a considerable income from trade, via tolls, import and export duties, which of course further increased when more merchants sought his protection. Because of the continual shifting of merchants and nayars from one group to another and because the alliances between nobles and kings often changed, internal instability was a characteristic of Travancore politics.

<sup>1</sup> This is only a general survey of Chapter V of my Ph.D. which is forthcoming.

<sup>2</sup> Anjengo Factory Records, June 1704 : OIOC, G/1/21, fol. 6r.

Martanda Varma knew the weakness of this system and tried to break with it by advising his uncle Rama Varma to hire mercenaries from the Coromandel coast<sup>3</sup>. These mercenaries had several advantages over the nayars :

1. they had no links with Travancore and were thus less liable to shift from one party to another ;
2. they were paid for their services so that it was more likely that they were reliable ;
3. in case they were no longer necessary they could be sent back to their own country without the danger that they would act as brigands and robbers or that they should ally themselves to the nobles.

But to hire Marawa's or mercenaries from the Coromandel coast it was necessary for Travancore to induce European companies to trade in Travancore as these companies paid the duties that gave the king means to pay for his mercenary army. This necessitated an effective control over the trade routes and the power to offer the Europeans favourable trade contracts. Because the king neither had control over the trade routes nor the power to offer Europeans favourable trade contracts this system was extremely weak.

From the moment that Rama Varma was served by mercenaries, his adversaries the nobles concluded alliances with the princes of neighbouring states and even with the Nayak of Madurai<sup>4</sup>. In exchange for military support the nobles offered the Nayak to collect tribute for him in Travancore. The result was constant warfare rendering effective control of trade routes very difficult. Thus many merchants choose the side of the nobles who themselves offered trade privileges to the Europeans in order to crush royal authority.

## 2. MARTANDA VARMA THE MAKER OF MODERN TRAVANCORE

After the death of Rama Varma, his nephew Martanda Varma had to fight the nobles intensely. It seems that the nobles made use of an intricate matrilineal succession system which often led to struggles between various pretenders for the throne to strengthen their power.

Martanda Varma sought and found help from the English at Anjengo who, unlike the Dutch, offered the king military assistance in the form of gunpowder, lead, guns, rifles etc.<sup>5</sup>. Often the king changed pepper for arms. Modern European arms were extremely important for the Travancore king.

<sup>3</sup> K. M. PANIKKAR, *A History of Kerala 1498-1801*, Annamalainagar, 1961, pp. 237-238.

<sup>4</sup> Letter to Batavia, 22 May 1724 ; A.R.A., VOC inv. no. 2010, fol. 181v ; and 29 May 1725, A.R.A., VOC inv. no. 2027, fol. 256r.

<sup>5</sup> Letter from Hendrik de Jong to Julius Valentijn Stein van Gollenesse, 20 April 1741, in : Various papers concerning the expedition to free the kingdom of Nedumangadu (Peritallij) from the enemy (Travancore), A.R.A., VOC inv. no. 2542, fol. 435.

Until at least 1730 both king and nobles had very old-fashioned and rusty arms and guns <sup>6</sup>. A lead in modern arms would certainly help the king to achieve ascendancy on the battlefield.

A new difficulty soon arose for the king. Although he gradually received some modern western arms, he had not the expertise to teach his nayars how to use them. In the beginning of his reign, Martanda Varma often solved this problem by receiving "on loan" constables and even European soldiers <sup>7</sup>. But this was no solution for the problem. As early as 1730 Martanda Varma was already served by Europeans who had deserted the English and/or the Dutch service. These Europeans, however, were often people that had committed a crime. Moreover, they lacked the capability to teach the Travancoreans how to use modern arms. Apart from this they were too few for an army which consisted of more than 50,000 men.

Around 1739, Martanda Varma was in big trouble. He had managed to get rid of the noblemen by the support of the English who had achieved large influence at the Travancore court. This was not liked by the Dutch who, so far, had been neutral in the struggle between king and nobles. The Dutch thought that it was more profitable to await at the end of the struggle. Then, they thought, they could do business with the victor. But in 1739 the situation in Travancore was considerably changed and now that the internal struggle had ended, Martanda Varma could turn his attention to the neighbouring princes <sup>8</sup>.

These princes were nearly all members of his family and had actively supported the opposition of the nobles. But more important was that these principalities yielded an enormous income from the pepper trade which would enable Martanda Varma to improve both payment and armament of his soldiers <sup>9</sup>.

In 1739 the army of Martanda Varma invaded a principality which was both rich in pepper and an ally of the Dutch. Already before this event took place the Dutch had been worried about the growing power of Travancore. The Travancore invasion was for the Dutch alarming enough to intervene. In the beginning, this intervention seemed successful. The large army of Travancore was badly armed and trained. The Dutch blocked the harbours of Travancore

<sup>6</sup> Copy of a report written by the Malabar Commissioner Hendrix concerning his embassy at the Travancore court of 29 April 1732, A.R.A., VOC inv. no. 2231, fol. 3150.

<sup>7</sup> Extract of a letter from Tengapattanam to Cochin of 8 August 1733, A.R.A., VOC inv. no. 2281, fol. 1970r.

<sup>8</sup> A. P. Ibrahim KUNJU, "Expansion of Travancore in the 18th century", in : *Journal of Indian History*, 1975, p. 439.

<sup>9</sup> M. O. KOSHY, *The Dutch Power in Kerala (1729-1758)*, New Delhi, 1989, pp. 58-59 ; and Various papers concerning the intended expedition to clear the principality of Peritallij from the enemy (Travancore), A.R.A., VOC inv. no. 2542, fol. 422.

so that trade became impossible <sup>10</sup>. The Dutch expected that this would affect the treasure of the king to the extent that he would no longer be able to finance warfare.

The Dutch were militarily superior to the Travancore forces, but this was at the same time their weakness. The Dutch officers were wrong in thinking that it would be easy to defeat the Travancoreans. When the monsoon came, the Dutch decided to withdraw to forts at the coast. But they received no reinforcements and lacked supplies of all kinds <sup>11</sup>. What the Dutch lacked most was strategic insight and capable officers.

Now that the Dutch had withdrawn to their forts, the Travancoreans, hidden in the forests and mountains, showed themselves and started to besiege the Dutch. The latter expected that they could be supplied by sea, but they had not taken account of the bad weather and the tenacity of the Travancore besiegers. Finally this led to the capitulation of one of the most important Dutch forts in Travancore : Colachel. In August 1741, after six months of siege, the Dutch surrendered <sup>12</sup>.

Martanda Varma was helped during the siege of Colachel by the English and some Dutchmen who had deserted from the VOC. One of these deserters was a German, Carl August Duyvenschot, who had been made captain of the forces surrounding the Dutch fortress <sup>13</sup>. I will say more about him in the next section.

### 3. DUUVENSCHOT AND DE LANNOY, TWO EUROPEANS IN TRAVANCORE SERVICE

Duyvenschot soon was of little use to Martanda Varma as he became seriously ill. He also seems to have been mentally deranged : he claimed that he was sent by heaven to free Travancore from the Dutch <sup>14</sup>. Thus it became necessary for Martanda Varma to search for a new European who could succeed to Duyvenschot. As Travancore by now had imprisoned many Europeans, Martanda Varma had at his disposal a large reservoir of possible instructors and officers for his army. He ordered Duyvenschot to induce his comrades to join the Travancore army. Duyvenschot had two means at his disposal to achieve his goals : firstly by friendly means, such as good food and excellent

<sup>10</sup> Anjengo to Tellicherry, 6 January 1741, in : *Records of Fort St.-Georges. Letters to Tellicherry*, vol. 5, p. 24.

<sup>11</sup> Colachel to Kanniyakumari, 31 May 1741, A.R.A., VOC inv. no. 2542, fol. 379-380.

<sup>12</sup> Account of the weaver Rengas describing the capture of Colachel by Travancore on 16 August 1741, A.R.A., VOC inv. no. 2581, fol. 7436-7437.

<sup>13</sup> Cochin Council to Batavia, 9 August 1741 ; A.R.A., VOC inv. no. 2525, fol. 167v.

<sup>14</sup> Secret letter Cochin Council to Batavia, 26 October 1741, A.R.A., VOC inv. no. 2525, fol. 41r.

payment, the presentation of seductors as arrack and tobacco and, secondly, by the use of force and terror <sup>15</sup>.

Although the Dutch officers refused to serve Travancore, hunger and fear finally forced them to join Martanda Varma. In fact, they accepted Travancore service only as a means to avoid further imprisonment. Often their attempts to escape were successful such as that of Hartmann, who has left behind a most interesting account of the treatment of the Dutch prisoners and their respective duties. Sometimes the escapes failed, which then led to the horrible execution of some Dutchmen on the beach <sup>16</sup>.

The fall of Colachel meant a serious setback in the Travancore-Dutch war which only came to an end in May 1743, when the treaty of Mavelikara was concluded. Although this was on the whole a contract regarding trade, it also contained stipulations about the Dutch who had deserted to the king of Travancore. The king refused to return those Europeans who out of their own free will had entered into his service <sup>17</sup>. The maharaja pretended that they ran the risk of being punished severely, even to death, when he sent these men back. This was in fact only a pretext not to comply with the stipulations in the Mavelikara treaty for it was agreed that the deserters were granted a general amnesty.

One of the deserters who stayed in Travancore was a Frenchman, Eustache de Lannoy. He was born in the city of Arras in 1715 and went to the Indies when he was 20 years old <sup>18</sup>. Nothing is known about his life in Europe, but it seems clear that he belonged to a distinguished family and that he had knowledge both of the use of arms and of building fortifications. He had deserted in 1741, when the Dutch had tried in vain to relieve Colachel. He had seen the incapability of the officers ; they were often drunk, behaved badly and quarreled with each other, whereas they treated the ordinary soldiers as riff-raff and scoundrels <sup>19</sup>. This must have inspired young Eustache to run away from VOC service. Apart from this, de Lannoy was a Roman Catholic and was, like many of his French and German comrades, distrusted by the Dutch <sup>20</sup>. The soldiers were badly paid, sometimes even in kind. The deserters thus lost nothing when they left VOC service.

In 1743, after the death of Duyvenschot, De Lannoy was appointed captain of Martanda Varma's palace guard. He trained the guard so well that he became

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 41r.

<sup>17</sup> Resolution from the Cochin War Council, 17 February 1742, A.R.A., VOC inv. no. 2581, fols. 6175-6177.

<sup>18</sup> De Lannoy Family-Archives, Deventer, inv. no. 88, fol. 276r.

<sup>19</sup> Resolution of the Cochin Police Council, 12 October 1741, A.R.A., VOC inv. no. 2577, fols. 705-708 ; and Letter from Kanniyakumari to Cochin, 9 September 1741, A.R.A., VOC inv. no. 2581, fols. 7465-7466.

<sup>20</sup> Cochin Council to Batavia, 21 October 1747, A.R.A., VOC inv. no. 2694, fol. 22v.

commander of Udayagiri Fort, near to the summer residence of the Travancore raja. Here De Lannoy had his own house, which was soon surrounded by a community of several hundred Europeans and Indo-Europeans who also served the Travancore king<sup>21</sup>. As a pious Roman Catholic de Lannoy built a small chapel, whereas outside the fortress a cannon-foundry and gunpowder factories were constructed<sup>22</sup>.

#### 4. THE FUNCTIONS OF EUROPEANS IN THE TRAVANCORE ARMY

Let us return to the beginning of this paper where I wrote that Martanda Varma, to subdue the nobles, had hired mercenaries from outside Travancore. Do we see here any relation with the Europeans dissatisfied with their respective employers who by serving an Indian prince hoped to receive better payment and prospects ? Indeed there is a link here. Martanda Varma needed soldiers on which he could rely. They had to be strangers to the country and completely dependent on the king. This condition was certainly fulfilled by those Europeans who stayed on in Travancore after the Mavelikara treaty of 1743. The king paid these soldiers well and gave them the opportunity to rise in rank, whereas many of them had in the meantime married Indo-Portuguese women. In other words, there were strong reasons for these men to stay in Travancore. Also they had no alternative but to be sent back and to serve their old employer with the same bad salary as before. This explains the great resentment of those Europeans who were of no use to the king and who were returned to the VOC<sup>23</sup>.

From the last sentence it is clear that the king could not use all Europeans who deserted to him. He needed specialized men with certain skills such as : a) adaption to the local way of life in Travancore ; b) the possession of some technical knowledge ; c) the ability to teach this knowledge to local soldiers. Technical and didactical knowledge was essential for instructors who had to teach the nayars how to handle modern European fire-arms, how to use entrenchments, bombs and heavy artillery. Apart from this, the introduction of these modern arms made a reorganization of the Travancore army and the introduction of discipline, a uniform, etc., necessary<sup>24</sup>.

Round 1750 Travancore, with the help of Europeans like De Lannoy, developed its own arms industry and became more independent from European supplies during a period in which it became difficult, because of the peace in Europe, to play various European nations off against each other.

<sup>21</sup> PAOLINO DA SAN BARTOLOMEO, *A Voyage to the East Indies*, London, 1800, p. 113.

<sup>22</sup> M. O. JOSEPH, *Valiya Kappittan, the Maker of Modern Travancore*, Alleppey, 1947, pp. 79-81 [Malayalam edition].

<sup>23</sup> Cochin Council to Batavia, 2 May 1741, A.R.A., VOC inv. no. 2542, fols. 224-225.

<sup>24</sup> C. ACHYUTA MENON, *The Cochin State Manual*, Ernakulam, 1911, p. 19.

It seems that although the whole of the Travancore army was reorganized, only a small elite corps was trained in a western manner under its own European captain. The soldiers thus trained were called the Cunju Cuttas<sup>25</sup> and they were dressed like Europeans, which was sometimes extremely confusing on the battlefield. Round this elite corps there was a huge peasant army, partly irregular, partly regular infantry. These soldiers were armed with the traditional shields, bows, axes, spears and swords. Both types of soldiers seem to have been trained in special fighting schools<sup>26</sup>.

As I have pointed out before : Europeans like De Lannoy also started to improve existing fortifications. It was essential for the defence of the country that its borders were guarded by strong fortifications. Already in 1744 De Lannoy had built in the extreme south a fortification line which was constructed in particular to anticipate invasions by the Madurai Nayak. More than 20 years later, de Lannoy constructed a wall, 58 km long, in the north to protect Cochin and Travancore against intrusions from the armies of Hyder Ali<sup>27</sup>. But also in the interior, many forts were built at strategic points such as important waterways and trade routes. Obviously these fortifications in the interior had two functions : protection of trade routes and places where merchants were forced to pay duties on their merchandize.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The Europeans thus enlisted in the Travancore army served as instructors for the Travancore nayars and as military engineers who built several lines of fortifications at the borders of the kingdom. This enabled Travancore to protect itself against an attack from outside. More important was that Martanda Varma, with the help of European knowledge, could expand his territories and increase his influence in the politics on the Malabar coast. This finally led to a new political situation for both Travancore's neighbours and the European East-India Companies.

<sup>25</sup> A. GALLETTI and A. J. VAN DER BURG, *The Dutch in Malabar*, Madras, repr. 1984, p. 54 : Cunjecutas or Kunjukuttakars : picked nayars.

<sup>26</sup> H. K. S'JACOB, *De Nederlanders in Kerala 1663-1701. De Memories en Instructies betreffende het Commandement Malabar van de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*, Den Haag, 1976, p. xxvii.

<sup>27</sup> K. M. PANIKKAR, *A History of Kerala 1498-1801*, Annamalainagar, 1961, p. 272 ; and *Report on the Administration of the Archaeological Department of the Cochin State, 1926-1927*, Ernakulam, 1928, pp. 5-6.



### III. AFRICA



# TRADE AND COMMERCE BETWEEN THE CANARY ISLANDS AND GUINEA IN THE 16th CENTURY

BY

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Guinea is the territory which was officially discovered by the Portuguese in the first half of the 15th century. After Nuño Tristao had rounded Cape Bojador and taken the first negroes directly from the west coast of Africa, Guinea became linked, virtually from this period of time, to the history of the Canary Islands. This was due to the disputes throughout the 15th century between the monarchs of Castile and Lusitania over the possession of the newly found territories. In fact, both territories are mentioned in various treaties — the treaties of Alcaçovas, Tordesillas and Sintra — which were drawn up between both countries during the 15th and 16th centuries in order to settle the disputes. Both territories are mentioned to indicate that Guinea was an area of Portuguese influence while the Canary Islands remained within the jurisdiction of Castile. However, once a colonial-type economy had been established in the Canary Archipelago, with the planting of sugar cane, it became necessary to import slave labour so as to make the business profitable. From the beginning, there was an interest in illegally invading the coasts of Guinea, so as to obtain slaves without passing the Lusitanian fiscal and military controls.

Although this trade remained veiled during a great part of the 16th century, it was during the middle decades of the century when the trade acquired greater relevance, not only bringing about Portuguese protests but also their undertaking of military actions in which Canary islanders and slaves, found in waters within this jurisdiction, were captured. This action by the Lusitanians not only corresponded, but was parallel to the increase in the number of expeditions to the area, especially during the period from 1550 to 1564 and, above all, during the years 1559 and 1564. These were the years, according to research, in which more than two expeditions were carried out annually from the islands

of Gran Canaria and Tenerife. The Portuguese authorities were aware of the *rescate* (the exchange of slaves for merchandise) trips carried out by the Canary islanders. They also revealed the fact that many ships were equipped in the Canary Islands so as to enable the islanders to steal, barter and trade along the coast of Guinea.

The Lusitanian complaint, sent via the diplomatic corps, caused King Philip II who, in his interest to achieve good relations with his relatives, proclaimed a royal decree in 1563, in which he complained to Judge Esquivel, the judge of appeal in Gran Canaria, about the outrages committed by the islanders in Guinea. In 1564, King Philip II decided to name Esquivel as the inquiring judge. He was to inquire into the trade which was carried out during the expeditions and was appointed to punish the guilty parties. The islanders protested. Even if the appointment of the inquiring judge limited these rescue operations, similar but less frequent journeys were made later on.

This issue does not allow us to speak of an intense or lasting trade. But, the concentration over a very few years permits us to affirm the existence of a certain increase of trade. This period of activity, which represents 53% of the total trade carried out during the 1500's, coincides with the reign of Don Sebastian. Bearing in mind that it took place over a ten year period, it is an important percentage. Eighteen companies were formed between 1555-1564 for this same reason.

The difficulties encountered by these expeditions engaged in illegal commerce, explain why their organization was so slow and complicated even though the risk and investment were always extremely well compensated if the voyage was a success.

This explains why the companies were always run by people who were recognised as being economically solvent and by members of the administration. Amongst them were aldermen of the regional authority and even the governors themselves. The aldermen were, perhaps, the most frequent investors in these business deals, although they left the running of the operations to others. Spanish and foreign merchants, the French, the Flemish and other men in public posts or from the administration of the Islands, were also interested in this trade.

These people invested money in the enterprises which not only equipped the ships for the voyages but also paid for the crews and anything else that was necessary for the organization of the *rescate*.

Because of the danger of the crossing, the vessels used for the trips were of low tonnage. These small ships were able to travel faster, escape Portuguese vigilance and they were also able to navigate the entrance of the large rivers more easily. Only one ship was used for each expedition for reasons of security, although on exceptional occasions, two or more vessels were used. However, despite the size of the ships, between 100 and 150 slaves could be transported without much difficulty, therefore, obtaining a higher profit. The overcrowding

of slaves in the vessels often had adverse effects as they were kept in the holds for several days, which produced epidemics and a high mortality rate.

The crew was selected in accordance to the type of vessel to be used. A small but diverse crew was chosen for the work to be performed. As well as this seafaring crew, there were experts in carpentry, maintenance and health. However, it was unusual to have more than 16 crew members, including the captain, first mate and pilot. The pilot, an essential crew member during these voyages, was always a person of renowned experience in the job. His mission was to carry out the necessary manœuvres in order to steer the ships into the rivers and up-stream to the areas where the negroes used their rafts. The post of pilot was of such importance that researchers have found expeditions in which three pilots were present: one to navigate the coastal areas, one for the rivers and a third to replace one of the other two should the need have arisen.

Similarly, the first mate was also essential for the smooth running of the vessel. Curiously enough, this maritime expert was nearly always of Portuguese origin so, it is not surprising that they were accused of joining these expeditions against Lusitanian interests, as they worked as guides for the Canary islanders.

The other members of the crew were the sailors and cabin boys who carried out varying functions at the same time. There were also qualified personnel such as doctors, pursers and coopers onboard. The doctors or surgeons were contracted to take care of both the crew and the slaves, while the purser's job was to keep the books which referred to the merchandise on both outbound and inbound journeys. Not only was the purser responsible for choosing and marking the negroes for the traders, but also for keeping records of the slaves who died during the crossing. The cooper was a very necessary part of the crew during these trips, bearing in mind that one of the principle goods which was carried on board and used to carry out the *rescate* was the wine which was produced on the Islands.

Attention should be drawn to the mediator or interpreter — also known by other names commonly used in this period such as *tangomango* or *lanzado* — who was an important figure for these expeditions. These people were considered to be of certain importance along the African coast, and were usually in charge of organizing the *rescate* by negotiating the exchange of goods for slaves with the petty kings. Those interpreters who lived in Guinea were responsible for collecting up the slaves to be exported. They were also accused of being of Jewish origin and of living in the same style as the negroes.

All personnel were paid both in cash as well as with the slaves who were gathered during the *rescate*. This latter mode of payment was the most usual formula used among the Canary shipowners.

Having carefully analysed the details of the preparation of the expedition and its illegal character, what was pursued and whether it was really worth the risk taken in these commercial activities should be examined. The trading

was organized via the *rescate* and exchange of articles for negro slaves, gold, tabasco pepper and other goods. These trading deals required the outlay of great sums of maravedies (the Spanish currency of the time). The participation of large investors and small shareholders was justified so as to obtain economic compensation.

The investment capital which was almost always well over one million maravedies — although sometimes the amount was a little more modest — nearly always came from societies and companies. The companies were formed on a temporary basis, one trip only, and the money was invested to pay for the transport, the crew and the Portuguese-style merchandise which consisted of three kinds of goods : fabrics, metal objects of little value and foodstuffs, especially wine. These provisions were used in exchange for the slaves at prices that were lower than those paid in the market which existed in the Canary Archipelago or in South America. These investments produced large profits of roughly 600% on individual deals, and between 300% and 400% on transactions of greater importance. The same conclusion that other authors have arrived at is therefore reached : the profit from this trade was so substantial that it played a considerable role during the period of accumulation of capital.

The profit obtained was distributed according to the capital invested by the partners. Each investor perceived benefits in relation to their contribution. Once the operation concluded, the ship and the slaves were sold in the market and the company was liquidated.

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A VIEW OF THE COLONIAL FACTORIES  
IN THE LITORAL AREA OF BENIN  
WITH A SPECIAL REFERENCE  
TO DUTCH SETTLEMENTS  
A PICTORIAL ESSAY

BY

Peter J. VAN WIECHEN, M.D.

*Monsieur le Résident,*

*J'ai l'honneur de porter a votre connaissance que dans l'état actuel de la Souveraineté et de indépendance de notre état, il tous apparait impossible de tolérer sur notre sol une enclave étrangère qui presente une possession coloniale quelconque. C'est la raison pour laquelle et suite a nos diverses prises de position, je viens vous informer de notre decision de mon gouvernement de vous prier d'avoir a quitter l'actuel fort Portugais au 31 juillet 1961, dernier délai veille du premier anniversaire de notre indépendance. Veuillez agréer, monsieur le resident, l'esperance de ma consideration distinguée. Hubert Maga, president.*

This letter of the president of the new state Dahomey, in 1974 renamed in the People Republic of Benin, rang in the end of era of the factory existence that had been started in the 17th century<sup>1</sup>. Interesting to note is that this event would be the beginning of the total collaps of the Portugese imperium. At the end of the same year India would invade Goa. A colonial war started in the other Portuguese overseas territories.

It was a dramatic evening. Dahomey expected a worthy surrender. The vice-president of the Republic was in Ouidah to assist the hoisting of the Dahomean flag. But things worked out differently. The panic stricken Portuguese resident did not know what to do. He wanted to speak the president. That was impossible and at that moment he set fire to the fort and his brand-new car. The police arrested him and put him out of the country. This dramatic

<sup>1</sup> *L'Aube Nouvelle*, 7 August 1961, Archives Nationales, Porto Novo, Benin.

event is still visible because the wheel became a part of the Portuguese monument inside the fort.

This formerly Portuguese fort, São Jao Baptista d'Ajuda, was transformed into a museum and was recently — in 1990 — restored with aid from the Portuguese government and the Gulbekian foundation. This fact can be considered as a recognition of the factory as cultural heritage in Dahomey. In my opinion there is no other country where the factory has had such an impact upon the architecture as in the centre of the coastal cities in Benin.

The factory as subject for a congress is a good idea of the Royal Academy of Overseas Sciences of Belgium and the Scientific Committee for Maritime History.

The factory was, after the ship, the starting point of European expansion. And it was in fact a peaceable beginning. Around a factory the Europeans and the inhabitants of the island or country were equal. That could be dangerous for the Europeans. They did not speak the language and usually they did not have any knowledge of customs and manners. They had to adapt themselves to the daily life of the people around them and they were obliged to accept the wishes and the sometimes capricious behaviour of the local kings. They were uncertain in regard to their future. Living as they did in a rather primitive tropical country hostile to their health, in a setting totally different from home.

Therefore, it is understandable that these Europeans tried to create an environment, more in European style and thus more adapted to their needs. As much as possible they liked to build factories in a European style, and for safety they always wanted to fortify their factories.

The often fragile and temporary character of the factories is important to point out. This is the main reason that, in contrast to the forts, no factory from the 16th or 17th century has survived. We have to rely on descriptions or engravings.

Although the ship always remained an important floating base, Boxer has pointed out that this base was supplemented by the establishment of *feitorias* or factories ashore<sup>2</sup>.

By such a concept of trading the Portuguese were able to divert a great portion of the trans-Saharan trade to their ships and settlements on the West-African coast. It is understandable that the Dutch words *factorij* and *loge* or *logie* have been derived from Portuguese words *feitoria* and *loja*. The Portuguese word *loja* means a room where someone can buy and sell.

After their discoveries, the Portuguese had settled factories all over the world, from the African westcoast as far-away as in the Asian Moluccas. When the Dutch started their expansion they had only to follow the Portuguese.

<sup>2</sup> C. R. BOXER, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire*, London, 1969, p. 25.

Before looking to the factories in Benin, it would be interesting to have a view of the architecture features of the factory in general. To do this I use engravings mostly from Dutch sources, such as Valentijn's *Oud- en Nieuw-Oostindiën* (Amsterdam, 1724).

The factory is a house with rooms for store and for living. Apartments for the director and his assistants. Mostly we see a two storehouse or a house with a wall around. I show you a European, probably a Portuguese example (L. Degrandpré, XVIII century Lisboa, Bibliotheca National).

An easy access to the sea or a position on the bank of a river was always a necessity. Mostly we see lodges situated in the village itself or very nearby. A fort is always built outside the village and on a more strategic spot higher up. In this detail of an engraving taken from Valentijn you can see that distinction : under B the ruins of the factory Cambello, on the coast of Ceram in 1657, and more higher up in the mountains than the fort (coll. auth.).

Although a factory never was a extraterritorial area, there was always a flag hoisted in front of the building. The flag became an notation on maps for a factory, as we can see at the map of the Gambiariver in 1732 (*Carte de la rivière Gambra ou Gambie*, J. Leach, 1732).

The architecture of the factory was strongly dependent on the results of the trade. In the beginning usually a simple dwelling was enough. Frequently a local house was used. An example is this Dutch *handelspost* at Fombetokke (coll. auth.).

But when the trade was very succesfull, a factory could grow in size and could develop into a real city. This happened to the Dutch factory in Hougly, in Bengal. The factory became so wealthy that the Dutch painter Hendrick van Schuylenburgh was invited to paint the settlement (*The factory of the Dutch East India Company in Hougly, Bengal*, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, cat. 1976, no. A4282).

Was the factory more than a simple house, than there was a certain general ground plan. The physician Nicolaas de Graaff, a skilfull drawer, gives us such plan from the factory Chiopra<sup>3</sup>. Besides the houses for the directors, the surgeon and the bookkeepers, there are warehouses and gardens and some buildings adapted to the main trade in such a factory. In Chiopra it was the processing of saltpetre. Walls were important mainly to prevent stealing.

A factory implied never an exclusion. Often we see factories of different nationalities lying besides each other in a certain area of a city. This was also the case in Kanton around 1775.

Carnot, a Dahomeyan slavetrader in 1830, summed up the characteristics of a first class factory :

<sup>3</sup> M. BAREND-VAN HAEFTEN, *Oost-Indië gespiegeld*, Zutphen, 1992, p. 44.

- a two store house with a veranda and a belvedere with a beautiful view,
- magasins,
- a cuisine for your own,
- a kitchen for the slaves with dwellings for them,
- a waterstore,
- a covered open space for the slaves to rest during the day
- a wall and
- a main gate <sup>4</sup>.

In the 17th century the coast in Dahomey became a second hand area of Portuguese and French settlement. For the Portuguese it was their last area at the Guinea coast after having been defeated by the Dutch. The excellent quality of the slaves attracted them just as the French. After the conquest of Brazil the Dutch, firmly established at the Gold Coast, needed slaves as well. They were also thinking to start a settlement at the Slave Coast, but the conquest of Angola made it less important <sup>5</sup>.

The Slave Coast was not attractive to settle. Strong waves, no harbour, lagoons made access difficult.

Further, the political situation was complicated. Several little kingdoms with rivaling kings made the Slave Coast a troubled area with many local wars. The small coastal area was divided between three kingdoms, that of Allada or Ardra, of Ouidah and of Popo. And more inland there was a much larger kingdom, that of the king of Abomey. Offra and Jakin were cities in Allada, Great and Little Popo in the Popokingdom, and Ouidah and Savi in the Juda region. Traffic in slaves was the most important commercial activity during the 18th century and especially in Ouidah. In the first half of the 19th century, after the abolition, this trade continued illegally, despite several blockades of European countries.

In 1680, several years after the loss of Angola, the Dutch had settled in Great Popo and in Offra. They did not have a factory in the more important kingdom of Ouidah, where the French and the English, the Brandenburgers and the Portuguese already had their trading houses. From the Dutch lodge in Great Popo is not left any description. But the echo of the Dutch presence here was seen longtime on maps (*Carte d'Anville, 1727*).

At the end of the 17th century, after a lot of difficulties with the kings of Allada and Popo, the Dutch trader Willem Bosman made several journeys from Elmina to the Slave Coast and achieved that the king of Ouidah was willing to build a factory for the Dutch in Ouidah. His description of the region is one of the earliest and a source of much information. He described the Dutch factory in Ouidah as follows : "The lodge is quite big. Three storehouses, seven

<sup>4</sup> Th. CARNOT, *Confession d'un négrier*, Paris, 1993, pp. 236-237.

<sup>5</sup> A. VAN DANTZIG, *Les Hollandais sur la Côte de Guinée*, Paris, 1980, p. 66.

rooms, a beautiful square in the middle and around a roofed-in gallery. The other European houses are bad and uncomfortable”<sup>6</sup>.

In Bosman’s book are no engravings. We have to wait till the visit of Labat, the count of Marchais, to know how the housing of the Europeans looked like. Despite the existence of forts in Ouidah, the king had decided that all the directors had to live near his palace in the capital of Savi.

We see a Dutch factory appearing in the engravings of Labat. He informs us very well about the architecture of the factories. He gives us an exceptional clear view of the factories with a charming feeling for details. We see the kitchen, the slavebooth, the native village, etc., and an European trader lying in a hammock (*Vue des comptoirs Européens de Xavier*)<sup>7</sup>.

Labat describes the houses, all made with red mud. It may be imagined that these buildings were not very different from the local housing nowadays in Savi.

The French, possessing a factory in Ouidah since 1680, were allowed to build a fort in Ouidah in 1704. They named it fort Saint Louis and the canons they used were taken from a Dutch vessel<sup>8</sup>.

The English followed some years later. They settled a fort, named Fort William. But the Dutch never got permission to build a fort, probably because their aggressive behavior in that region.

In 1720, when the Portuguese wanted to build a fortin and asked permission, the Dutch heavily demonstrated against it. They carried out a campaign against the Portuguese ships and in 1726 they tried to set fire into the Portuguese factory of Savi. Ultimately they tried to convince the king to give the Portuguese only an allowance for a house by threatening him they should leave Ouidah. Their attempt was unsuccessful and so they transferred their trade to Jakin, in the neighbouring kingdom of Allada, a village near Offra<sup>9</sup>.

The life between the Europeans was not without troubles. Bosman tells us about his conflict with the French. Perhaps the last event where all the European directors were together was the coronation festivities of the King Hufon in April 1725. According the engraving of Labat, their attendance was peaceful. The French guests are sitting beside the English, the Dutch and the Portuguese directors and their assistants (*Couronnement du Roy de Juda*, avril 1725, Labat).

In 1727 the king of Abomey, the famous and cruel Agaja, attacked the littoral area and conquered the Ouidah, Allada and the Popo kingdoms. All the factories in Savi were burnt down and the Europeans arrested. The rule

<sup>6</sup> W. BOSMAN, *Naauwkeurige Beschrijving van de Guineese Gout, Tand en Slave kust*, Amsterdam, 1709.

<sup>7</sup> REV. J. B. LABAT, *Voyage du chevalier des Marchais en Guinée*, Amsterdam, 1731.

<sup>8</sup> S. BERBAIN, *Le comptoir Français de Juda*, Paris, 1942.

<sup>9</sup> VAN DANTZIG, *op. cit.*, pp. 225-242.

of the Abomey king was a period of more or less permanent fighting and the trade in Ouidah wasted away rapidly. In 1743 the French fort was in a worse condition : roofs were gone and the walls had almost fallen down (Levet). But the Portuguese trade did not seem to suffer too much. For the Dutch the settlement in Jakin, called Zelandia, was not a successful one. The king of Abomey mistrusted the Dutch very much and arrested them. The Dutch director Herzog escaped and settled a factory in Badagri. After his murder in 1738, the Dutch influence at the Slave Coast ended definitely <sup>10</sup>.

More and more the slave trade declined and at the end of the century not much was left. The English fort was in a decaying condition and the French left Ouidah in 1797.

After the French revolution there is a renewed interest in the west African coast.

In 1845 John Duncan visited Ouidah : "The Portuguese quarter excels the English and the French quarters. This I consider attributable to their superiority in knowledge of agriculture and domestic economy. The returned slaves from Brasil have small farms and are much cleaner in their habits. They live in comfort and occupy good and well furnished houses. In the meantime the English fort is gone and is turned into a ordinary factory" <sup>11</sup>.

A few years after him, the Dutch physician Gramberg was visiting Ouidah and Badagri. In contrast to Duncan he was not so impressed by the Portuguese, as well as astonished by the dwelling houses of the European traders. Their worse conditions of life invited him to make a sketch of it. So we thank to him a rather unique inside view of a factory. A house made from bamboo and red mud. Without any comfort. Not much furniture and a lot of bottles. Their life is not easy. They have to wait a long time for their need and medical treatment is impossible. Only boredom and idleness <sup>12</sup>.

Was nothing left remembering the Dutch ? Let us see what famous Richard Burton, who was visiting Ouidah in 1861, has to say. On the beach he saw seven distinct establishments of mat roofs and mud walls for storing cargo and for transacting business during the day. Ouidah itself is a ruined place, everything is showing decay, more bush than buildings. The English fort is in a worse condition. Two bastions of the fort and the drawbridge have gone, and the main building is very shabby. It is a scandal morally and physically. The English fort is the house of the missionaries of Wesley. Very shameful for him was the fact that the fort was being protected by two fetishes, called the defenders of the white man. The French fort is the finest of all. It is recently restored by the owner, the trader Regis from Marseille, so he wrote. He bought it after being unoccupied during more than fifty years.

<sup>10</sup> R. LAW, *The Slave Coast of West Africa, 1550-1750*, Oxford 1991, pp. 125-155.

<sup>11</sup> J. DUNCAN, *Travels in West Africa (1845-1846)*, London, 1847.

<sup>12</sup> J. S. G. GRAMBERG, *Schetsen van Afrika's Westkust*, Amsterdam, 1861.

In the Portuguese fort lived missionaries of Portugal. The main building is a large doublestored house with thick walls as an old Norman castle. There is a chapel and some other ground floor houses.

According to Burton, there is still another fort, a Brazilian one, in the village. Erected upon the old Dutch factory, it is the residence of the wealthy de Souza family<sup>13</sup>. Around a triangular square smaller houses have been added to both sides. In the beginning of the 19th century Francisco de Souza, coming from Bahia, settled there. His influence upon the king became so enormous that he was nicknamed the 'vice-king of Ouidah'. In the complex the family is still living there with the paintings of the forefathers. In the residence, the room with Francisco's Brazilian bed, in which he died. His grave are kept by the de Souza family as a shrine (sanctuary)<sup>14</sup>.

It is clear that the European influence upon the trade at the Slave Coast was gone. Certainly for the Dutch who did not try to get a part in it. Their strongholds at the Gold Coast were decaying and, in the Netherlands, only a few people liked to invest there. For the French and English the situation was not very different. The trade, illegal slavetrade and palmoil, was now in hands of the Brazilians. By the profit they could invest in tradebuildings, in which the architecture of their homeland became obvious. In Ouidah and in other places in Dahomey, such as Porto Novo, the Afro-Brazilian architecture can be considered as a cultural heritage. I will show you some examples<sup>15</sup>.

The factory as successful commercial concept remained. Magasins at the ground floor and apartment for living at the first floor. Typical baroque characteristics were added. So we see balconies, entrances with decorations. In central Ouidah around the market place Zobé you can still find most of the beautiful examples. The resemblance with the traditional Brazilian architecture is quite obvious as this engraving of Albert Eeckhout, a Dutch painter in Dutch Brasil, shows (detail of *Portrait of Tupinamba woman*, Nationalmuseum Copenhagen).

The remembrance to the short presence of the Dutch factory in Ouidah is still vivid. According to Agbo, a wellknown local historian and writer of *L'histoire de Ouidah*, the Dutch factory was situated close to the quarter of the Adamè family<sup>16</sup>. Indeed there is still a delapidated two store house, and according to the local people a Dutch house. Probably it was the spot where the Dutch factory had been situated and the big house is the echo of that factory. The aged residents are still very proud of the Dutch history of their house.

<sup>13</sup> R. BURTON, *A Mission to Glele, king of Dahomey*, London, 1864.

<sup>14</sup> S. DE SOUZA, *La famille de Souza, Benin-Togo*, Cotonou, 1992.

<sup>15</sup> M. CARNEIRO DA CUNHA, *Da Senzala ao Sobrado*, Sao Paulo, 1985 ; J. SOULILLOU (ed.), *Rives coloniales, architectures, de Saint-Louis a Douala*, Paris, 1993.

<sup>16</sup> C. AGBO, *Histoire de Ouidah du XVI<sup>e</sup> au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris, 1959.

More concrete the Dutch presence is seen in the region of the old king palace in Savi. The spot of the palace and European factories, burnt down in 1727, was two years ago the region were the American archeologist Kelly, in cooperation with professor Alexis Adande, archeologist of the Benin university, did some excavations <sup>17</sup>. The finds are exposed now in the museum of Ouidah and in the museum of Porto Novo. Yellow IJsselbricks and pipes from the city of Gouda in the Netherlands are pieces of evidence of Dutch history in Dahomey.

The Dutch presence in Dahomey was not impressive. Despite the short durance of it we were able to find some traces. Not only in literature but also in the area itself. This points out not only the value of oral history as source for history, as well as the significance of modern archeological research in this field of history.

<sup>17</sup> K. KELLY, *Historic Archeology at Ouidah, Benin*, 11th Biennial Conference of S.A.F.A., 1992.

# EUROPEAN FORT COMMUNITIES ON THE GOLD COAST IN THE ERA OF THE SLAVE TRADE

BY

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This paper aims to shed light on continuity and change in Afro-European relations on the Gold Coast before formal British colonisation. I shall focus on the relationship between the European “factories”, or “fort communities”, and African societies in the 18th century and during the transitional phase of “informal colonialism” in the first half of the 19th century. My main point of reference will be the “Danish” Fort Community, briefly outlining its historical trajectory of gradual transformation from “port of trade” to “Afro-European city state”, to “bridge head of colonial expansion”. In conclusion I shall argue that such a trajectory, common for all European establishments, paved the way for a kind of “colonisation by invitation” on the Gold Coast.

## THE TRADE ESTABLISHMENT ON THE COAST

The coastal region of Ghana, formerly known as the Gold Coast, is known to have had the highest concentration of European trade strongholds (castles, forts, and trade lodges or factories) in Africa during the time of pre-colonial, commercial expansion<sup>1</sup>. Quest for gold brought Portuguese, and later on a number of North-European traders to the Coast. The Atlantic slave trade kept them there during the 18th century, while the so-called “legitimate trade” which replaced the slaving business after formal Abolition, conditioned a continued commercial presence harbouring the seeds of colonial conquest.

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed description of the European establishments, see A. W. LAWRENCE, *Trade Castles and Forts of West Africa*, London, 1963; and Albert VAN DANTZIG, *Fortes and Castles of Ghana*, Accra, 1980.

The Portuguese established their major trade base, the castle São Jorge da Mina, as early as 1482, dominating the trade in gold for more than a century. At the turn of the 16th century the Portuguese power on the Coast crumbled. By the 1640s the Dutch had conquered São Jorge, renamed Elmina castle <sup>2</sup>. Attempting to gain the same hegemonic position as their predecessor, they were confronted with growing competition. English traders challenged Dutch dominance, and from the middle of the century we witness a veritable “scramble for the Gold Coast”, involving Swedish, Danish, French and German (i.e. Brandenburg) companies as well. They were all struggling to gain permanent foothold on the Coast. In the event three European establishments survived : the Dutch, the English and the Danish, whose activities centred around their respective headquarters Elmina, Cape Coast, and Christiansborg at Accra.

The Portuguese never regained foothold. But their pioneer activities had a lasting effect. They left a legacy which influenced Afro-European relations throughout the pre-colonial era : confronted by local political systems sufficiently strong to deter conquest, by unfavourable health conditions, and by a functional indigenous commercial system which could be exploited by peaceful means, the Portuguese ruled out the “colony option”, adopting an organisational solution based on the *feitoria*, or “factory” concept. The basic elements of the *feitoria* organisation were : in Portugal, i.e. Lisbon, the monopolist “Mina House” served as the overarching administrative and co-ordinating nucleus in full charge of the “Mina” (i.e. Gold Coast) gold trade ; in Africa *São Jorge da Mina* — under the strict authority of the “House” - functioned as a regional centre, through which all imports to the Coast, and all gold exports, were channelled. A string of lesser trade forts and lodges were attached to the São Jorge castle <sup>3</sup>.

The *feitoria* became the guiding principle for the commercial organisation of all European nations involved in the Gold Coast trade. Elmina, Cape Coast and Christiansborg became the Gold Coast executive arms of the respective chartered companies in Europe, and each headquarter controlled a number of satellite trade stations. None of the establishments constituted a consolidated bloc. Intense inter-European rivalry in the latter half of the 17th century led to the formation of a “patchwork” of trade posts flying different European flags. At Accra, for example, Danish Christiansborg, Fort James of the English and Crève-Coeur of the Dutch lay within gun range.

The adoption of the *feitoria* system meant that, except for the limited European staff of the forts, we can hardly talk of European “settlements” on the Gold Coast until the 19th century. Thus I have preferred the term “fort community”. The trade establishments were originally tiny “stranger enclaves”

<sup>2</sup> For a description of the Portuguese enterprise, see J. VOGT, *Portuguese Rule on the Gold Coast*, Athens, University of Georgia Press, 1979.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 204-05

consisting of the commercial staff, a few military officers, a limited number of soldiers and a few artisans. The European power base was extremely weak ; trade and security depended heavily on the goodwill and co-operation of local rulers. By the 18th century the nature of the early “fort communities” had changed : a process of expansion and, at the same time, “indigenisation” (or assimilation) had weakened their “stranger” as well as “enclave”-character. First, the Europeans had been forced to adapt to the ways and means of African society. Second, increased recruitment of “company slaves” (castle/fort slaves) to satisfy the fort’s labour demands and enrolment of mulatto soldiers resulted in a numerical “Africanisation” of the staff employed at the fort. Third, as a rule there developed a symbiotic relationship between the European strongholds and African settlements, or towns of varying size, which grew up under the fort walls. Normally fort-and-town formed one politico-commercial unit. One might even apply the term “extended fort community”. The fort walls did not mark any physical boundary between fort and town : members of all fort groups became integrated in familial or other social and economic networks in the local town. Fort slaves and mulatto soldiers lived within the town wards, and the European company staff often put up their own *casa* in town to house their African wives and families. During the heydays of the slave trade on the Gold Coast the few Europeans could be described as a commercial elite struggling to defend a position of leadership over mixed, Afro-European fort communities.

To describe the role of fort-and-towns, or “extended fort communities” in the Atlantic trade Polanyi’s concept “port of trade” is quite useful <sup>4</sup>. They were sea-ports, special zones through which import goods brought by European ships and African exports brought by caravans from the interior were exchanged. They bridged the gap between two different commercial systems, where repeated transactions generated common commercial ground, i.e. mutually accepted standards of exchange, systems of value evaluation, codes of conduct and proper procedures in negotiations, etc. Customary practices were integrated in a well-known framework which facilitated the business of trading in kind. The fort-and-towns moreover possessed the necessary practical facilities ; such as storage, accommodation, carriage capacity and provisions to cater to the needs of the personnel involved — and they were places of concentrated knowledge and skills. Local merchants and brokers possessed vital commercial expertise, often acting as middlemen. Linguists/interpreters and professional messengers played an important role in negotiations, and there were people who possessed the

<sup>4</sup> Karl POLANYI, “Ports of trade in early societies”, in : *The Journal of Economic History*, XXIII (1963). See also, K. POLANYI et al., *Dahomey and the Slave Trade : an Analysis of an Archaic Economy*, Seattle and London, University of Washington Press, 1966, pp. 99ff.

necessary skills in handling the various goods. Finally, the fort-and-towns were places where safety around transactions could normally be guaranteed <sup>5</sup>.

Thus the extended fort community constituted the primary commercial base for European enterprise on the coast. The fort “merchants” could draw on the institutional setting provided, and the lively intercourse and multitude of social and economic relations between fort and town gave access to important commercial networks covering the hinterland kingdoms, which were the main providers of gold and slaves. To attract traders from these areas was vital. Successful trade depended much on commercial diplomacy, cultivation of partnerships, or creating reciprocal relations. In short, to obtain preferential treatment some sort of alliance system had to be developed. Such alliances, however, although grounded in commercial interests, by necessity meant *political* involvement. Trade and politics on the Gold Coast were inseparable <sup>6</sup>. Before picking up this thread, however, let us now have a brief look at the Danish activity on the Coast.

#### DANISH TRADE

The first permanent Danish base on the Gold Coast was fort Frederiksborg at Cape Coast which was built 1660. Shortly after an agreement was reached with the then still existing Accra kingdom which allowed the construction of Christiansborg fort (1661). Throughout the 17th century, however, the Danish establishment was in a precarious state. In 1685 Frederiksborg was taken over by the English. Christiansborg came temporarily on “foreign” hands on two occasions. What saved the Danish fort was a re-consolidation of the Danish West India Guinea Company in Copenhagen, which by the late 1690s saw an opportunity to capture a share in slave trade profits. During the 18th century we see — in spite of temporary setbacks — a gradual expansion of the Danish establishment towards the Volta river in the east. In the late 1730s Fredensborg fort at Ningo was constructed. By the mid-1780s former lodges at Ada and Keta were made into Fort Kongensten and Fort Prindsensten. Added to this came a number of more or less permanent trade lodges. There was a clear increase in Danish slave trading activities from the late 1760s, reaching a peak in the 1780s <sup>7</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> For a description of the “ports” on the Gold Coast, see e.g. , R. A. KEA, *Settlements, Trade and Politics in the Seventeenth Century Gold Coast*, Baltimore, 1982.

<sup>6</sup> See the classical demonstration of this fact, K. Y. DAAKU, *Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast 1600-1720 : a Study of the African Reaction to European Trade*, London, 1970. As to the reciprocity of relations, see M. PRIESTLY, *West African Trade and Coast Society*, London, 1969. See also P. HERNÆS, *Slaves, Danes and African Coast Society : the Danish Slave Trade from West Africa and Afro-Danish relations on the 18th Century Gold Coast*, University of Trondheim, 1995.

<sup>7</sup> For the history of Danish activities on the Gold Coast see, G. NØRREGAARD, *Danish Settle-*

The volume of Danish slave exports, from the Gold Coast region seen separately, as well as from West Africa on the whole, was rather modest. According to my own research the total number of slaves exported from Africa on ships flying the Danish flag reached a level at about 85,000 during the period 1660-1806. The results of my calculations, empirically grounded on archival sources as far as possible, are as presented in Table 1 below. Peak years of Danish Gold Coast trade in the 1780s are reflected in the total figures covering the whole of West Africa (period 1777-1789). After 1792 the Gold Coast forts played a minor role. Top figures for the period 1793-1806 were due to intensified shuttle traffic between the Caribbean and West Africa, mainly by ships owned by Danish West Indian merchants based on St. Thomas and St. Croix.

TABLE 1  
Danish slave exports from Africa, 1660-1806

Years	Slaves exported on Danish ships
1660-1689	3,000
1690-1697	2,900
1698-1733	6,800
1734-1765	15,500
1766-1776	5,300
1777-1789	21,100
1790-1792	1,050
1793-1806	30,000
Total	85,650

Source : P. HERNÆS, *Slaves, Danes, and African Coast Society : the Danish Slave Trade from West Africa and Afro-Danish Relations on the 18th century Gold Coast*, University of Trondheim, 1995, p. 226.

As the total number of slaves shipped across the Atlantic (1451-1870) might have reached 13 million, the Danish share is negligible (*ca* 0.7%). The picture is slightly different if we focus solely on the Gold Coast proper, as revealed by Table 2 below. During the 1770s and -80s the Danish proportion of total annual average exports reached 11-12%. Total European exports from the Gold Coast during the entire century amounted to 600,940 slaves out of which the Danes stood for 32,150, or *ca* 5% of the total <sup>8</sup>. The figures demonstrate,

*ments in West Africa 1658-1850*, Boston, 1966 ; O. JUSTESEN, *Kolonierne i Afrika*, in : O. FELDBÆK and O. JUSRESEN (eds.), *Kolonierne i Asien og Afrika*, Copenhagen, Politikens Danmarkshistorie, 1980 ; and P. HERNÆS, *op. cit.*

<sup>8</sup> P. HERNÆS, *op. cit.*, , part 4.

TABLE 2

Estimate of annual Danish slave exports from the Gold Coast proper in the 18th century and percentage of total exports

Years	Total slave exports per year	Danish exports	Danish exports in percent of total
1700-1709	3,315	150	4.5
1710-1719	3,914	160	4.1
1720-1729	6,781	270	4.0
1730-1739	7,299	120	1.6
1740-1749	8,219	190	2.3
1750-1759	5,295	350	6.6
1760-1769	6,998	300	4.3
1770-1779	5,570	600	10.8
1780-1789	5,440	675	12.4
1790-1799	7,263	400	5.5

Source : P. HERNÆS, *op. cit.*, p. 335 ; D. RICHARDSON, "The eighteenth-century British slave trade", in : *Research in Economic History*, 12 (1989) and "Slave Exports from West and West-Central Africa", in : *Journal of African History*, 30 (1989).

that Danish trade on the Coast was one of minor scale. The economic and social influence of the Danish establishment should therefore not be exaggerated. Via diplomatic manoeuvres and strategic alliances, however, the Danes were able to defend their position in trade and to play a political role of some importance on the eastern part of the Coast, which in turn led to certain "colonial ambitions".

#### THE FORT COMMUNITY : FROM "PORT OF TRADE" TO "COLONIAL BRIDGEHEAD"

Trade and politics were inseparable ; this had to be so in an environment characterised by European competition and by an unstable regional political structure which gave rise to perennial power struggle among African polities. The Europeans were forced to manoeuvre on two levels. First, they had to keep up good relations with their local hosts. One implication of the symbiotic relationship between fort and town was political involvement in local affairs as well as in inter-polity affairs. Second, the forts had to be on good terms with the leading powers in the interior. During the 18th century the political landscape changed <sup>9</sup>. We see a process of shifting centres of political gravity : the kingdom of Akwamu was the dominant power at the beginning of the century, controlling the eastern part of the Gold Coast (including Accra). In the 1730s

<sup>9</sup> See e.g., KEA, *op. cit.* ; J. K. FYNN, *Asante and Its Neighbours*, London, 1971 ; M. A. KWAMENA-POH, *Government and Politics in the Akuapem State*, London, 1973 ; and HERNÆS, *op. cit.*, part 1.

Akyem was the dominant power in the east. In the west Asante gradually strengthened its position after the defeat of Denkyera, building its empire by making a number of lesser kingdoms tributary states. Growing Asante power led to a consolidation of the Fante confederacy of petty states, preventing Asante domination of the coast. By the 1740s, however, Asante included Akyem in its domain and became the nominal master of the coastal region from Accra to the Volta. Asante hegemony did not mean absolute control. Tributary states had a certain degree of autonomy and space for political manoeuvres. There were numerous attempts at secession.

Thus Asante's dominant position did not mean stability and political equilibrium. Consequently the European forts came in a position where their trade diplomacy evolved into a strategic game of shifting political alliances, partly on their own initiative, partly as a result of inland powers competing for a share in the Atlantic trade and motivated above all by the fact that the forts were suppliers of firearms (muskets) which played a crucial role in the inter-African power struggle. The "fort communities" on the coast underwent important changes in their politico-commercial character, from predominantly "ports of trade" to important political actors as well: they functioned in the additional role of "city states", participating in the regional political struggle much like other petty states, and thus became an integral part of the Gold Coast political system. Their status varied, from mere clients of dominant powers to a position of relative autonomy which gave space for manipulation and pursuit of more ambitious interests. This picture, I believe, applies to Dutch Elmina (and its satellites)<sup>10</sup>, as well as English Cape Coast<sup>11</sup> and the "Danish" fort community centred at Christiansborg. Let me give a brief sketch of the Danish example.

During the first decades of the 18th century Christiansborg aligned itself with Akwamu. This alliance soon made the Danish establishment a client of the Akwamuhene. Clientage had certain advantages as far as trade was concerned, but led to political isolation locally since Accra ("Dutch Accra") and most coastal towns opposed Akwamu rule, supported by the English and Dutch forts. In 1730 Akyem defeated Akwamu. Christiansborg rapidly built a new alliance where the Danes gained Akyem support of their eastward expansion and the building of Fredensborg fort in 1736. Akyem's rule ended in 1742 when Asante invaded the coast and besieged the European forts at Accra. The Danes now recognised Asante as their "overlord". But, as mentioned, Asante became a "distant master" the following decades. This gave the Danes

<sup>10</sup> See e.g., FEINBERG, Harvey M., *Africans and Europeans in West Africa: Elminans and Dutchmen on the Gold Coast During the Eighteenth Century*. Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, 79 (1989), part 7; and YARAK, Larry W., *Asante and the Dutch 1744-1873*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1990.

<sup>11</sup> K. G. DAVIES, *The Royal African Company*, London, 1957.

an opportunity to strengthen their eastern sphere of influence and build up a trade hegemony over the Volta area, based on Fredensborg at Ningo, Ada lodge in the Volta estuary and Keta lodge east of the river.

By the mid-1770s this hegemony was challenged by the Dutch at Crève-Coeur and their allies in "Dutch Accra". The Dutch managed to gain the support of the Ada chief (*caboceer*) Tetteh Djabaku who allowed them to build a trade lodge at Tuberkue. The Danes refused to accept this, regarding it a violation of well established "rights". Actual fighting broke out. Christiansborg managed to mobilise support from its allied towns, Osu (the "fort-town"), Labade and Ningo and, through them, the chiefdom of Akuapem. Moreover the Danes obtained at least "passive support" from Akyem and Asante and was able to force Ada back to the Danish alliance system thus defending their claims regarding the "Rio Volta"<sup>12</sup>.

This episode reveals clearly that even a weak power such as Christiansborg could at times, by skilful diplomacy and strategic manoeuvres, exert a certain political influence over wider areas than the immediate neighbourhood of the fort. We may also glimpse the growing territorial interests of the Danish establishment, which developed into more overt colonial ambitions. In the early 1780s the Danish governor Jens A. Kiøge exploited the temporary absence of the Dutch from Crève-Cœur (the fort was partly demolished by English naval forces in the Anglo-Dutch war) to form a comprehensive alliance of coastal towns, including former "Dutch Accra". Backed by forces from this alliance the Danes conducted a military campaign against the Anlo (Awuna) people east of the Volta and were able to extend their Keta lodge into Fort Prindsensten in spite of strong opposition<sup>13</sup>. Danish territorial expansion in the 1780s coincided with intensified slave trade. The Danish "fort community" had by this time grown sufficiently strong to function as colonial bridgehead.

However, Danish power on the coast fluctuated considerably, depending upon current regional political constellations. The Danes never managed to consolidate actual colonial rule over their sphere of influence.

#### THE FORT COMMUNITY : SOCIAL ORGANISATION AND ROLE IN SOCIAL CHANGE

The fort community became a platform for Danish expansion. I have touched upon the fact that it could be described as an Afro-European community. Let us now have a closer look at the social organisation of the Danish fort community<sup>14</sup> and its possible role in social change.

<sup>12</sup> P. HERNÆS, *op. cit.*, part I.

<sup>13</sup> See NØRREGAARD, *op. cit.* and JUSTESEN, *op. cit.*

<sup>14</sup> The discussion of the "Danish fort community" and Danish trade is based on a wide range of archival sources in the Danish National Archives (Rigsarkivet) in Copenhagen. The following

There were three distinct social groups in the fort community (here taken in the narrow sense, i.e. staff employed at the fort) : Europeans, mulattos and “fort slaves”. The commercial-administrative staff as well as the military officers were Europeans. At first this group also included a small force of private soldiers. This occupation was gradually taken over by the mulattos. The fort slave group represented the solution to the fort’s labour problem : a number of people were purchased, or recruited by other means, to serve as a stable workforce. The size and composition of the fort community changed substantially. In 1703 the total population counted 50 persons. During the first decade of the 19th century the number reached a level somewhere between 300 and 400. The demographic profile of the fort community should be clear from Fig. 1 below. The number of Europeans remained fairly stable. “Population growth” was due to recruitment of mulattos and, above all, to the large increase of the fort slave group. From nearly one half of the population at the outset, the proportion of Europeans was reduced to 11-12% in the last quarter of the century. We see here a concretization of the “numerical Africanisation” of the fort community, mentioned above.

The community was organised according to a strict hierarchical structure reflecting positions of authority and socio-economic status : the Europeans on the top, the mulattos in a middle position and the fort slaves at the bottom. Social divisions generally concurred with occupational positions. A certain degree of social mobility occurred : a few mulattos were included in the commercial and administrative staff ; some fort slaves became soldiers and a few even occupied trusted positions as linguists and diplomatic envoys. The fort slaves were also used as auxiliary troops in times of crisis. Social relations were of course to some extent affected by “class” differentiation, but in the 18th century there seem to have been few exclusive barriers : in daily life a multitude of individual social and economic interactions, criss-crossing social divisions, took place.

Were the fort communities nuclei of acculturation and social change on the Coast ? The question is not as rhetorical as it seems, when talking about the 18th century. Judging from the Danish example, acculturation — up to a point — worked both ways. The fort community was in many ways a mixture of African and European cultural elements. The symbiotic relationship with

source categories have been particularly important : (1) General correspondence from Christiansborg to Copenhagen, including the series of so-called “Generalbreve” ; VgK (West India Guinea Company) and GK (Guinean Company) series. (2) “Secret Protokoller” (Minutes of the Christiansborg Council) ; VgK 880-83/ DAfG 2 and 50-54/ GK 144-150. (3) “Justits Protokoller” and “Palaber Bøger” (Palaver Books) which are records of judicial proceedings ; VgK 890, 285 and 188/ GK 152-59 and 175-78. (4) “Omkostningsbøger”, “Gagebøger”, “Inventarie og Consumptie Bøger” (Account Books of various kinds) ; VgK and GK series. (5) “Negotie Hovedbøger fra Guinea” (Trading accounts) ; VgK 891-934/ DAfG (Diverse akivalier fra Guinea) 13-26/ GK 182

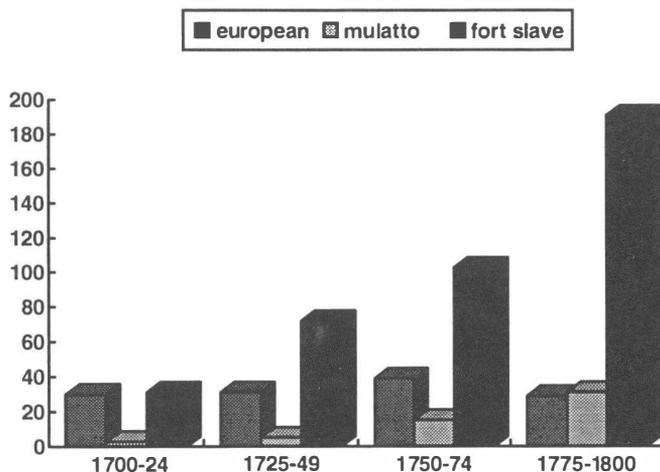


FIG. 1. — Population of the Danish fort community in the 18th century.

Period average figures :

Years	1700-24	1725-49	1750-74	1775-1800
European	30	31	39	29
Mulatto	3	5	15	31
Fort slave	31	72	103	191

Sources : Rigsarkivet (Danish National Archives), Series VgK 942-49/ DAFG 37-43/ GK 204-05 (Census and salary lists); VgK 937-41/ GK 192-202 (Expenditure accounts); VgK 951-54/ DAFG 44-49/ GK 206-208 (Inventories).

the fort town is one important factor here : it should be emphasised that the expansion of the fort community, with its concomitant “Africanisation”, intensified interrelations with African society. It is also clear that the European “heads” of the community were forced to adapt to the local environment. Let us take the system of government and judicial practice as an example : all important matters of policy, transactions, and fort affairs in general were decided by the governor and his “Exclusive Council”. This body also exercised judicial powers over the fort community. Although Danish law did influence judicial practice, particularly regarding internal affairs of the European group, it is evident that such law-principles were modified significantly in a process of adaptation to local African customary law. Moreover the governor was not free to act, not even regarding the fort slaves, without due consultations and “palavers” with the groups involved. In many respects he played the role of an African chief. He was definitely conceived of as a lineage chief, responsible for the deeds of his subjects, by the African environment. To conclude, European cultural influence on African society in general was very limited. It seems to have been rather weak even within the fort community.

This situation changed during the first half of the 19th century<sup>15</sup>. Then the Danish fort community gradually went through more decisive social changes which implied a certain “Europeanisation”. From the 1790s a group of entrepreneurial Danish so-called “free-traders” settled permanently in the fort-town. Apart from trade, their private enterprises included experiments with plantation cultivation of coffee and cotton. Later on they entered the palm oil business. Together with a growing group of mulattos who were able to seize new economic opportunities, they formed the core of a gradually evolving distinctly “Europeanised” commercial and educational elite who gained increasing influence in the “extended fort community”. In this period we can observe more consistent attempts to strengthen Danish jurisdiction and to practice Danish law. Efforts were made to provide some primary education to spread basic literacy. Christian missions entered the scene and became vital agents of social as well as religious change. This process had its roots in the 18th century, but gained strength — perhaps as late as in the 1820s? One of its results was to give the fort community a key role in the spread of European culture and social categories, thus strengthening the social basis for colonial expansion. The importance of the Danish community per se must have been modest. It was, however, part of a broader picture of increasing European influence, culminating in British domination, at first in the form of informal rule, but finally in the shape of colonial annexation.

#### COLONISATION BY INVITATION ?

Afro-European relations during the 18th century could be described as an open interactive system of shifting partnerships and alliances governed by a mutual assessment of advantages, where either party was involved in a strategic game aiming at the highest possible score (or gain), but where neither side could dictate the rules of the game. By contrast the Colonial epoch, although certain elements of the strategic game survived, was a period when the relationship took the form of a “closed” interactive system, where the Europeans normally were able to enforce their own rules.

Such a fundamental change could not be predicted in the early decades of the 19th century — as far as the Gold Coast was concerned. Conditions at the forts were problematic due to deteriorating trade and political trouble, and the number of the European staff was extremely limited. Continued existence of the European “strongholds” appeared to depend totally on their ability to come to terms with their African hosts. Things got worse when Asante

<sup>15</sup> Regarding the Danish fort community in the 19th century, see also NØRREGAARD, *op. cit.* ; JUSTESEN, *op. cit.* ; and O. JUSTESEN, “Danish settlements on the Gold Coast in the nineteenth century”, in : *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 4 (1979).

tightened its control of the coastal zone through a series of military campaigns which now also brought Fante to its knees. Asante rule provoked resistance. Facing a rather chaotic situation, the British governor at Cape Coast took steps to set up an anti-Asante coalition including the coastal towns as well as a number of tributary kingdoms in the southern periphery of the Asante empire. The coalition defeated Asante in 1826 (Dodowa). In the following years the British managed to negotiate a peace treaty. Asante expansion had been contained.

However, these turbulent years marked a turning point in Afro-European relations. Successful British intervention, politically and militarily, had changed their role in Gold Coast affairs, from merely a client of African patrons to a kind of protector. The Asante invasions of the coast had in fact destroyed the basis of the *feitoria* system: commercial interests could not be furthered without *territorial* control. The “colony option” gained new currency. From the late 1820s British policy reflected the growing territorial interest. Gradually British jurisdiction and political control spread in the coastal area. “Informal” colonial rule was bolstered by increasing investments in the palm oil business (and other “legal trade” enterprises) by British firms, and by the process of social change in which the European “fort communities” played a pivotal role. Socio-economic changes undermined the authority of the traditional chiefs and created a nascent commoner elite (petty bourgeoisie). The way of life changed in coastal society, and gave people in general a “modern” orientation. All this broadened the social basis of increasing British power<sup>16</sup>. Neither the Dutch, nor the Danes had sufficient resources to follow suit. The Danes pulled out in 1850, the Dutch in 1873. The year after Britain formally declared the annexation of the Gold Coast Colony.

Having emphasised transition and change, we also have to observe elements of continuity. The Asante conquest of the coast did turn the tides in Afro-European relations. But in setting up the anti-Asante coalition the British could in fact draw on “traditional” networks and the customary system of strategic alliances. No doubt the African partners in the bloc opposing Asante imperialism must have interpreted British initiatives in terms of the well established politico-commercial paradigm, embracing the military support of the Cape Coast fort community (or “city-state”), the major importance of which was the ability to supply firearms. They did not anticipate any decisive change in the Afro-European balance of power. In the event this actually became the result of the process outlined above. But could this have happened so easily without the acceptance of leading African powers on the coast and its immediate hinterland? I would say no! The explanation appears fairly simple:

<sup>16</sup> See e.g. Mary McCARTHY, *Social Change and the Growth of British Power in the Gold Coast: The Fante States 1807-1874*, London, University Press of America, 1983.

In spite of the withdrawal of Asante troops from the coast the threat of an Asante return continued to loom large on the political horizon. This created an umbrella under which British power was allowed to expand unchallenged. Original inter-dependence was thereby gradually converted into a relationship of African dependence. Coastal society came to see the British as the protector and guarantor of their new way of life. By the 1860s we might in fact talk of two competing "imperialisms" (one African and the other one European) acting out their interests on the Gold Coast scene. Even though the strengthening of British rule provoked some opposition among coastal (Fante) chiefs, neither traditional rulers nor commoners were in any doubt which alternative to choose when Asante launched new military campaigns towards the coast from the late 1860s — which in turn led to British counterattacks supported by coastal allies, culminating in the destruction of Kumasi (the Asante capital) in 1874<sup>17</sup>. In this particular context British colonial expansion could — up to a point — be described as a "colonisation by invitation" which was rooted in the long-term history of the European fort communities on the coast.

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<sup>17</sup> For political and socio-economic developments on the Gold Coast in the 19th century, see the following : MCCARTHY, *op. cit.* ; YARAK, *op. cit.* ; E. REYNOLDS, *Trade and Economic Change on the Gold Coast 1807-1874*, London, 1974 ; F. AGBODEKA, *African Politics and British Policy in the Gold Coast 1868-1900*, London, 1971 ; I. WILKS, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century. The Structure and Evolution of a Political Order*, Cambridge, 1975 ; and D. HENIGE and T. C. McCASKIE (eds.), *West African Economic and Social History*, Madison, University of Wisconsin, 1990.

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# STATION NAVALE OU COMPTOIRS ? LA PRÉSENCE MILITAIRE FRANÇAISE À LA CÔTE D'AFRIQUE OCCIDENTALE DE 1783 À 1790 <sup>1</sup>

PAR

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Conséquence des défaites de la guerre de Sept Ans (1755-1763), le traité de Paris dépouilla la France de la plupart de ses possessions coloniales. En Afrique, tous les établissements français du Sénégal étaient devenus anglais à l'exception de l'îlot de Gorée. (article X du traité de Paris), cependant les Anglais tolérèrent les Français à Albréda. «Gorée n'est qu'une petite île stérile et ne nous servait tout au plus que de relâche mais elle était indispensable pour assurer la traite en Gambie, en Bissau et en Guinée» (Mémoire du 27 septembre 1762) <sup>2</sup>. Sur la côte équatoriale, les Français conservèrent Ouidah (ou Juda). Les différents mémoires conservés aux Archives des Colonies montrent que, dès 1766, la question de construire des forts sur la côte africaine se trouva régulièrement posée mais sans grand résultat. En dépit de ces pertes territoriales, le commerce colonial français connut une forte reprise tant sur le plan des importations des sucres, cafés, cotons et indigo que sur le plan des exportations des ports français vers les «Isles». La traite des Noirs connut elle aussi une croissance spectaculaire <sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Cet article sera développé et élargi sous le titre : *Les établissements français sur la côte occidentale d'Afrique de 1755 à 1792*, dans les «Publications de l'Université francophone d'été», Cloître des Carmes, 17500 Jonzac, France.

<sup>2</sup> Dans Léonce JORE, *Les établissements français sur la côte occidentale d'Afrique de 1758 à 1809*, in : «Revue Française d'Histoire d'Outre Mer» (RFHOM), tome LI (1964), 2 fascicules, 475 p., Paris., tome 1, p. 44.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Patrick VILLIERS, *Traite des Noirs et navires négriers au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Grenoble, 1982 (diffusion Société dunkerquoise d'histoire et d'archéologie, 4 rue Benjamin Morel, 59140 Dunkerque, France).

L'entrée en guerre de la France contre l'Angleterre à partir de 1778 relança la politique navale des Français à la côte d'Afrique. En 1779, une division forte de huit bâtiments commandée par le marquis de Vaudreuil s'empara de St-Louis du Sénégal. et détruisit différents comptoirs anglais de la Gambie à la Guinée. Les Anglais ripostèrent en envoyant, le 8 mai 1779, une division commandée par l'amiral Hughes qui s'empara de Gorée et revint en force en Gambie ce qui permit une certaine reprise économique de la Gambie anglaise. Le vaisseau le «Héros» et la frégate la «Précieuse» ne purent reprendre Gorée en novembre 1779. Sur le plan territorial, ce statu-quo dura jusqu'à la fin de la guerre mais la présence française entrava considérablement les négriers anglais et celle des Anglais, les négriers français. Les deux camps recoururent alors au pavillon neutre, notamment portugais <sup>4</sup>.

Dans le traité de Versailles du 3 septembre 1783, trois articles concernaient les côtes d'Afrique occidentales, les articles IX, XI et XII. L'article IX gardait à la France «la rivière du Sénégal avec les forts de Saint-Louis, Podor, Galam et Portendic» et les Anglais devaient renoncer à «l'île de Gorée laquelle sera rendue dans l'état où elle se trouvait lorsque la conquête a été faite...». La Gambie restait aux Anglais mais les Français gardaient Albréda. Les Anglais continuaient à avoir le droit de faire la traite de la gomme depuis la rivière Saint-Jean jusqu'à la baie de Portendic mais avec interdiction de faire aucun établissement permanent. Des litiges étant prévisibles, il était prévu d'envoyer dans les trois mois des commissaires de chaque nation. L'article XII portait ces quelques lignes : «Pour ce qui est du reste des côtes d'Afrique, les sujets anglais et français continueront à les fréquenter selon l'usage qui a eu lieu jusqu'à présent».

Dans les instructions données le 10 novembre 1783 au colonel Louis Le Gardeur de Repentigny, nommé gouverneur de Saint-Louis et des possessions du Sénégal, on trouve l'emploi d'un vocabulaire très précis visant à définir la présence française en Afrique «... depuis le Cap Vert jusqu'à la rivière de Sierra-Leone, la France possède comme dépendance de l'île de Gorée, les comptoirs de Rufisque, Joal et Portudal sur la terre ferme ... et le comptoir d'Albreda sur la rivière de Gambie. Dans cette partie, les droits de la France sont entiers et exclusifs. Depuis le Cap Pointe Noire jusqu'à la rivière de Sierra-Leone ... la France a des droits incontestables fondés sur une continuité de titres... Les Portugais y ont fondé des établissements dont la possession ne peut pas leur être disputée, de même qu'ils ne peuvent former au delà aucune prétention...» <sup>5</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Patrick VILLIERS, *Marine de Louis XVI*, Grenoble, 1986, tome 1, pp. 241-243 (diffusion S.D.H.A., 4 rue Benjamin Morel, 59140 Dunkerque, France). Cf. PONTEVEZ-GIEN, commandant de la «Résolue», *Procès-verbal de destruction du comptoir de Gambie et de l'île de Loos*, Archives Nationales, section Outre-mer, Aix en Provence, Dépôts des Fortifications des Colonies, carton 74, dossier 63.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Archives Nationales, fonds Marine, B4 270, lettre à M. de Repentigny, 18 octobre 1784.

Le grand historien nantais Gaston-Martin affirme que les «comptoirs qui étaient rattachés tant à Saint Louis qu'à Gorée n'étaient pas à proprement parler des possessions françaises, même quand le sol sur lequel ils se trouvaient avait été cédé à la France par des chefs indigènes. Ils ne pouvaient donc être considérés comme colonies»<sup>6</sup>. Il étend ce principe aux différents forts ou escales que la France avait établi sur la côte de l'or et dans le Golfe de Guinée. Dans son ouvrage déjà cité, Léonce Jore adopte le même point de vue et précise dès le début du 1<sup>er</sup> chapitre : «Aucune des nations civilisées qui avait établi des points de traite sur la côte occidentale d'Afrique entre le Cap Blanc au sud du Maroc jusqu'au delta du Niger ne s'était souciée de placer sous sa souveraineté la moindre parcelle de territoire... On ne peut dire que les Français échappaient à cette règle puisque leurs deux établissements au Sénégal se limitaient à deux petites îles : Saint Louis et Gorée». Il précise également le sens des mots «forts» et «escales». *Fortes* : «L'empire consistait seulement en des 'forts' à l'intérieur desquels leurs ressortissants, les captifs que ces derniers avaient achetés et leurs marchandises était à l'abri tant de l'avidité des 'naturels' que des autres 'blancs'». *Escales* : «Albreda, Joal, Rufisque, Portudal... n'étaient que les parcelles de terrains sur lesquelles les chefs indigènes avaient autorisé les commerçants français à commercer...»<sup>7</sup>. Nous reprendrons ces définitions quitte à les compléter par des textes des années 1780. Le traité de Versailles permettait diverses interprétations. Du côté français, tout dépendait des moyens navals que le roi voulait consacrer à cette politique et des instructions qui seraient données aux gouverneurs et aux commandants des navires de guerre envoyées en station navale sur la côte africaine. Des recherches approfondies dans les archives de la Marine, dans celles des Colonies et dans le fonds du Dépôt des Fortifications des Colonies d'Aix-en-Provence nous ont permis d'élaborer le tableau suivant.

Il apparait immédiatement que les moyens mis en œuvre ont été considérables. La station navale à la côte d'Afrique devint régulière dès l'année 1783 et se maintint jusqu'en 1790. Plusieurs types de bâtiments furent mis en œuvre : vaisseaux, frégates, corvettes, gabares, flûtes, avisos et côtres. Le «Sagittaire» de 64 canons comme l'«Experiment» de 50 canons étaient des vaisseaux avec tout ce que cela implique comme logistique. La corvette qui nécessitait 94 hommes était la plus économique tout en portant 18 canons de 6. Cependant si le roi envoya sept corvettes, sa préférence alla aux frégates avec neuf départs. Ces nouvelles frégates étaient capables de vaincre n'importe quel corsaire et d'attaquer des fortifications terrestres. Les frégates de 26 canons

<sup>6</sup> Cf. GASTON-MARTIN, *L'ère des Négriers (1714-1774), Nantes au XVIII<sup>e</sup>*, Nantes, 1931 et GASTON-MARTIN et ROUSSIER, *Histoire des Colonies françaises pendant la Révolution*, Centre d'Études de la Révolution, 3<sup>e</sup> cahier, 1935, p. 12.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. L. JORE, *Les établissements...*, *op. cit.*, p 19.

TABLE I  
Batiments de guerre français expédiés à la côte d'Afrique de 1783 à 1789

Départ de France	Nom du navire	Type et nombre de canons	Commandant	Lieu et objet de la mission
<b>1783</b> janvier mars novembre	Sagittaire Ariel Bayonnaise	64 vaisseau 24 frég. de 9 16 corvette	Villeneuve-Cilart de Sercey de La Jaille	Sénégal et Guinée : protection du commerce et rapport sur la côte d'Afrique Sénégal : protection du commerce. Gambie et Gorée : amener gouverneur Repentigny et appliquer le traité de Versailles
<b>1784</b> janvier  sept.  nov.	Venus Lamproie Anonyme Neptune Blonde Emeraude  Levrette Sénégal	34 frég de 18 24 gabarre 16 gabarre navire affrété 18 corvette 26 frég de 12  18 corvette 14 côtre du roi	Bernard de Marigny de Capellis Du Loir  La Tour du Pin de La Jaille  de La Ferté Bellon de Ste Marguerite	Côte d'Angola : expédition de Cabinde   «Emeraude», «Blonde» et «Levrette», commandée par La Jaille forment la 2 <sup>e</sup> division de la station navale d'Afrique, en station au Sénégal En Gambie, île de Loos et archipel des Bissagos Aux ordres de Repentigny, signature de traités avec les rois africains
<b>1785</b> mars octobre	Rossignol Bayonnaise	20 corvette 16 corvette	de Brach de La Haichois	Amener gouverneur Boufflers et cartographie de la côte du Sénégal, ramène Boufflers en France en juin 1786 Cartographie, exploration côte du Sénégal et Sénégalie

TABLE 1 (suite)

Départ de France	Nom du navire	Type et nombre de canons	Commandant	Lieu et objet de la mission
<b>1786</b> janvier mars octobre novembre décembre	Experiment Pandour Cérés Junon Dordogne	50 vaisseau 14 côtre du roi 28 frég de 12 34 frég de 18 18 gabare	Girardin de Champagny Angély de Fayolle de Flotte de Villemagne	Construction du comptoir d'Amokou et côte de Guinée Avec «Experiment» et «Juda» + cartographie côte de Guinée Sénégal, Gambie, Amokou et côte de Guinée Station d'Afrique, Guinée et Juda Sénégal, Gorée et Guinée, retour de Boufflers
<b>1787</b> septembre octobre novembre	Outarde Flore Fauvette	18 flûte 28 frég de 12 16 corvette	de Sablières de Bonnaventure de La Beaume	La Corogne, Madère, Cap vert, Sénégal et Açores Sénégal, archipel des Bissagôts et Guinée Amener Blanchot, successeur du gouverneur Boufflers Gorée, exploration de la Sierra-Leone et île de Loos
<b>1788</b> mai juin novembre	Eveillè Cousine Néréide	aviso 16 corvette 28 frég de 12	de Boubée Martin Villeneuve-Cillart	Sénégal et île de Loos Sénégal, archipel des Bissagots De Gorée à côte de l'Or
<b>1789</b> mars	Cérés	28 frég de 12		Sénégal, Amokou, côte de Guinée
<b>1790</b> avril	Félicité	28 frég de 12	Grimouart	Sénégal, Amokou, côte de Guinée

de 12 telles l'«Emeraude» ou les frégates de 18 telle la «Vénus» en 1784 ou la «Junon» en 1786 sortaient à peine des chantiers navals. Aller à la côte d'Afrique était un moyen de les tester en haute mer et de former des équipages<sup>8</sup>. Au niveau des hommes, il apparaît que Villeneuve-Cillart, La Jaille, Girardin, le comte de Flotte, Grimouard étaient des commandants expérimentés qui avaient de brillants états de service. Les enseignes ou les lieutenants de vaisseau qui commandaient les corvettes, les côtres ou les goélettes le long des côtes d'Afrique apparaissent d'après leurs états de service comme dynamiques et motivés. Ainsi la politique royale à la côte d'Afrique a misé sur la qualité pour les hommes comme pour le matériel. Une évidence s'impose. La station navale à la côte d'Afrique relève d'une volonté délibérée. L'analyse des archives montre les diverses missions confiées à cette marine : en premier lieu faire respecter le pavillon français et récupérer les possessions africaines en application du traité de paix mais aussi rechercher des lieux propices à l'implantation de nouveaux comptoirs.

#### FAIRE RESPECTER LE PAVILLON FRANÇAIS

Cette volonté de faire respecter le pavillon apparaît clairement dans les *Instructions particulières* aux commandants de la station navale comme à ceux des navires de guerre à leur départ de France, lors de la remise des comptoirs par les Anglais en application du traité de Versailles et lors de l'affaire de Cabinde avec les Portugais. Le 27 janvier 1783, alors que la suspension de l'état de guerre entre la France et l'Angleterre était sur le point d'être signée, de Cillart reçut l'ordre d'aller sur la côte d'Afrique avec le «Sagittaire», vaisseau de 64 canons. Sa mission était de protéger la traite française : «Le chevalier de Cillart se postera de préférence dans les endroits de la côte où il apprendra que la traite sera la plus abondante et où elle est menacée d'être inquiétée par les Anglais... S'il rencontre des frégates ou autres bâtiments de guerre au royaume d'Angleterre, il les combattra et s'en emparera... »<sup>9</sup>.

En octobre 1783, Castries envoya à la côte d'Afrique M. de La Jaille, sur la «Blonde», corvette de 18 canons de 6, pour amener Le Gardeur de Repentigny, nouveau gouverneur, à Saint-Louis du Sénégal et l'aider à reprendre possession des comptoirs de Gorée et d'Albréda. Il devait «empêcher tout établissement des Anglais et des Portugais sur les côtes appartenant exclusivement à Sa Majesté et échanger mutuellement avec les Anglais les établissements pris sur cette côte pendant la guerre...».

Le 23 janvier 1784, il fut prescrit au chevalier Bernard de Marigny, capitaine de vaisseau, commandant la frégate de 18, la «Vénus», «en partant de

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Patrick VILLIERS, *Marine de Louis XVI*, tome 1, *op. cit.*

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Archives Nationales, fonds Marine, B4 267, f° 219.

Brest de diriger sa route de manière à se rendre à Cabinde le plus tôt possible. L'intention de sa Majesté étant qu'aucune puissance ne mette d'entraves au commerce de ses sujets...». Bernard de Marigny reçut l'ordre de s'emparer du fort en cas de résistance portugaise (cf. ci-après l'affaire de Cabinde).

Cette volonté de montrer le pavillon français fut renouvelée en septembre 1784 et en 1785. En 1786, les négriers français se heurtant à ceux du Danemark, Castries «ordonna à M. de Champagny de se rendre à Juda en passant par Kéta et le Petit Popo où il s'arrêtera pour vérifier les plaintes qui ont été portées contre la nation danoise»<sup>10</sup>. En 1788, le roi envoya M. de Bonnaventure pour protéger le fort d'Amokou et de vérifier les prétentions du commandant anglais «de considérer cette partie de la côte d'Or comme appartenant exclusivement à l'Angleterre»<sup>11</sup>. Ainsi de 1782 à 1788 revinrent constamment le problème des comptoirs et celui de la liberté du commerce négrier, mais les tensions ne se résolurent pas de la même façon selon que les Anglais et les Portugais furent concernés.

#### LES DIFFICULTÉS AVEC LES ANGLAIS : LA GAMBIE

Lors de son arrivée au Sénégal le 29 février 1784 à bord de la corvette la «Blonde», Repentigny annonça la paix et les conséquences du traité de Paris pour la côte du Sénégal. Il fallut deux visites en Gambie du gouverneur français, en décembre 84 et en mars-avril 1785, pour régler les problèmes. Entre temps, La Jaille sur la «Blonde», conformément à ses *Instructions*, était venu installer une batterie de six canons dans le fort français d'Albréda. Au cours de sa seconde visite, Repentigny définit avec son homologue anglais les positions des deux nations et signa un accord, le 14 avril, sur les limites de la concession française d'Albréda. La France eut le droit d'avoir un résident à Albréda et de fortifier ce comptoir. Ces deux visites de Repentigny montrent le souci de ne pas créer un incident irréparable avec les Anglais. Il en fut de même en 1788 lorsque la rumeur circula que les Anglais avaient détruit le fort d'Amokou, Bonnaventure reçut l'ordre de «faire dresser un procès verbal qu'il lui communiquera en lui déclarant qu'il le rend responsable des événements qui pourraient s'en suivre...»<sup>12</sup>. Ainsi, dans l'ensemble, à la différence de ce qui s'était produit entre la guerre de Succession d'Autriche et la guerre de Sept Ans, les incidents entre les négriers français et anglais restèrent mineurs. Le ton des autorités françaises ne fut pas du tout le même vis-à-vis des puissances navales secondaires. L'exemple portugais est là pour le montrer.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, fonds Marine, B4 267, f° 164.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, fonds Marine B4 277, f° 115.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, fonds Marine B4 277, f° 115.

## LE CONFLIT AVEC LES PORTUGAIS : CABINDE

Alors que la liberté de traite pour les Français sur la côte d'Angola existait depuis la fin du règne de Louis XIV, les Portugais, profitant de la guerre d'Indépendance, construisirent un fort à Cabinde et l'armèrent d'une batterie de canons tournés vers la mer en octobre 1782. En juillet 1783, ils chassèrent les négriers français qui, à cette date, auraient été au nombre de 26. On mesure ainsi l'enjeu de pouvoir traiter sur la côte angolaise. Castries réagit très rapidement en envoyant Marigny sur la «Vénus», la frégate était armée en guerre et accompagnée d'une flûte chargée de troupes et d'approvisionnements. Castries précisa que «l'intention de Sa Majesté étant qu'aucune puissance ne mette d'entraves au commerce de ses sujets ... il attaquera le fort et après s'en être emparé, il le fera raser...». Le 21 juin 1784, Bernard de Marigny mena une double attaque victorieuse par mer et par terre et put écrire quelques jours plus tard aux capitaines négriers en majorité français et anglais : «Je vous annonce avec plaisir, Messieurs, que le fort portugais établi à Cabinde se démolit conformément aux ordres et intentions de Sa Majesté très chrétienne...»<sup>13</sup>. Ce rétablissement «musclé» des intérêts français dans les ports portugais fut accompagnée par une politique en faveur des comptoirs.

## UNE POLITIQUE DE COMPTOIRS

Dans le golfe de Guinée, les Français n'avaient pas de comptoirs, à l'exception de Juda (ou Ouidah). Ils cherchèrent à en créer de nouveaux. Dans les *Instructions* adressées à La Jaille en 1784 la situation des comptoirs était déjà évoquée. Il en fut de même en 1785. «L'objet de la mission du sieur marquis de La Jaille est de protéger le commerce des sujets du roi sur la côte d'Afrique de reconnaître les lieux où il serait avantageux d'établir des comptoirs, soit dans l'archipel des Bissagots soit dans l'étendue des côtes comprises entre la rivière de Gambie et celle de Volta et d'en former un dès à présent sur l'île de Gambie...». Il devait ensuite «établir un fort ou faire d'autres établissements semblables si des obstacles nautiques ne s'y opposent pas. Il paraîtra à la rade de Juda et prendra connaissance de la situation du comptoir français et des projets proposés pour d'autres comptoirs sur les mêmes côtes...»<sup>14</sup>.

La maladie le contraignit à écourter sa mission qui fut poursuivie par ses successeurs comme le montrent les instructions particulières des années suivantes et notamment en 1788 celle de Bonnaventure sur la «Flore», «en longeant la côte à l'est du cap des Palmes, il visitera les pointes qui lui paraîtront les plus intéressantes et particulièrement la rivière de Saint-André et il verra si

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, fonds Marine B4 267, f° 310 ; *ibid.*, fonds Colonies, C6 24, Côte d'Angole, Cabinde, 1784 ; *ibid.*, fonds Marine B4 267, f°s 282 et 360.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, fonds Marine B4 270, janvier 1785.

le roi du pays est disposé à céder le terrain nécessaire pour l'établissement d'un comptoir fortifié... La France en a le droit ainsi que les autres nations qui y sont concurrentes entre elles, pourvu toutefois que les établissements soient hors la portée du canon des nations déjà établies...»<sup>15</sup>.

Ainsi les comptoirs furent l'objet essentiel des missions des marins. Les gouverneurs du Sénégal avaient été, eux aussi, mobilisés pour cette mission. Certains furent très efficaces comme en témoignent les traités signés avec les chefs africains et leurs rapports. En mission de reconnaissance de la côte, Repentigny signa le 8 février 1785, avec Sandéné, roi de Salum, un traité favorisant la traite des noirs des négriers français et obtint la concession de l'île de Coyon appelée aussi Castiambé pour y établir un comptoir<sup>16</sup>.

Un rapport de 1786 propose un comptoir dont «le lieu le plus propre est la proximité de la rivière Missam, situé à 5 lieues à l'est du cap corse et conséquemment à 2 1/4 lieues sous le vent et à l'est d'Annamabou». Les Français ne disposaient alors d'aucun emplacement sur cette partie de la côte africaine alors que les Anglais et les Hollandais y étaient très présents avec notamment les forts d'Anamabou et Fantonkerry pour les premiers et ceux de Maury et Corromentin pour les seconds. L'auteur en énumérant les différents avantages de ce site trace ainsi le portait du comptoir négrier idéal en cette fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle :

«1°) l'ancrage y est parfait sur fond de sable fin, vaseux depuis 11 à 10 brasses pour les navires jusqu'à 4 brasses pour les chaloupes chargées à portée de mousquet du rivage. Le service du débarquement peut y être fait par de moyennes pirogues, les canots des navires peuvent même y aborder le matin parce qu'il n'y a point de barre comme en temps d'endroits de la côte.

2°) un beau plateau depuis le rivage jusqu'à la terre escarpée, ayant en largeur depuis 150 jusqu'à environ 300 toises, sur à peu près 1000 toises de long, offrirait la commodité d'établir et réunir les villages voisins que protégerait le fort bâti sur le haut de terre escarpée, dont l'élévation est d'environ 60 pieds. L'étendue en paraît unie et superbe. Des fossés du côté des terres suffiraient et on aurait toujours la communication libre avec la mer.

3°) l'embouchure de la rivière qui est de conséquence se trouverait commandée par le fort. Les navires s'y pourvoiraient bien plus commodément qu'au bas de la côte d'Or d'une eau dont la qualité est parfaite.

4°) la pierre, le bois et les coquilles pour faire de la chaux y sont à profusion ainsi que le sable.

5°) les noirs y sont doux et traitables. Ce serait le lieu où on pourrait s'établir avec le plus d'économie et partager la traite d'Anamabou et Cormantin, qu'on estime produire annuellement 4 500 noirs et du morphil et de l'or en proportion...»<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, fonds Marine B4 277, f° 155, Instructions à M. de Bonnaventure.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Archives Nationales, section Outre-mer, DFC Sénégal, carton 82, dossier 89bis, 31 mars 1785, Repentigny à Castries.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, DFC Sénégal, carton 75, dossier 93, 1786, «Sur l'établissement d'un comptoir à Missam».

À la suite de ces rapports, le secrétaire d'État à la Marine et aux Colonies, Castries, préféra faire construire un comptoir à Amokou en 1786 au lieu de Missam. Il envoya le vaisseau l'«Experiment» et la corvette le «Pandour» dont les équipages furent mis à contribution. En dépit du nombre élevé de malades, on réussit à élever un petit fort et quelques bâtiments. La garnison de 14 hommes fut dirigée de 1786 à 1794 par le sieur Mongin, lieutenant de division. Si les événements révolutionnaires mirent fin à la station navale, il semble que ce fort ait été peu fréquenté par les navires français. Le fort de Juda lui-même est en déclin et même contesté comme le montre un *Mémoire concernant l'inutilité du comptoir de Juda* daté de 1786.

Pourtant, de 1783 à 1790, le commerce négrier français connaît son apogée. Ce paradoxe n'est qu'apparent. Il est clair en effet que les négriers français fréquentaient peu les comptoirs français et n'hésitaient pas à pratiquer la traite volante ou aller acheter leurs captifs aux comptoirs étrangers hollandais, anglais et surtout portugais. Dès lors une station navale était beaucoup plus adaptée que des comptoirs qui, en outre, était très vulnérable en temps de guerre comme l'avait montré les raids français pendant la guerre d'Indépendance et comme l'avait souligné Villeneuve-Cillard : «Un bon vaisseau de ligne, deux frégates les auraient promptement tous détruits...»<sup>18</sup>.

#### CONCLUSION

La station navale était plus rentable que les comptoirs en terme de coûts et d'efficacité. En évitant le péché d'anachronisme, on peut dire que, par bien des points de vue, la station navale d'hier préfigure le porte-avions d'aujourd'hui. On peut se demander pourquoi il falut attendre le règne de Louis XVI pour avoir une politique maritime continue à côte d'Afrique et envoyer des navires sur les côtes africaines en Atlantique comme en Océan Indien. Le mérite en revint à Louis XVI et à son secrétaire d'État Castries. Louis XVI avait reçu une très bonne instruction maritime. Il était en outre passionné de géographie et de découvertes, encourageant notamment le voyage de Lapérouse. Jusqu'à la fin de son règne, il chercha, en dépit du poids de la dette de la guerre d'Amérique, à accorder à la Marine les crédits correspondant à son rôle économique et militaire. Cette politique coûtait cher, d'où l'idée de faire coïncider croisières d'instruction et stations navales puis de céder les comptoirs du Sénégal à la compagnie du Sénégal. Le dépouillement des archives conservées à Paris et à Aix-en-Provence, pour être géographiquement compliqué, n'en permet pas moins de mettre en évidence un volet ignoré de la politique maritime et coloniale de la France.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Patrick VILLIERS, *Marine royale, corsaires et trafic de Louis XIV à Louis XVI*, Dunkerque, 1992, 2 tomes, thèse, 830 p. (diffusion S.D.H.A., 4 rue Benjamin Morel, Dunkerque, France). Voir les pp. 830 -845. Cf. Archives Nationales, fonds Marine B4 267, f° 225, Villeneuve-Cillard à Castries, 20 juillet 1783.

# THE DUTCH IN WEST AFRICA : SHIPPING, FACTORIES AND COLONISATION, 1800-1870

BY

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The Dutch in West Africa have never been the subject of much historical research. Until two decades ago, there were no major studies at all. Obviously, many historians considered the Dutch forts and factories on the Gold Coast as a historical *cul de sac*. Since the 1970s, however, there has been a change, mainly by the increased interest in African history in general and in the history of slavery and of the slave trade in particular. The involvement of the Dutch factories in West Africa in the slave trade has been studied as well as the relations between the Dutch and the kingdom of Asante <sup>1</sup>.

What has not been studied is the position of the Dutch Gold Coast forts and factories in the wider framework of Dutch colonial policies during the 19th century. There is an older study of the diplomatic exchanges between the U.K. and the Netherlands concerning the transfer of the Dutch possessions on the Gold Coast to Britain in 1872. More recently, the question has been raised whether the Dutch colonial policies could be labelled as imperialist during the period between 1870 and 1914. In order to answer this question West Africa was excluded since the Dutch had already decided to withdraw from that continent before the period of "Modern Imperialism" even had started <sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> A. VAN DANTZIG, *Les Hollandais sur la Côte de Guinée à l'époque de l'essor de l'Ashanti et du Dahomey 1680-1740*, Paris, 1980 ; H. M. FEINBERG, *Africans and Europeans in West Africa : Elminans and Dutchmen on the Gold Coast during the Eighteenth Century*, in : "Transactions of the American Philosophical Society", Vol. 79, part 7, Philadelphia, 1989 ; J. M. POSTMA, *The Dutch in the Atlantic slave trade, 1600-1815*, Cambridge, 1990 ; L. W. YARAK, *Asante and the Dutch, 1744-1873*, Oxford, 1990.

<sup>2</sup> D. COOMBS, *The Gold Coast, Britain and the Netherlands, 1850-1874*, London 1963 ;

In sum, there exists no study of the Dutch colonial policies during the period between 1815 and 1870 in which West Africa is used as a test case for finding out whether these policies were similar to or different from other colonial powers with African interests at the time, notably from those of Great Britain. In this paper various aspects of the Dutch policies and actions regarding West Africa will be reviewed. It will be shown that during the first half of the 19th century the policies and actions of Great Britain and the Netherlands in West Africa were very similar to one another and that there existed no fundamental differences between the two. The position of the Dutch and the British on the African Coast does not explain why Britain became one of the most important colonizers in the region and why the Dutch disappeared completely from the scene.

In reviewing the existing evidence on the Dutch in West Africa we will first discuss the abolition of the slave trade and its impact on the position of the European forts and factories along the Gold Coast. Then we will show that the Dutch like the British were able to replace the trade in slaves by a trade in products and that by so doing the traders of both nations founded factories and trading posts away from the Gold Coast, in the Niger and Congo estuaries. In both Britain and the Netherlands projects were proposed in which the respective Gold Coast possessions would be transformed into plantation colonies. In both cases all these schemes came to naught. Also, the recruitment of African soldiers for service in the respective colonial armies will be mentioned. This recruitment was of limited value and did not last long. Attempts made at recruiting labourers for service in the colonial plantation areas equally met with little success. Finally, mention will be made of the changing relationship between the British, the Dutch and the African nations, which were present at the Gold Coast. Lastly, the Dutch colonial policies in East and West will be discussed in an attempt to find out whether the withdrawal from the African Coast fitted a more general pattern.

## 2. THE DUTCH POSSESSIONS ON THE GOLD COAST AND THE ENDING OF THE SLAVE TRADE

There is no reason to assume that the impact of the ending of the Atlantic slave trade on the Dutch forts along the Gold Coast differed from that on the neighbouring British forts. For both countries the economic value of these forts plummeted. Without slaves these forts could not generate much trade. However, in spite of this important similarity in the past there had been some

interesting differences between the economic role of the British and Dutch forts which might have still been of importance during the 19th century <sup>3</sup>.

First of all, a big difference had existed between the development of the British and Dutch slave trades. Around 1780 the volume of British trade with Africa had reached unknown dimensions. The abolitionists in the U.K. made much of the fact that Africa would remain a valuable trading partner once the trade in slaves had been replaced by the trade in goods. In addition, the Napoleonic Wars and the rivalry with France stimulated British interests in West Africa even more. All these factors which roused British public interest in Africa, were absent in the Netherlands. After the 1770s, the Dutch trade with Africa had been greatly reduced since the demand for slaves in the Dutch West Indies had declined due to a financial crisis among the planters in that colony. There was virtually no abolitionist debate in the Netherlands and the small groups opposing the slave trade were not numerous and powerful enough to publicize new ideas about alternative trade opportunities with Africa. In addition, the Napoleonic Wars had disrupted the maritime link between the Netherlands and West Africa almost completely. Between 1810 and 1815 not a single ship from the Netherlands had arrived at Elmina castle <sup>4</sup>.

A second factor, which suggests that Africa generated more interest in Britain than it did in the Netherlands was the founding of the colony of Sierra Leone and the naval efforts to suppress the Atlantic slave trade. In Britain both activities had generated great interest among the policy makers and abolitionists alike. The Netherlands, on the other hand, did not participate actively in the suppression of the slave trade nor did the Dutch create a colony in Africa in order to house freed slaves <sup>5</sup>.

A third factor, which stimulated British interests in Africa was the rapid and interesting development of the trade in goods, notably in palm oil. The constant activities of the British naval squadron along the Coast of West Africa not only impeded the slave trade, but also furthered the trade in goods, especially after 1830, when Palmerston was in office favouring an interventionist policy towards West Africa. In London plans circulated to buy the island of Fernando Po from the Spanish. The fight against the illegal slave trade on the Coast was intensified, in particular on the Gold Coast and in the Niger delta. At the same time the trade in palm oil increased and reached the value

<sup>3</sup> Edward E. REYNOLDS, *Abolition and Economic Change on the Gold Coast*, in : David ELTIS and James WALVIN with the collaboration of Svend E. GREEN-PEDERSEN (eds.), *The Abolition of the Slave Trade ; Origins and Effects in Europe, Africa and the Americas*, Madison, 1981, pp. 141-154.

<sup>4</sup> David ELTIS, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, New York/Oxford, 1987, pp. 31-61 ; James A. RAWLEY, *The Transatlantic Slave Trade ; A History*, New York, 1981, p. 165 ; Pieter Cornelis EMMER, *Engeland, Nederland, Afrika en de slavenhandel in de negentiende eeuw*, Leiden, 1974, pp. 47-62.

<sup>5</sup> Christopher FYFE, *A History of Sierra Leone*, London, 1962.

of one million pounds per year during the 1850's. The Dutch trade with West Africa also increased and during the 1850s reached the value of £ 60,000, not even ten percent of that of the British trade <sup>6</sup>.

In spite of the fact that before and after the ending of the slave trade, the British and the Dutch trade with Africa greatly differed in volume, both nations were faced by the same problem concerning the Gold Coast forts. In neither case did these forts contribute much to the legitimate trade of the 19th century. The British merchants were mainly trading in the Niger delta and the Dutch became increasingly involved in trade in the Congo estuary <sup>7</sup>.

### 3. THE NEW TRADE: THE DUTCH AND BRITISH LEGITIMATE COMMERCE ON THE WEST COAST OF AFRICA, 1815-1870

The Gold Coast, a stretch of about 500 kilometres along the Gulf of Guinea, stands out from the rest of the West African Coast by the fact that it housed dozens of forts, at some places quite close to each other, which in the course of three centuries were erected along the shore by fiercely competing European companies. This situation differed sharply from other coastal areas where, of old, European captains had carried on trade with African merchants, such as in the Senegambia area, the Slave Coast, Calabar, the Camaroons and the mouth of the Congo river where the Europeans only had constructed temporary factories <sup>8</sup>. Actually, some of these temporary buildings were rather sturdy, more as a prevention against theft and plunder by the local population than as a defence against attacks by competitors. Initially, the large supplies of gold had attracted the chartered companies of several European nations to the Gold Coast all trying to secure the exclusive right to trade along a section of the Coast. They obtained this right from the authorities of the small states along the Gold Coast and subsequently, the Europeans would be allowed a plot of land for erecting a fort where trade could be conducted and rivals kept at bay by its cannons. The relationship between these European forts and the local rulers was laid down in contracts and maintained by means of regular gifts by the companies. In spite of the fact that the companies could sometimes have a decisive influence on coastal politics, the exercise of rights

<sup>6</sup> Colin NEWBURY, *Trade and Authority in West Africa from 1850 to 1880*, in: L. H. GANN and P. DUIGNAN (eds.), *The History and Politics of Colonialism 1870-1914*, Cambridge, 1969, pp. 76-79; Hendrik MULLER, *Een Rotterdams zeehandelaar Hendrik Muller Szn. 1819-1898*, Schiedam, 1977, pp. 61-62.

<sup>7</sup> NEWBURY, *Trade and Authority...*, p. 86.

<sup>8</sup> Besides the string of forts along the Gold Coast, the Dutch had had forts at Arguin (Mauretania), on the isle of Goree (Senegal) and further there were fortified establishments in West Africa at Cacheu (Guinea), Ouida (Benin), Luanda (Angola) and on the isle of Sao Tomé.

of sovereignty was beyond their power as their formal influence remained confined to an area delineated by the range of the cannons of the forts.

In addition to obtaining gold and ivory, the forts also served as collection points for the slave trade. In fact, from the 1720s onward and especially during the second half of the eighteenth century when the various European companies no longer possessed a monopoly, the trade in slaves had grown to such an extent as to make the forts resemble mere slave depots, while the managers of these forts usually had become the middlemen and agents for the slave-trading companies and merchant houses. After the Napoleonic wars and the abolition of the Transatlantic slave trade this situation changed dramatically. At that time three European nations possessed establishments on the Gold Coast : viz. Great Britain, the Netherlands and Denmark. By 1800 the Dutch and Danish chartered companies trading to Africa were dissolved and their African possessions taken over by the respective states. Only the British establishments were still managed by the Company of Merchants, which was supported with a parliamentary grant of £ 20,000 per annum. Although extensive illicit trade in slaves in the eastern part of the Gold Coast was still carried on until the 1860s, the legitimate export commodities were now those products which had dominated the early trade with Africa before the slaves had become the main export commodity, such as gold and ivory, pepper, camwood, beeswax, gum etc. Gold had always been exported from the Gold Coast, even when the slave trade was at its height, but the supply of gold varied widely from year to year. In the 1830s gold dust was a considerable export commodity : from 1831 until 1836 the gold exports from the British part of the Coast were estimated to be on average 25,000 ounces a year, which constituted a value of £ 100,000 <sup>9</sup>.

It should be noted, however, that statistical data concerning the Gold Coast for the nineteenth century up to 1870 are rather problematic. The data, collected by the colonial officials on the Coast, were mostly guesswork. The administrative situation made it difficult to do anything else because the commercial activities of the various nations involved in the trade could hardly be separated. The fortified establishments of the British, Dutch and Danes were very close to one another along the shore — only those of the Danes were concentrated in the eastern part — and the forts of the Dutch and the English sometimes stood side by side. In 1850 the Danes sold their Gold Coast possessions to the British, who raised import duties in their extended territory in 1855 <sup>10</sup>. Meanwhile, the French had founded establishments in Grand Bassam

<sup>9</sup> E. REYNOLDS, *Trade and Economic Change on the Gold Coast, 1807-1874*, London, 1974, p. 93.

<sup>10</sup> In 1823 governor MacCarthy started to levy import duties in the British West Africa settlements : 6% on the invoice price of foreign goods and 2% on articles produced in Great Britain and colonies, including India. This taxation was repealed in 1828. In 1839 0.5% ad valorem

and Assini in 1843, places which at that time were considered to be within the territory of the Gold Coast (now Ivory Coast).

Another cause of statistical confusion was that English, American, French, Dutch, Portuguese, German and Italian ships and occasionally of some other country (most of them measured less than 200 tons) traded with African dealers partly on sea (floating trade) beyond the control of the colonial authorities on the Coast. On land, the factories of English, Dutch and American enterprises lay dispersed over Dutch and British territory. In 1856, for instance, the Dutch brothers Stoové, one trading in Axim, the other in Shama, possessed no less than 22 factories from West to East along the Coast, nine of which were located in so called British territory <sup>11</sup>.

Further, we may assume that some part of the imports destined for dealers in British territory went via Dutch coastal towns, as the Dutch did not levy any duties to the great annoyance of the British administration on the Coast.

It has always been difficult to control the exportation of gold. Particularly since in 1852 the African Steamship Company started a mail service to Cape Coast (the British headquarters) which enabled both African and European merchants to send parcels containing gold dust to different destinations in Europe.

Groundnuts and palmproducts — palm oil and later on also palm kernels — made up the bulk of West Africa's export commodities during the 19th century. Already in the 16th century the inhabitants of the Gold Coast grew both products for domestic use <sup>12</sup>. After the Napoleonic wars palm oil became an outstanding means of exchange for the peasants, who made this labour-intensive product, which suddenly had become highly valued by both European and American shippers.

The export of palm oil from the Gold Coast started in the years 1812-1817, with a volume of about 50 tons a year, and in the 1850s the volume had increased to about 2,000 tons <sup>13</sup>. However, the bulk of the palm oil came from Lagos and the so-called "Oil rivers" — Kalabar, Bonny. The Gold Coast's share in the total export of palm oil from West Africa during the 1850s was on average not even six percent. As to groundnuts, the quantity exported

duties were imposed, which were increased to 2% in 1855, see G. E. METCALFE, *Great Britain and Ghana, Documents of Ghana History, 1807-1857*, London, 1964, pp. 83 and 265.

<sup>11</sup> General State Archives, The Hague (A.R.A.), *Nederlandse Bezittingen ter Kuste van Guinea* (NBKG) 979, fol. 117.

<sup>12</sup> A. VAN DANTZIG and A. JONES (trans. and eds.), *Pieter de Marees : Description and Historical Account of the Gold Kingdom of Guinea (1602)*, Oxford, 1987, pp. 42, 84, 122 and 177.

<sup>13</sup> G. A. ROBERTSON, *Notes on Africa*, London, 1819, pp. 359-364. In the years 1850-1855 the palm oil export from the Gold Coast to England averaged about 1919 tons : REYNOLDS, *Trade and Economic Change...*, p. 133.

from the Gold Coast is negligible in comparison with the huge exports of that commodity from the Senegambia, Sierra Leone and Guinea <sup>14</sup>.

The new areas along the African Coast where the trade in "legitimate produce" flourished made most forts redundant. They had become nothing more than centres of colonial administration with some function as entrepôts in so far the officials of the company or government participated in the trade as they sometimes doubled as agents for various metropolitan merchants. However, the greater part of the trade was conducted in the numerous makeshift factories which were constructed along the Coast.

A large part of imports and exports were channelled through a half dozen English firms who had their seats in West Africa. The leading ones were Forster & Smith and Messrs. F. & A. Swanzy who generally worked on a commission basis for metropolitan trading houses. Many of the local merchants in the British as well as in the Dutch part of the Coast kept current accounts with these firms. After 1852 however, some of them started to do business directly with Europe, bypassing these coastal trading houses by making use of the facilities offered by the new steamship line from Cape Coast.

Only a few Dutch shipping companies traded on the Gold Coast. In the 1830s and 1840s the Amsterdam firms Trakanen & Co, De Vries and Joh. Boelen, which were particularly interested in the palm oil trade on the "Oil rivers" did business on the Gold Coast <sup>15</sup>. The later enterprise had invested some capital in a factory at Elmina, the headquarters of the Dutch, and engaged a Dutch colonial official as its agent <sup>16</sup>. In 1846 the Rotterdam shipowner Huibert van Rijckevorsel began to send his ships to West Africa <sup>17</sup>. As at the same time the Amsterdam firm of Joh. Boelen went out of business and the governor of Elmina acted as Van Rijckevorsel's chief agent, that firm obtained a virtual trading monopoly along the Dutch part of the Gold Coast.

<sup>14</sup> Robidée VAN DER AA, *Afrikaansche Studiën. Koloniaal bezit en particuliere handel op Afrika's westkust*, The Hague, 1871, p. 40. In 1868 the export of groundnuts from West Africa amounted to 74,503 tons (Guinea 33,754, Gambia and Sierra Leone 18,055, Goree 8,121 and Senegal 4,573 tons), p. 38.

<sup>15</sup> The ships of these companies sailed also to the Dutch East Indies. Messrs. van Hoboken of Rotterdam and Mr. de Vries of Amsterdam had their agents on the coast, see H. F. TENGBERGEN, *Verhaal van den Reistogt en Expeditie naar de Nederlandsche Bezittingen ter Westkust van Afrika*, The Hague, 1839, p. 33. Trakanen's business was taken over by the Amsterdam firm Abuys, Janse & Co., which let English steamships carry the palm oil directly to the Liverpool market. The firm Fokker and Jeras in Middelburg carried on Boelen's business and its ships sailed solely to Calabar, see Robidée VAN DER AA, *Afrikaansche Studiën...*, p. 106.

<sup>16</sup> Notarial deeds of 19 and 20 Jan. 1839, 24 April 1840, 18 and 20 December 1842 in A.R.A., NBKG 974.

<sup>17</sup> For Huibert van Rijckevorsel, see MULLER, *Een Rotterdams zeehandelaar...* Hendrik Muller took over the firm of Van Rijckevorsel in 1864. He carried on business in West Africa till 1891 and in 1892 he sold his African affairs to the Oost-Afrikaansche Compagnie in Rotterdam.

However, things changed in 1858. In that year the Amsterdam firm Herklots & Bouman entered into competition with Van Rijckevorsel<sup>18</sup>. Moreover, in that same year the Dutch government prohibited the private trade of colonial officials. Meanwhile, during the years 1857 and 1858 the firm of Messrs. Kerdijk en Pincoffs (who transformed their firm in 1866 into the "Africaansche Handels-Vereeniging" (AHV) had sent out a member of the firm in order to investigate the prospects for trading on the West African Coast<sup>19</sup>. He arrived at the conclusion that the situation on the Gold Coast was not very favourable compared with the trading possibilities offered in the Congo estuary and also in Liberia. In 1868 the value of the exports from these regions by the AHV was three times as high as the Dutch Gold Coast exports<sup>20</sup>.

The situation regarding trade on the Dutch Gold Coast can be summarized as follows. Yearly about seventy ships anchored in the roads of Elmina, about one third to a quarter of them were English and about a quarter to a fifth American. After 1858 the Dutch share increased to about an eighth, but before that time it had always been less than ten percent<sup>21</sup>.

#### 4. EUROPEAN-AFRICAN RELATIONS, 1800-1870

After March 1807, participation in the African slave trade was disallowed by an Act of Parliament as far as Great Britain and her colonies were concerned. At one stroke the Company of Merchants trading to Africa was deprived of ninety percent of her revenues. Moreover, in the same year an Asante army invaded the coastal region of the Gold Coast, took the 'English' town of Anomabu but failed to seize its fort. While they were besieged, the English suspected the Asantis of carrying on correspondence with the Dutch fort at Elmina. In 1811, again an Asante army appeared on the Coast, now in the eastern part and in 1816 the Asantis destroyed Winnebah and captured Komenda with the help of the people of the village of Elmina. In fact, the Asante claims of sovereignty over the coastal peoples by right of conquest and their friendly relations with the people of Elmina<sup>22</sup>, in combination with

<sup>18</sup> The Amsterdam company Herklots & Bouman was dissolved in 1862. Its African business was carried on by the firm Bouman & Van Rijckevorsel (not related to the Rotterdam Van Rijckevorsel family). In 1869/70 the firm continued under the name of Van Rijckevorsel & Co and went out of business in 1880/81 ; see MULLER, *Een Rotterdams Zeehandelaar...*, p. 72 and note 67.

<sup>19</sup> A. F. SCHEPEL, *Reisjournaal van Lodewijk Kerdijk. West-Afrika 1857-1858*, Schiedam, 1978.

<sup>20</sup> Robidée VAN DER AA, *Afrikaansche Studiën...*, p. 129, and MULLER, *Een Rotterdams zeehandelaar...*, p. 207.

<sup>21</sup> *Koloniaal Verslag* (Report on the Colonies addressed to the Second Chamber of States General), sessions from 1849/50 to 1871/72 included.

<sup>22</sup> Missive of Col. Torrane to the Committee, Cape Coast Castle, 20 July, 1807 ; idem of Governor and Council to the Committee, C.C.C., June 1816, in METCALFE, *Documents...*, pp. 8 and 37.

the old and mutual distrust between English and Dutch officials, determined to a great extent the local political developments, which the respective metropolises, London and The Hague, had to take into account when defining their Gold Coast policy.

During the Napoleonic wars the Dutch officials on the Coast had concluded a treaty of peace and neutrality with the English in 1805 and had remained in possession of their forts. However, the Commissioners of African Inquiry in Britain recommended in 1811 to take six forts from the Dutch and in 1812 the African Committee concluded that "the annexation of Holland by France makes it essential that we occupy Dutch forts"<sup>23</sup>. This was easier said than done, since the implementation of this suggestion was not feasible on account of the simultaneous Asante interventions in the Coast. In 1814, the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, Earl Bathurst, received a letter from the Gold Coast merchant G. Barnes, saying that "unless Holland can be induced entirely to abolish the slave trade, either their forts or our own must be abandoned"<sup>24</sup>. Meanwhile, the young kingdom of the Netherlands had abolished the slave trade in 1814 and both nations remained in possession of their forts with all the entailing problems.

The first governor appointed by the king to restore order in the Dutch possessions on the Coast of Guinea was Hendrik Willem Daendels, an energetic man with a colourful record as a former patriot, as a short-lived general of the French army, and as a governor of the East Indies. In January 1816 he arrived at Elmina with a ship loaded with goods of his private merchant house H. W. Daendels & Co.

Vigorously, Daendels got to work and soon Dutch authority was revived again on the Coast<sup>25</sup>. Immediately, he took the initiative to send an embassy with costly presents to Asante, the dominant power in the hinterland. His envoy was instructed to establish friendly relations with its sovereign and to urge him to order his subjects to grow cotton, which Daendels would buy. The Asante ruler was also asked to keep the chief of Wassa in check, a region between Asante and the Dutch part of the Coast and to let a road be made from his country through Wassa to the Dutch headquarters.

Daendels himself had started a plantation to the North of Elmina and began to put forward a whole series of schemes and projects: such as the exchange of territory between the Netherlands and Great Britain in order to improve the dispersed location of the forts of the two nations; the transfer

<sup>23</sup> Report of the Commissioners of African Inquiry, 29 July 1811; The African Committee to the Lords of the Treasury, 9 April, 1812, in METCALFE, *Documents...*, pp. 20-21 and 24.

<sup>24</sup> G. Barnes to Earl Bathurst, African Office, 23 April, 1814, in METCALFE, *Documents...*, p. 27.

<sup>25</sup> J. LEVER, *Mulatto influence on the Gold Coast in the early nineteenth century: Jan Nieser of Elmina*, in: "African Historical Studies", 3/2 (1970), pp. 253-261.

of the Dutch headquarters from Elmina to the more healthy coastal town of Axim in the West; to establish a string of Dutch settler colonies which had to start plantation agriculture — however all these plans and projects came to naught, because of Daendels' death, in May 1818<sup>26</sup>. Immediately, The Hague decided to reduce the budget of the Dutch coastal possessions in Guinea by sixty percent<sup>27</sup>.

Daendels' plantation projects were in no way a novelty. Already in the 18th century, plantations had been laid out by the Dutch West India Company in the vicinity of some of its strongholds on the Coast, for instance near Axim and Komenda. In spite of the fact that they were worked by slaves, the cost of labour was higher than the proceeds of these plantations<sup>28</sup>. The same applies to the English and Danish attempts at plantation agriculture. Meanwhile, the English in the employ of the African Company of Merchants at Cape Coast Castle were deeply suspicious of Daendels' actions, particularly of what his envoy had achieved in Asante. However, the two embassies they sent to Kumasi, the capital of Asante, could not obtain what they required, as the Asante ruler firmly held on to his rights of sovereignty over the coastal peoples. The treaty of peace that T. E. Bowdich concluded with the sovereign on 7 September 1817<sup>29</sup> as well as the treaty made by Joseph Dupuis on 23 March 1820 were not accepted in Cape Coast<sup>30</sup>.

Finally, these diplomatic difficulties in dealing with an African potentate, the growing expenses, for which they had to demand extra grants as well as the complaints by British merchants about company officials monopolizing the trade on the Coast, made the British government resolve in 1821 to abolish the Company of Merchants and to transfer their possessions to the Crown. The Cold Coast forts came to resort under the direction of the governor of Sierra Leone McCarthy, who first tried to solve the Asante problem. He was of the opinion that Daendels had "fomented the hatred of the King of Asante against the British merchants on the Coast" and warned the Secretary of State about the danger that the Americans, who had conquered a considerable share of the trade, would obtain a permanent foothold on the Gold Coast, as they spread reports that their government was negotiating with the Dutch in order to take over their forts<sup>31</sup>. At the same time, the British and African merchants

<sup>26</sup> A.R.A., Collectie Goldberg 178, Doss. 62; NBKG 350, 351, Ministerie van Kolonien (MvK) 4584. W. J. KOPPIUS, *Herman Willem Daendels, Gouv.-Gen. ter Kuste van Guinea 1816-1818*, in: "De Indische Gids", 52 (1930), pp. 892-904 and 979-997.

<sup>27</sup> By Royal Decree no. 32 of 1 November, 1819, the yearly grant of f100,000 decreased to f40,000. Secrete Memorie in A.R.A., NBKG 350.

<sup>28</sup> A.R.A., Verspreide Westindische Stukken 414, 415.

<sup>29</sup> T. E. BOWDICH, *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee*, London, 1819.

<sup>30</sup> Commodore Sir G. R. Collier to J. W. Croker, Cape Coast Road, 16 April, 1820 in METCALFE, *Documents...*, p. 61; J. DUPUIS, *Journal of a Residence in Ashantee*, London, 1824, 2nd ed. 1966.

<sup>31</sup> Sir C. MacCarthy to Earl Bathurst, CCC, 18 May, 1822 in METCALFE, *Documents...*, p. 76.

of Cape Coast felt annoyed because of the duty-free importation of rum via the Dutch forts and urged the British government to purchase the Dutch and Danish possessions, stating in a memorandum that Elmina was chiefly a factory for the disposal of American and Portuguese produce<sup>32</sup>. MacCarthy's approach of the Asante question ended in disaster. After having mobilized the coastal peoples against their inland overlord, he set out with his army, but was defeated and killed, his head being cut off and sent to Kumasi, early in 1824. Thereupon the Asantis began to besiege Cape Coast with the help of the people of Elmina who provided them with provisions and ammunition, but soon, in July of that year, they withdrew<sup>33</sup>.

Two years later, the military commander on the Gold Coast, Lt. Col. Purdon managed to inflict a crushing defeat upon the Asante army at Dodowa by using rockets. Though the British had won the battle, they did not obtain peace. The people of Cape Coast and the Fanti, who had regained their autonomy because of this British victory, immediately began to besiege Elmina, the ally of the Asante. This siege lasted for almost five years and during that time the king of Asante was not willing to make peace with the British.

The Dutch commander of Elmina as well as the British governor at Cape Coast were powerless. Already in 1825 MacCarthy's successor Turner wrote to London : "Here we have no territory, no sovereignty or subjects"<sup>34</sup>. Governor Campbell made an inventory of the situation in 1826 and came to the conclusion that the total number of British merchants on the Coast amounted to no more than seven. Only one fourth or one fifth of the trade was carried on by these merchants. The ships from Europe bartered their cargo for the greater part directly with the Africans. He concluded that in all likelihood the consumption of the British manufactures as well as the exports of African produce to Britain would be the same without establishments of government and resident officials<sup>35</sup>.

In spite of these calculations a highly placed British civil servant suggested to the Dutch ambassador in London that his government could better transfer its Gold Coast possessions to Great Britain, whereupon that diplomat replied with a smile that the Dutch also wanted to take part in the philanthropic task of civilizing Africa. When afterwards the ambassador asked instructions from The Hague, in case the British government would come back to this

<sup>32</sup> Memorial of the Cape Coast Merchants, 30 September, 1822, in METCALFE, *Documents...*, pp. 80-82.

<sup>33</sup> Defeat of Sir Charles MacCarthy, the action at Asamakow and the Ashanti attack on Cape Coast in J. J. CROOKS, *Records relating to the Gold Coast Settlements from 1750 to 1874*, Dublin, 1923, pp. 180-194 and 198-207.

<sup>34</sup> Major General Turner to Earl Bathurst, CCC, 24 March, 1825, in METCALFE, *Documents...*, p. 94.

<sup>35</sup> Campbell to Bathurst, CCC, 12 November, 1826, in METCALFE, *Documents...*, pp. 105-107.

question, he was told that the Netherlands' Gold Coast possessions were not for sale but could perhaps be exchanged for the Isle of St. Helena, at that time an important revictualling station en route to the East Indies <sup>36</sup>.

In 1827 the British government changed its mind and thought of means to get rid of the Gold Coast which had turned into a hornets' nest. The suggestion to simply abandon the Coast, however, evoked many protests from the side of manufacturers of Birmingham as well as from the merchants residing on the Coast <sup>37</sup>. Finally, the British government decided to withdraw all its personnel and to hand over the administration of the establishments (formally remaining under the rule of Sierra Leone) to a "Committee of Merchants" residing on the Coast, who received a grant of £4,000 per annum for the maintenance of the forts <sup>38</sup>. Contrary to expectation, this change in the administration of the Gold Coast did not diminish the British commitment to the Gold Coast.

Thanks to George Maclean, who had been appointed as president in 1830 by the Committee of Merchants, peace was restored on the Coast and trade flourished. Maclean was a military man, he had a great deal of sympathy for the African population, learned their language and customs and understood the power politics of the different coastal communities. Immediately, he started to settle the Asante question and, on 27 April 1831, a peace treaty was concluded in Cape Coast between the representatives of Asante and the British government in conjunction with all principal coastal chiefs, who were formerly subordinate to Asante. As long as Maclean was in function, this peace was maintained and also no serious frictions arose between the British and Dutch sections of the Coast. Moreover, Maclean arbitrated in African disputes, such as the settling of debts and the reclaiming of run-away slaves. Basically, he exercised an informal jurisdiction over the greater part of the Coast and its hinterland. However, he was unable to solve the disciplinary problems with Kaku Aka, the king of the most western region, Apollonia. As a result Maclean offered the territory of that chief to Belgium for colonization in 1837, but this newly founded European state did not take advantage of his generosity <sup>39</sup>.

The British anti-slavery lobby got Maclean into trouble. He was accused of not doing his utmost to suppress slavery. In view of these accusations, London sent a commissioner, Dr. Madden, to the Coast in 1841, who reported

<sup>36</sup> P. H. VAN DER KEMP, *St. George d'Elmina in 1825*, in : "De Tijdspiegel", 1 (1910), pp. 224-231.

<sup>37</sup> R. W. Hay to T. Lack, Downing Street, 27 June, 1827, in METCALFE, *Documents...*, pp. 112-113.

<sup>38</sup> A similar amount (£4000) the Dutch government granted to its Gold Coast establishments : Campbell to Bathurst, 12 November, 1826, in METCALFE, *Documents...*, p. 106.

<sup>39</sup> Maclean clashed with Kaku Aka, the absolute ruler of Apollonia, who took no notice of British authority ; the expedition of Maclean to that country in 1835 was not an overall success, so he wanted to get rid of that troublesome area of the Gold Coast. Archives Ministère des Aff. Étr. Bruxelles, Notes et Mémoires IV, Côte d'Or 1837-1840, dossier B 217 ; Dossier 2024 I, "Projet de colonisation", 27 févr. 1837.

about the existence of domestic slavery and the unauthorized juridical powers Maclean exercised. He recommended to the government in Westminster to reassume the administration of its possessions<sup>40</sup>. Finally, in 1844 the Crown took over the government from the Committee and annexed again the Coast to Sierra Leone.

It was during Maclean's period in office that the Dutch started to recruit young men for the army of their colony in the Dutch East Indies. A first attempt at recruitment in the coastal area in 1831 was not successful<sup>41</sup>, but in 1837 an embassy under the leadership of a former general from the East Indies, Verveer, was sent to Kumasi and he concluded a contract with the king of Asante for the delivery of 2,000 young men per year<sup>42</sup>. In actual reality these men were slaves who were bought and manumitted by the Dutch, provided with a military outfit and subsequently shipped as volunteers to Java. In spite of the fact that the king of Asante had received various expensive presents and military goods in advance for his promised assistance, the required number of recruits was never met. Moreover, the press in England was opposed vehemently against — what it called — the Dutch slave trade in disguise and the British government raised objections against the recruitment. The Dutch government was afraid to rouse British opposition against colonial policies in the Dutch East Indies and ordered an end to the recruiting activities in 1842. Subsequently, the Dutch government tried to benefit from its West African possessions by having a go at gold mining but these attempts ended also in human and financial disaster. Mine workers and engineers specially brought in from Germany for that purpose succumbed in the tropical climate, the African workers ran away and after all, an investment of *f* 130,000 yielded a quantity of gold to the value of *f* 43.14<sup>43</sup>.

Also, a couple of government-sponsored agricultural projects fell short of the high expectations. For instance, the Brazilian cotton planter, Rocha Vieira, who was hired by the government in 1852, returned quietly to Bahia in 1855 without having achieved anything<sup>44</sup>.

Unlike the Dutch, who because of their small manpower did not want to be mixed up in African affairs<sup>45</sup>, the British jurisdiction over the coastal peoples was confirmed and even extended during Crown government. When the new

<sup>40</sup> Dr. Madden's summary of his recommendations in METCALFE (1964), pp. 170-171. Colonial Office declined to act on his recommendations before a Select Committee of the House of Commons had gone into the question of West African Affairs, of which the proceedings took place in 1842.

<sup>41</sup> A.R.A., MvK 4000, Verb. 7 September 1831, no. 16.

<sup>42</sup> YARAK, *Asante and the Dutch*, pp. 109-111 and 227-228.

<sup>43</sup> Register van de handelingen van de commissie voor de stelselmatige Goudwassching en Delving, in A.R.A., NBKG 777; kasboek 1849 in NBKG 781.

<sup>44</sup> J. S. G. GRAMBERG, *Schetsen van Afrika's Westkust*, Amsterdam, 1861, pp. 275-276.

<sup>45</sup> René BAESJOU (ed.), *An Asante embassy on the Gold Coast*, Leiden, 1979, p. 22.

governor Hill settled in Cape Coast Castle, the different Fante chiefs came to visit with full regalia in order to pay their respects. In fact, they told him that they had heard that it was the intention of the British government to free all slaves within the regio under British jurisdiction. Hill denied that and the chiefs were delighted, whereupon the governor used the occasion to let them sign a declaration, acknowledging the British jurisdiction in their territories <sup>46</sup>.

Hill's successor Winniet urged the Colonial Office in 1847 to purchase the Danish forts for £ 30,000, alleging that the French would buy them otherwise <sup>47</sup>. The Secretary of State did not pursue this proposal, but a year later Winniet subdued Apollonia against the wishes of Earl Grey <sup>48</sup>. In 1850 the Gold Coast was separated from Sierra Leone and in the same year the Danish possessions were ceded to Great Britain for the sum of £ 10,000. This acquisition and the introduction of the Poll Tax Ordinance in 1852 caused a series of political problems <sup>49</sup>. First, the different peoples living in former Danish territory started to rebel against British authority and had to be subjected with great force. Secondly, the introduction of the Poll Tax had made it necessary to determine which coastal inhabitants were subject to British jurisdiction and had to pay tax, and which groups considered themselves to be Dutch subjects and did not need to pay. The Dutch did not want to levy taxes and duties and this fact irritated the English to a considerable extent. In 1857 governor Sir Benjamin Pine wrote to the Secretary for the Colonies "the (Dutch) settlements may all be likened to parasitical plants living on the British oak..." gave as his opinion that "the Dutch government on this Coast ... an anti-civilizing element" <sup>50</sup>.

However, British-Dutch negotiations for a customs agreement for the Gold Coast had been carried on in 1856, but they failed chiefly on account of the strong opposition of the Dutch commercial house of Van Rijkevorsel <sup>51</sup>. And in 1860 Lord Napier, the British ambassador at The Hague, held discussions with Nagtglas, the governor of Elmina, and Ord, the British commissioner for the Gold Coast, regarding the possibility of an exchange of territory as a condition for introducing import duties. However, Rochussen, the Dutch minister for Colonies raised various objections <sup>52</sup>. The situation changed sharply

<sup>46</sup> Bond with protected tribes, March 6, 1844, in CROOKS (1923), pp. 296-297.

<sup>47</sup> Commander W. Winniet to Earl Grey, CCC, 31 December, 1847, in METCALFE, *Documents...*, p. 204.

<sup>48</sup> Grey to Winniet, London, 3 July, 1848, in METCALFE, *Documents...*, p. 272.

<sup>49</sup> The Poll Tax 'Ordinance' of 19 April, 1852, stipulated that the chiefs and headmen should pay annually to the Government to sum of 1s sterling per head, for every man, woman and child residing in the districts under British protection.

<sup>50</sup> Pine to Labouchere, Accra, 30 December, 1857, in METCALFE, *Documents...*, p. 272.

<sup>51</sup> MULLER, *Een Rotterdams Zeehandelaar...*, pp. 81-82; COOMBS, *The Gold Coast...*, p. 23.

<sup>52</sup> Lord Napier to Lord John Russell, The Hague, 1 August, 1860, in METCALFE, *Documents...*, pp. 285-287. The main problem was Wassa, situated in the hinterland of the western region. Wassa was allied with the Fante and belonged to the British protectorate. In case of an exchange

in 1863, when an Asante expeditionary force invaded a part of the hinterland of the Coast, allied to the British<sup>53</sup>. Immediately, governor Richard Pine prepared a huge military force to march to Kumasi, but his army could not go further than the river Prah, the boundary between Asante and the British protectorate. No shot was fired, but the climate had made many victims and consequently he was compelled to withdraw with his troops to the Coast.

This fiasco — the venture amounted to some £ 700,000<sup>54</sup> — was later on discussed in the House of Commons and a Select Committee was installed in order to inquire into the state of affairs of the Gold Coast. In June 1865, the Committee reported that “all further extension of territory or assumption of government in West Africa ... should be peremptorily prohibited and carefully prevented”, and resolved “that the object of our policy should be to encourage in the natives the exercise of those qualities which may render it possible ... to transfer to them the administration of all Government, with a view to our ultimate withdrawal from all...”<sup>55</sup>. Again the Gold Coast was annexed to Sierra Leone.

Conran, the new Administrator, wanted first to solve the question of the import duties with the Dutch and advised to Blackal in Sierra Leone a partition of the Coast and protectorate between the Dutch and the English. Conran's advice was welcomed by the Home government and on 5 March 1867 a convention was signed in London between the Netherlands and Great Britain in which an exchange of territories was agreed upon as well as the implementation of a common customs system on the Gold Coast<sup>56</sup>. However, the implementation of that convention brought about revolutionary developments. From a European viewpoint the Coast simply became divided between the Dutch and English for fiscal reasons. The Africans, on the other hand, considered the new agreement within their horizon of power relations as a division between Fante territory and Asante dominion. They refused to recognize the new situation since none of them was consulted about that division. That the exchange might cause some problems on the African side, both nations were well aware and had therefore sent some warships to the Coast.

of territory the western region would come under Dutch authority and therefore Rochussen required that Great Britain should give up its protectorate over Wassa.

<sup>53</sup> Pine to Newcastle, CCC, 15 April and 12 May, 1863, in METCALFE, *Documents...*, pp. 294-296 ; BAESJOU, *An Asante Embassy...*, p. 11.

<sup>54</sup> METCALFE, *Documents...*, note 2, p. 297.

<sup>55</sup> Draft report of the Select Committee, 22 June, and Resolutions, 26 June, 1865, in METCALFE, *Documents...*, pp. 310 and 311.

<sup>56</sup> Convention for the exchange of territory, London, 5 March, 1867, in METCALFE, *Documents...*, pp. 320-321. Dutch authorities on the coast had already earlier proposed an exchange, such as governor Daendels in 1817 (Secrete memorie, 16 February, 1817, in A.R.A., NBKG 350) and Commander Swarte in 1833 (Generaal rapport, 24 May, 1833, in A.R.A., MvK 4002).

The British take-over of the Dutch fort in Accra went on smoothly, as the population had only protested in writing. However, the transfer between Britain and the Netherlands in the Western regions could not take place than after extensive palavers with the local chiefs in Dixcove and Sekondi. In Komenda the people even took to arms in order to prevent the Dutch flag flying in their territory and for that reason a Dutch warship shot the fishing village afire.

Subsequently, the Fante, who were united in the Fante Confederation, began to besiege Elmina. A full-scale attack on the town was beaten off by the people of Elmina, but Elmina still remained cut off from the food supply of its hinterland. Also, their communication over sea was disrupted as their fishing canoes were regularly attacked by the people of Komenda and Fante. The British administrator in Cape Coast was asked by the Dutch government to interfere, and he answered that he was not able to do so as he had no authority over the Fante. Moreover, the position of the Dutch governor deteriorated when the people of Komenda had caught three sailors from a sloop of the warship "Amstel", which had capsized in the surf on the Coast of their territory. These men were handed over to the Fante, who demanded a ransom of f 12,000 from the Dutch. The governor at Elmina had to pay that sum<sup>57</sup>. Meanwhile, the local authorities of Elmina had sent a petition to the king in order to obtain help because of the rapidly increasing food shortages caused by the Fante blockade. They did not receive an answer and thereupon they sent two delegates to the Hague who in person had to bring the bad situation on the Coast to the notice of the King. With great difficulty, the delegation was allowed to see the Minister for the Colonies De Waal, who promised to send a ship with grain to starving Elmina immediately and to replace the governor.

The interview with the representatives of the population of the Dutch section of the Gold Coast had made clear to the Minister how strained the relations between the Dutch and English parts actually were, and this stimulated De Waal to make the first steps in order to get rid of this troublesome colony. He submitted his proposals to this effect to the Council of Ministers on 17 April 1869<sup>58</sup>. After an entire series of diplomatic negotiations, intrigues by colonial officials, discussions in the press, debates in Parliament, strong protests and demonstrations by the 'Dutch' subjects, the interference of Asante ambassadors and the application of military force on the Coast, the Dutch Gold Coast possessions were finally transferred to Great Britain on 6 April 1872<sup>59</sup>. Further, the Dutch were allowed by the British to recruit coolies in India for Suriname

<sup>57</sup> BAESJOU, *An Asante Embassy...*, pp. 32-33.

<sup>58</sup> BAESJOU, *An Asante Embassy...*, p. 31.

<sup>59</sup> COOMBS, *The Gold Coast...*, pp. 57-120 ; BAESJOU, *An Asante Embassy..*

and to subdue Aceh in their East India colony. The British, at the same time, had Sir Garnet Wolseley to organize an expensive expedition against Asante and so finally the former coastal trading establishments could be transformed into the Gold Coast colony.

##### 5. THE NEW LABOUR SUPPLY : WEST AFRICA AND THE RECRUITMENT OF MIGRANT LABOURERS AND SOLDIERS, 1800-1870

The ending of the export of slaves from West Africa to the Americas did not happen overnight. After the British had abolished the trade more than 3 million slaves were transported across the Atlantic, mainly to Brazil and Cuba. They came from many regions in West Africa, but the areas around the Dutch and British forts on the Gold Coast hardly featured in the 19th century slave trade. In spite of some British complaints there is no evidence to suggest that Dutch ships or Dutch officials, be it from the Netherlands or on the African Coast, participated in the illegal trade in slaves <sup>60</sup>.

After the ending of the slave trade all former slave trading nations tried to obtain so-called “free” Africans who were like the slaves destined for the plantation areas overseas. In addition, the British, the Dutch, the French and the Portuguese tried to obtain African labour for use in Africa itself. Plans were made to establish plantation areas on mainland Africa and some of these plans were executed, albeit without permanent success <sup>61</sup>.

The British managed to recruit around 40,000 free Africans, who were all transported to the British Caribbean. In addition, the British shipped a number of African soldiers to the West Indies during that period. All of these African labourers and soldiers were recruited in Sierra Leone among the 160,000 liberated Africans who had been found aboard illegal slave ships. The decline of this recruitment during the late 1860s went hand in hand — as could be expected — with the decline of the illegal slave trade <sup>62</sup>.

The Dutch attempts to recruit African labour or soldiers for employment overseas met with little success. The Dutch on the Gold Coast never succeeded in recruiting Africans as plantation workers in the Caribbean <sup>63</sup>. However, the Dutch managed to recruit about 3,000 Africans to serve in the Dutch colonial army in the Dutch East Indies. Only 50 of these soldiers were sent to the

<sup>60</sup> EMMER, *Engeland, Nederland en Afrika...*, p. 63.

<sup>61</sup> Patrick MANNING, *Slavery and African life ; Occidental, Oriental, and African Slave Trades*, Cambridge, 1990, pp. 142-147.

<sup>62</sup> Monica SCHULER, *The Recruitment of African Indentured Labourers for European Colonies in the 19th Century*, in : P. C. EMMER (ed.), *Colonialism and Migration ; Indentured Labour before and after Slavery*, Dordrecht, 1986, p. 136.

<sup>63</sup> BAESJOU, *An Asante Embassy...*, p. 37.

Dutch West Indies. The question can be raised as to why the number of African soldiers recruited by the Dutch was so much smaller than that of African recruits for the British army<sup>64</sup>.

The first reason for explaining this discrepancy is the difference between Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast. Only Sierra Leone offered relatively large numbers of Africans without opportunities for alternative employment. On the Gold Coast, on the other hand, the Dutch had to rely on recruiting slaves from the Asante, who could be employed in Africa itself. The second reason for the relatively low number of recruits was the British pressure to stop the Dutch recruitment on the Gold Coast because it would encourage the enslavement of Africans. Third, recruitment of soldiers in Europe for service in the Dutch colonial army in the Dutch East Indies was well organized. The army attracted a constant stream of recruits, half of whom came from Germany<sup>65</sup>.

In sum, the differences between the British and Dutch recruitment of African labourers and soldiers were marginal in view of the large demand for labour in the plantation colonies. After the ending of the slave trade African labourers hardly participated in the large-scale intercontinental migration of labourers. The relatively small number of Africans, who left Africa on a contract of indenture came from Sierra Leone and French West Africa and hardly from the Gold Coast<sup>66</sup>.

## 6. WEST AFRICA AND DUTCH COLONIAL POLICIES, 1815-1870

In the historiography of Dutch expansion overseas the Napoleonic Wars are usually seen as a watershed. The Dutch colonies and trade networks of the period before 1800 have always been associated with the initial and dynamic first phase of Dutch expansion overseas. After 1815, on the other hand, the Dutch overseas expansion seemed to have lost most of its impetus. During the Napoleonic wars virtually all Dutch possessions overseas had been taken by the British. After 1814 Ceylon in Asia, the Cape of Good Hope in Africa and Berbice, Demerara and Essequibo in the West Indies were never returned

<sup>64</sup> J. VERHOOG, *De werving van Westafrikanen voor het Nederlands-Indische leger, 1831-1872*, in: "Mededelingen van de sectie militaire geschiedenis landmachtstaf", 12 (1989), pp. 5-26. The difference between the recruiting of the British and the Dutch was that the British needed soldiers for the service on the African continent, and the Dutch for their East Indian army. For their Gold Coast garrison (about 150 men) the Dutch could easily obtain the necessary manpower from that part of the local population that descended from the former Company's slaves, and that still stood under direct authority of the governor of Elmina.

<sup>65</sup> A. VAN DANTZIG, *The Dutch Military Recruitment Agency in Kumasi*, in: "Ghana Notes and Queries", 8 (1966), pp. 21-24; Martin BOSSENBROEK, *Volk voor Indië; De werving van Europese militairen voor de Nederlandse koloniale dienst, 1814-1909*, Amsterdam, 1992.

<sup>66</sup> Paul E. LOVEJOY, *Transformations in Slavery; A history of Slavery in Africa*, Cambridge, 1983, p. 146.

to the Netherlands. In addition, during the period of Modern Imperialism between 1870 and 1914 the Dutch did not take part in conquering new colonies in Africa and Asia. In this respect the Dutch and the Portuguese remained defensive and "old" colonial powers, while Great Britain, France and Belgium all built new colonial empires which were quite different from the previous ones.

After 1800 the Dutch colonial empire in the Atlantic was cut back in size. The most promising plantation regions of the Dutch Guiana's were incorporated into the British empire. After the abolition of the slave trade, slave labour became more expensive in both the British and Dutch Caribbean, but unlike Britain the Dutch never provided the Suriname planters with protective tariffs for their products. As a result, the Suriname sugar and coffee had to compete on an equal footing with the sugar produced in Brazil and Cuba, countries which still could obtain slaves from Africa. Suriname was barely able to keep its sugar output from declining and the colony provided the port of Amsterdam with about 70 shiploads of sugar per year. After the liberalisation of its trade in 1848, however, Suriname planters sent most of their sugar to the U.K. and the U.S.<sup>67</sup>

In Asia the position of the Dutch had been quite different from that in the Atlantic. Until 1800 the Dutch had been able to remain one of the most important trading nations, both in the intra-Asian trade as well as in the trade between Asia and Europe. However, during the 18th century competition in both trades was increasing from British and French commercial companies. The question is why the Dutch in Asia were able to remain in a prominent position when they had failed to do so in Europe and the Atlantic. The only answer to this question is the Dutch East India Company, which organised the resources of its investors and merchants as well as its trade within, and from Asia in such a way as to enable itself to remain a match for the trading companies of the larger European nations in the Indian Ocean and Chinese sea<sup>68</sup>.

After the Napoleonic Wars the Dutch position in Asia became to resemble that in the Atlantic. Due to the application of protective trading tariffs the Dutch were able to keep the trade between Europe and Java from falling into the hands of the British and the U.S. merchants as happened with most of the intra-Asian trade. Obviously, the British and U.S. firms offered cheaper rates and better products than the Dutch were able to do. The opening-up of Japan and China by the British and the Americans is indicative of these

<sup>67</sup> Cornelis Ch. GOSLINGA, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and in Surinam, 1791/5-1942*, Assen, 1990, p. 472.

<sup>68</sup> Niels STEENSGAARD, *The growth and composition of the long-distance trade of England and the Dutch Republic before 1750*, in : James D. TRACY (ed.), *The Rise of Merchant Empires ; Long-Distance Trade in the Early Modern World, 1350-1750*, Cambridge, 1990. pp. 102-152 and Holden FURBER, *Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient, 1600-1800*, Minneapolis, 1976.

changes. The unique Dutch factory at Deshima had lost its value after the British-Japanese treaty in 1860 and the British conquest of India made the Dutch factories in Bengal and on the Coromandel Coast equally redundant<sup>69</sup>.

Yet, the Dutch were able to strengthen their position on Java because in 1830 they designed a system of forced cropping, which yielded financial results beyond the boldest expectations. The profits from this system enabled the Dutch to devise a set of new colonial policies, starting in the 1840s. Before that time the Dutch colonial policies in East and West were aimed at just keeping what was there without much of a development concept. After the 1840s, however, the profits from Java enabled the Dutch to increase the size of its colonial army and to prepare for the steady expansion in the other islands of the Indonesian archipelago. In addition, the Dutch Minister of the colonies now had the finances to prepare for the belated emancipation of the slaves in the Dutch West Indies by promising a reasonable compensation to the slave owners<sup>70</sup>.

In view of these new and expansive Dutch colonial policies it seems difficult to explain why the Dutch left West Africa in 1872. During the 1810s and 1820s the sale of the forts on the Gold Coast would have coincided with the exchange of Dutch and British factories in India and the Malay peninsula in 1814 and 1824. The change in the status of Deshima in 1860 cannot be used in this context, as it was forced upon the Dutch by the opening of Japan. The transfer of the Dutch Gold Coast forts to Great Britain cannot be explained by commercial arguments. During the decades before 1870 there had not been a dramatic change in the Dutch participation in the trade with West Africa. Most of this trade was conducted in the Niger and Congo estuaries and the Dutch forts hardly played a role in this trade. Nor does the financial situation of the Dutch forts provide us with an explanation as the budgetary situation of the Gold Coast factories had improved right before they were sold to Britain. The reshuffle of some British and Dutch forts along the Coast in 1867 had enabled both the Dutch and the British to start taxing imports. For both countries the tax revenues reduced the yearly deficit of Gold Coast forts considerably. In case of the Dutch this made the forts financially less dependent upon the profits from the Dutch East Indies, which were declining because of the abolition of the cultivation system<sup>71</sup>.

<sup>69</sup> F. S. GAASTRA, *Het Aziatische gebied*, in : F. J. A. BROEZE, J. R. BRUIJN en F. S. GAASTRA (eds.), *Maritieme geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, deel 3, Bussum, 1977, pp. 293 and 294.

<sup>70</sup> P. C. EMMER, *Anti-Slavery and the Dutch : Abolition without Reform*, in : Christine BOLT and Seymour DRESCHER (eds.), *Anti-Slavery, Religion and Reform, Essays in Memory of Roger Anstey*, Folkestone, 1980, pp. 81-83.

<sup>71</sup> Janny DE JONG, *Van batig slot naar ereschuld ; de discussie over de financiële verhouding tussen Nederland en Indië en de hervormingen van de Nederlandse koloniale politiek, 1860-1900*, Den Haag, 1989, p. 46.

## 7. CONCLUSION

In the introduction the question has been asked why the British remained on the Gold Coast and expanded their presence, while the Dutch did the opposite and left. Where is the answer to this question to be found : among the documents relating to the British and Dutch local policies on the Gold Coast or in the archives relating to the policy decisions of the respective metropolitan governments ?

In the preceding pages it has become clear that the British and Dutch policies on the Gold Coast can not provide a satisfactory answer. In spite of the various differences, the position of the British and the Dutch on the Gold Coast was very similar. First of all, both British and Dutch merchants no longer could participate in the slave trade. The complaints of the British government against the continuing slave trade along the Dutch sections of the Coast were addressed to the wrong nation. Not the Dutch, but the Americans and the Portuguese continued the slave trade and neither the British nor the Dutch on the Gold Coast could do anything to stop that trade.

Second, the preceding paragraph regarding the various ill-fated attempts to make the Dutch trading forts on the Coast into plantation or settlement colonies clearly show that such projects were not feasible. A similar catalogue of failed projects could be drawn up for the British.

Third, both the Dutch and the British on the Gold Coast were increasingly threatened by the growing territorial and political power of the Asante. As has been explained, the British and the Dutch played different roles, but the effects were to be very similar. The British were drawn into a full-fledged war against the Asante, because they felt obliged to protect the anti-Asante nations along the Coast, notably the Fante. The Dutch stood to be drawn into a war on the Coast, because of their traditional policy to protect the allies of the Asante on the Coast, notably against the Fante. The only solution would have been an alliance of all coastal nations against the expanding Asante, but such an alliance never came about in spite of British efforts. During the 1860s it became increasingly clear that a show-down was inevitable. The Dutch did not want to invest in a possibly protracted war and left in time. The British, however, decided to stay.

This last point indicated that the respective governmental attitudes in London and The Hague towards the British and Dutch presence on the Gold Coast was different.

First, the political debate regarding West Africa was different. The successive Whitehall policies regarding the British presence on the Coast varied widely, while the Dutch continued to diminish their presence along a straight line. This difference in decision making can be explained by the fact that the British parliament could discuss colonial matters, while the Dutch parliament was

barred from doing so until a constitutional change in 1848. This meant that both houses of parliament in London had a long tradition of discussing African matters, while this area had remained an object of executive policies in the Netherlands. In addition, African matters had been brought to the forefront of the political debate outside of parliament by the powerful anti-slavery lobby in the U.K. during the discussion of the abolition of the slave trade and the need to have a naval squadron off the African Coast. Such a lobby and such a debate was virtually absent in the Netherlands.

The second difference between the respective metropolitan interest in West African matters pertains to the influence exerted by the factory and shipping lobbies. In London the representatives of the textile mills in Birmingham and Manchester were able to voice protests against the possible abandonment of the British strongholds on the Coast, because West Africa had gained some importance as a market for mass-produced textiles for the mills in the Midlands. The textile mills in the Netherlands, on the other hand, only could sell their textiles overseas on the protected market of the Dutch East Indies, while the Dutch firms trading to Africa all bought their textiles in the U.K. As a consequence of that situation none of the Dutch factory owners voiced any opposition against the sale of the Dutch forts to Britain.

A third difference between London and The Hague had to do with the existence of personal networks. In London clubland multiple personal connections existed between civil servants of the Colonial Office and of other government departments on one side and on the other the civil servants to be sent to serve on the Coast. The same applies to the missionaries who were sent to that area. In the Hague no such networks existed. The small staff of the Department of the Colonies had no personal connections with any of the Dutch governors on the Gold Coast. None of the Dutch churches ever sent missionaries there; instead German and Swiss missionaries were allowed to do their work along the Dutch sections of the African Coast<sup>72</sup>.

In sum, not the "men on the spot", but the respective ministers for the colonies decided that the British would stay and the Dutch would go. In almost every respect the decision of the British not to abandon seems proof of an imperialist attitude, which became much more pronounced when Britain participated in the scramble for Africa<sup>73</sup>. The decision to leave the Gold Coast

<sup>72</sup> The Dutch local authorities were rather unresponsive for foreign missionary activities, as they were afraid that the Dutch sections of the Coast would be anglicized by the teaching of Wesleyan and Basel missionaries. However, at the end of the 1850s there was a plan of a Dutch missionary society to work on the Gold Coast (Stukken betreffende het Nederlandsche Zendingsgenootschap ter kuste van Guinea 1858, in A.R.A., Collectie J. F. R. S. van de Bossche, 33), and in 1871 the Elmina elite wanted to build a Christian Church on government ground (A.R.A., NBKG 417).

<sup>73</sup> J. R. WARD, *The Industrial Revolution and British Imperialism, 1750-1850*, in: "Economic History Review", XLVII/1 (1994), pp. 44-65.

is an indication of the fact that by 1870 the Dutch were not ready to participate in the new colonial policies which later were to be called “imperialism”. In fact, there is some debate whether the Dutch colonial policies were ever to become imperialist, even as late as 1900 <sup>74</sup>.

<sup>74</sup> M. KUITENBROUWER, *Drie omwentelingen in de historiografie van het imperialisme in Engeland en Nederland*, in : “Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis”, 107 (1994), pp. 575-585.



# BRITISH IMPERIAL TRADE AND WEST AFRICAN KRU SEAMEN

BY

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This paper considers the role of one particular West African ethnic group — the Kru — who worked on British merchant ships during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Kru originally came from Liberia and migrated to the British colony of Sierra Leone because of the naval opportunities here. Thus its capital — Freetown — became the headquarters of the Anti-Slave Squadron of the Royal Navy in the early nineteenth century. Here the Kru worked as linguists and sailors. Freetown also became a major port in British West Africa during the nineteenth century, since merchant ships stopped here to replenish supplies and recruit local labour. Kru were recruited here as supplementary crews initially to work coastwise and later deepsea. The contribution of this ethnic group to British maritime colonial trade will form the focus of this paper.

During the nineteenth century, the needs of the advanced European economies can be summarised as being : outlets for new areas of investment, new sources of raw materials, labour power to both exploit and transport these, and increased markets for the export of manufactured goods. Such needs were initially met through informal spheres of influence followed by the expansion of empire at the end of the nineteenth century. The African continent possessed large reserves of primary products such as rubber, palm-oil, timber, cocoa, that would come to play an important role in Britain's continued economic growth in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Such supplies were more firmly established with the expansion of empire and the establishment of formal colonies.

Traders and business generally were able to exploit raw materials and make huge profits with the political and military support of the state. Infra-structures such as roads, rail and port facilities were built to facilitate the plunder of raw materials. Whilst this distorted the growth of Africa's economies

and retarded industrialisation, it allowed economies such as Britain to enter into a second Industrial Revolution based on engineering, particularly the application of steam to ships and rail. Yet such developments could not have occurred without the full use of colonial labour. Thus alongside the expansion of colonial trade seen in the transfer of capital for investment in raw materials and the development of agricultural produce went an increased demand for labour<sup>1</sup>. The needs of European, but particularly British, capitalism in the more marginal areas of world economy led to greater demand for mobile and contractual migrant labour.

Throughout the nineteenth century, African labour was widely used for the maintenance and perpetuation of a European trading infrastructure in West Africa. In areas where local labour was numerically inadequate and unsuitable in terms of skill and experience, West Africans were recruited from along the coast and transported to areas of labour shortage. The Kru were by no means the only people who participated in this, and their experience has to be seen in the wider context of West African colonial migrations.

Kru labour from Liberia had been migrating to the British colony of Sierra Leone from at least the eighteenth century and this increased throughout the nineteenth. Kru became valued as hardworkers, reflected in the fact that, in Freetown, they were paid higher wages than other Africans. Thus in 1840 Holman notes: "... [the] superior value of their labour as compared to that of liberated Africans is proved by the fact that whilst the wages of a Krooman are from 9d to 1/- per day, those of liberated African are only 4d a day..."<sup>2</sup>.

Kru were engaged on British and European ships to work as stevedores and deck-hands, loading and discharging cargoes around the West African coast. With the arrival of the steamship around mid-century, the Kru were engaged as articulated seamen working in the newly created positions of firemen, stokers and greasers down in the engine-rooms. Kru labour drawn from Liberia and Sierra Leone formed a crucial component of British trade in West Africa, acting as labourers on shore, and as expert sea and river workers. The Kru's importance to British colonial trade in West Africa is reflected in the numerous accounts of those involved in this trade, in particular British shippers and individual colonial administrators. Thus in 1899 the British Foreign Office declared: "The services of Kru labourers in British West Africa are highly esteemed, and it is estimated that the number employed in British and other territory in West Africa outside of Liberia is not less than 10,000..."<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> See J. E. FLINT, *The growth of European influence in West Africa in the 19th century*, in: J. F. ADE AJAYI and I. ESPIE (eds.), *A Thousand Years of West African History*, Ibadan University Press, 1965, pp. 400-401; C. AKE, *The Political Economy of Africa*, Longman, 1974, pp. 391-393.

<sup>2</sup> J. HOLMAN, *Travels in Madeira, Sierra Leone, Teneriffe*, 2nd ed., London, 1840, pp. 178-179.

<sup>3</sup> Foreign Office 47/30 1899.

Initially ethnic Kru were recruited by European slave traders on the coast of West Africa in the capacity of tradesmen and linguists. According to Tonkin, the Kru appeared to be no different from other free coastal peoples engaged in trade with Europeans since before the eighteenth century<sup>4</sup>. With the ending of the slave trade in Europe in the early nineteenth century and the emergence of “legitimate trade”, Kru began to be recruited by the Royal Navy on British warships engaged in the suppression of the slave trade. Here they supplemented or replaced white crews who found the work too much in the tropical climate.

Kru seamen were also increasingly recruited in the nineteenth century to replace sick or dead white seamen that had little immunity from tropical diseases. The high mortality rates of whites in West Africa earned it the appropriate title of the “White Man’s Grave”. With innovations being made in steam power and its application to merchant shipping from mid-century onwards, Kru and other West Africans were increasingly employed as engine-room ratings, performing the roles of firemen, stokers and donkeymen in soaring temperatures. It was commonly believed that black labour could withstand the heat of the engine-rooms much better than white labour. Thus the Liverpool Steam-Ship Owners Association claimed, whilst giving evidence to a select committee on the Mercantile Marine in 1902, that foreign seamen were not only “more amenable to discipline” and thus provided another good reason for their recruitment, but that they were also indispensable in hot climates, especially as firemen<sup>5</sup>. The Kru acquired a reputation among European traders as naturally strong labourers and as competent skilled sailors. This reputation stretched back to the early nineteenth century if not before. Thus an Act of 1823 stated that Kru were “as much British seamen as a white man would be”<sup>6</sup>. Ships masters preferred West African seamen such as the Kru because of their “better discipline and greater energy, and these reasons operate still more in their favour if the voyage is in tropical areas”<sup>7</sup>. In addition, by the early decades of the twentieth century, if West Africans were engaged at an African port, they were paid lower wages than British crews and therefore proved to be a cheap source of labour.

Employing West Africans, of course, was also cheaper than employing European labour. The average duration of employment was about six weeks depending on the cargo carried. These men were employed for as long as the trip lasted, and when the work was finished, there was no obligation on the part of the employer to re-employ, to provide sickness or insurance. Such is the fate of casual labour.

<sup>4</sup> E. TONKIN, *Creating Kroomen ; ethnic diversity, economic specialism and changing demand*, in : *University of Aberdeen Symposium*, 1985.

<sup>5</sup> A. GIFFORD, W. BROWN and R. BUNDEY, *Loosen the Shackles*, London, 1989.

<sup>6</sup> Cited in J. WALVIN, *Black and White. The Negro in English Society, 1555-1945*, London, 1973, pp. 57 and 197.

<sup>7</sup> Home Office 45/11897/332187.

Initially Kru were used during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to work on ships in West African waters to save white seamen from exposure to the sun and mosquito infested swamps. This was probably still the case during the twentieth century. In addition, by supplementing the ships crew, an adequate supply of labour was ensured for operations along the coast. Although not permanently employed, it was important to use labour that was expert and “skilled” in certain operations. In this way, a sense of being semi-permanently employed was experienced by those who were frequently used to perform such work. This labour could be relied upon to shift bulky and often difficult cargoes, with the advantage (for the employers) of being classified as casual work with all that this implied. Routine maintenance work between ports ensured the upkeep of the ships, and gave value for money by keeping the Krooboy busy when the more demanding work of loading and discharging cargoes was finished. Moreover, the presence of Krooboy on board meant that preparations could be made for discharging or loading cargo before the ship docked. Thus as an ex-seafarer explained with reference to the 1930s: “When approaching port, the Krooboy would have all the hatches and hatch boards off ready for the shore labour, which saved valuable time”<sup>8</sup>.

Initially, Kru labour recruited in Liberia worked as stevedores to supplement their earnings from agriculture. It also provided an opportunity to earn bride-wealth, or goods given in exchange for a wife. In Freetown, Kru stevedores often graduated to the position of article seaman where better pay, longer duration of employment and higher status provided a great incentive. Thus stevedoring work was perceived as a form of apprenticeship where one gained some seafaring experience before moving on to the more lucrative status of seaman. Thus stevedoring work was prized not necessarily because it paid high wages, but because it initially provided a way of supplementing agricultural income in Liberia, it gave valuable experience that would be useful for seafaring, and because there was little else open to them. The other side of the coin was the advantages European merchants gained from employing such labour.

There was much competition for this work. Kru labour was successful in accommodating to the needs of British colonialism by migrating from their original homeland in Liberia to the British colony of Sierra Leone where much of this labour was recruited by the end of the nineteenth century. The Kru responded positively to the monetary incentives being offered and created for themselves an occupational niche that they successfully dominated from Freetown until the Second World War. This rested on an admirable reputation built up among merchants and colonial personnel that emphasised the Kru’s skill and hard work.

<sup>8</sup> Interview, Mr. Cowden, Liverpool 1989.

## CONCLUSIONS

The role of Kru labourers in stevedoring work around the West African coast highlights the contribution West Africans have made to British colonial trade here. The era of “legitimate trade” saw Kru and other colonial labour being pulled into an expanding world economy. British colonialism encouraged economic specialisation among different ethnic groups. More specifically, specialisation was cultivated within certain areas of work. In shipping the Kru were recruited for engineroom work and monopolised this until the Second World War.

The demand for migrant colonial labour such as the Kru became an important contributory factor in the growth of a Kru diaspora, so that they could be found in settlements all over West Africa as well as in the seaports of Britain.



#### IV. LATIN AMERICA



# THE AIMS OF THE WELSER COMPANY IN VENEZUELA, 1528-1556: TRADE, CONQUEST, OR COLONIZATION? \*

BY

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Beginning in 1526, when the struggle for hegemony over Europe between the houses of Valois and Habsburg turned once again to open warfare (marked by the breach of the Peace of Madrid by Francis I and the forming of the League of Cognac against Emperor Charles V), the financial needs of the Spanish Crown had been exceeding her capability to shield her young overseas empire *las Indias* militarily and politically against the intervention of non-Spanish powers. In this difficult situation Charles V encouraged the “Council of the Indies” (a department of the Spanish Crown Council) to negotiate in order to obtain investments from upper Germany for the development of the transatlantic area : a) to insure the value of the pacific route to the Spice Islands by a substantial investment project (this “Patagonia-Pacific Project” was offered to the Fuggers but failed in 1534) <sup>1</sup>, and b) to develop the Province of Venezuela in *Tierra firme* — in the southern Caribbean theater — with the aid of the Welser Company. We shall focus on this second project in the following article.

Concerning the province of Venezuela Charles V granted a Crown Charter — a so-called *asiento* — to the two upper German merchants Heinrich Ehinger and Hieronymus Sailer on March 27, 1528 <sup>2</sup>. Both merchants were factors of the Welser Company and Bartholomäus Welser, the “Regierer” (head) of the

\* For the translation from the German I am obliged to Thomas Beck (University of Bamberg).

<sup>1</sup> See H. KELLENBENZ, *Die Fugger in Spanien und Portugal bis 1560. Ein Großunternehmen des 16. Jahrhunderts*, vol. 1, München, 1990, pp. 149-164.

<sup>2</sup> See Eb. SCHMITT (ed.), *Dokumente zur Geschichte der europäischen Expansion*, vol. 4: *Wirtschaft und Handel der Kolonialreiche*, München, 1988, pp. 37-47 ; W. GROSSHAUPT, *Der Venezuela-Vertrag der Welser*, in: “Scripta Mercaturae. Zeitschrift für Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte”, 24 (1990), pp. 1-35.

company, had himself authorized them to sign the contract on their own behalf. This charter granted them the governorship over the *Tierra firme* region from Cabo de la Vela in the West to Cabo Maracapaná in the East and from north to south literally *de la una mar a la otra* — from coast to coast. This area included practically all of the western part of Venezuela as well as the Colombian basin from the Caribbean Sea southward. In addition to the governorship, several important trading and fiscal privileges were assigned to the merchants. The Augsburg trading company joined this contract on November 20, 1530. Subsequently, the company governed the province nominally until 1556.

So far there only exist two comprehensive studies of the approximately thirty year involvement of the Welser Company in Spanish America<sup>3</sup>. Besides these works, we do have an abundance of research on several aspects of the Welser dominion of Venezuela concerning government, economic and trading activities, and the attempts to conquer the back country<sup>4</sup>. However, we still know little about the underlying interest of the Welser trust in South America and to what extent the Spanish Crown governed its activities.

Because of the present vagueness in answering these basic questions the actual character of the Venezuela enterprise is not yet definitely clear. Was it an attempt to integrate Venezuela into the business activities of the Welser trust through the trading of Guaiacum, ores, and sugar, or was it rather a slave hunting and trading enterprise? Was it an attempt to exploit and loot the region, or was it, after all, more likely an enterprise to develop the young province as the Spanish Crown had expected and defined in the *asiento* of 1528?

At first glance, there seems to be a positive answer to all the above posed questions in light of particular proof and circumstantial evidence. Therefore, one seems to have the choice of which explanation to accept and which to dismiss. This explains the different opinions, especially among earlier scholars. A closer look, though, reveals a considerable shortage of reliable sources (especially concerning the company papers which are almost completely lacking). Therefore, all so far given explanations can only subsist provisionally. If we dare to make an assessment of the aims and the character of the Welser enterprise in Venezuela today, we can accomplish no more than a “binding together” of more or less well founded partial results of research with circumstantial evidence to form an explanation which may only be considered a high plausibility.

In attempting to formulate such an explanation, a series of letters has recently been helpful. Some of these letters, written to friends and relatives in the Holy Roman Empire by Philipp von Hutten, the last German Captain General

<sup>3</sup> K. HAEBLER, *Die überseeischen Unternehmungen der Welser und ihrer Gesellschafter*, Leipzig, 1903; J. FRIEDE, *Los Welser en la conquista de Venezuela*, Caracas-Madrid, 1961.

<sup>4</sup> See the bibliography in W. GROSSHAUPT, *Bartholomäus Welser (25. Juni 1484 - 28. März 1561). Charakteristik seiner Unternehmungen in Spanien und Übersee*, PhD thesis, Graz, 1987.

(military commander) in Venezuela, have first come to the attention of historical research during the last couple of years.

However, let us first look at (1) the Welser Company itself and its economic activities, (2) the fitting of its Venezuela engagement into the design of the Spanish Crown, (3) a sketch of the company's activities in Venezuela especially in light of the recently discovered material from the pen of Hutten. In conclusion, the outline of the company activities and the reactions of the Spanish administration to them leads us (4) to a rough assessment of the character of the company during its engagement in Venezuela.

(1) The Welser Company was founded in 1517. According to sources, it was called "Bartleme Welser vnnd Gesellschaft" <sup>5</sup>. The seat of the company was in Augsburg. The position of "Regierer", the sole decision making and continuously presiding head of the company, was held from 1517 to 1553 by the Augsburg Patrician Bartholomäus V Welser (born in 1484, deceased in 1561). The capital of the company was basically held by this head of the trust, who at the same time had at his disposal the considerable wealth of his wife, Felicitas Grander, and also by his brother Anton II. In addition, there were financing partners and depositaries who invested money at a fixed interest for a fixed time. I have no confirmed knowledge of the amount of capital on hand in the company at any one time. This is due, in part, to the fact that the amount was constantly changing. In any case, it seems to have amounted to several hundred thousand Rhenish Gold Guilders during the time period on which we have concentrated our studies.

"Bartholomäus Welser and Company" was an internationally ramified operating, trading, banking, and mining trust with factories in Ulm, Mainz, Frankfurt am Main, Cologne, Nuremberg, Leipzig, Milan, Genoa, Venice, Rome, Lyon, Danzig, Zwickau, Antwerp, Salzburg, Vienna, Lisbon, Seville, Santo Domingo, and Coro. The trust ran mines in several European regions and traded mainly in silver, copper and tin. It was a wholesaler of East Indian spices and was engaged in the transregional trade of dyestuffs and textiles as well as in the European scale insurance business. The company collected mortgages from Spanish knightly orders, held shipping companies, and lent money to European dynasties (especially to Emperor Charles V and Francis I of France). It also took revenues from the delivery of arms. The business of Bartholomäus Welser was not as extensive as that of his rival Anton Fugger but it was, in general, more risky.

Because Bartholomäus Welser had helped to finance the election of the then King of Spain, Charles I, as Emperor to succeed Maximilian I in 1519, the belief is that the granting of the right to govern Venezuela was to compensate

<sup>5</sup> See W. GROSSHAUPT, *op. cit.* note 4, p. 28.

for these services as well as the services rendered for the marriage of the emperor in Seville in 1526. This belief prevailed in older historiography. The Welser specialist Großhaupt formulates a different thesis on the basis of recent research. He is of the opinion that the declining revenues from central European silver and copper mining were to be compensated by American mines and a cheaper working force in the overseas possessions <sup>6</sup>.

To me, however, the problem seems to be more complex. The contemporary upper German high finance oriented itself, of course, towards areas in which European world politics could gain influence on international trade: Antwerp, Lyon, Rome, and especially Lisbon and Seville, the centers of European overseas expansion.

Via Seville, the Welser Company obtained gold washing enterprises and sugar plantations on La Española. Its activities in this area were undoubtedly assisted by its support of Habsburg interests, but they were not ruled by it (general profit expectations were the overriding concern). Over on the island of La Española, in Santo Domingo, which was the contemporary administration center of Spanish America and the seat of an *Audiencia* (i.e. a regional court of justice, the first one in the New World), the company installed its first American factory in 1526 <sup>7</sup>.

The intentions of this business expansion of the Welser Company are not quite clear from the sources available. Maybe one could attribute them to an expansion of business activities in order to gain a greater share of the market and the profit of the large scale international trade — thus broadening the rather narrow thesis of Großhaupt.

In regard to the Venezuela project, the management of the company obviously had no sophisticated concept. It is more likely that commercial inducements which sprang from information gained in Santo Domingo may have played a prominent part in determining policy. For example there were the profit expectations from the transatlantic slave trade, from sugar production using the cheap force of African and Indian slaves in the Caribbean, and from mining enterprises in the Indian empires on the Spanish Main. These empires seemed to abound in gold and silver, and one of them had already been conquered by Cortés 1519-1522.

Actually, we do not have any authentic statement on the reasons for the very involvement of the company in Venezuela. In any case we can not assume that the colonization plans of the Spanish Crown formulated in the *asiento* of 1528 were of any importance to the considerations of the company. An experienced contemporary merchant like Bartholomäus Welser, who was en-

<sup>6</sup> See W. GROSSHAUPT, *op. cit.* note 4, pp. 278-339.

<sup>7</sup> See E. OTTE, *Die Welser in Santo Domingo*, in: "Festschrift für Johannes Vincke", vol. 2, Madrid, 1962/63, pp. 475-518.

gaged in business on the European scale, and who gained from the needs of the Valois and the Habsburgs at the same time, was not very likely to be impressed by legal clauses like the ones in the *asiento* of 1528. In the Holy Roman Empire, the Fuggers and the Welsers had “made” the Emperor in 1519, and their services in granting credit, drawing bills of exchange all over Europe, and delivering arms could not easily be disposed of. Both the Fuggers and the Welsers had, later on, been able to prevent anti-monopoly laws intended by the Imperial Diet to curb them, thanks to their personal connections to the Emperor. We shall hardly err assuming that the *asiento* of 1528, even though it was signed by Charles V, was not held in very high esteem by Bartholomäus Welser, especially concerning its particular legal clauses, since in truth, they were the creation of the Council of the Indies <sup>8</sup>.

(2) During the years in which the Venezuela contract was being worked out, the Spanish Council of the Indies, as the formally competent institution, had been pushing for the integration of the western “Indies” into the Spanish empire by all means. Among this body, a deeply felt loyalty towards the state coincided with legal competence and the self-consciousness of being part of a highly centralized government. This together led to a relatively consequent control over the entire range of particular interests related to Spanish overseas possessions. Political bodies of such efficiency and power were unknown in the Holy Roman Empire. Therefore, the Welser Company could not draw on any experience in dealing with the Council. One gets the impression that the company constantly underestimated the power range of the Council.

What we today call “penetration” and “development” of the New World was known to the contemporaries of the 16th century as the “Conquest of the Indies”, due to the primarily military character of the enterprise. Immediately on the heels of the conquest followed the forced Hispanization of the indigenes by Spanish urbanization, missionary activity, and administration. It was never the aim of the Spanish Crown to destroy the original American Indian population; to the contrary, the aim was to deeply root the Indians in a Hispanic overseas province.

In the course of this policy, the Spanish Crown constantly struggled with the conquistadors, and with the early settlers who followed them, in order to

<sup>8</sup> In fact very few years later it appeared that the *asiento* was not at all known to the company as far as its implications and consequences were concerned: when, in 1534, the trust wished to have Nicolaus Federmann (who could draw on considerable experience in conquering the back country but was held incapable of organizing civil government in Venezuela by the Council on grounds of an unfavourable petition by the settlers) appointed governor the Council of the Indies prevented it insisting on the tenor of the *asiento*. Therefore Georg Hohermuth von Speyer had to be destined for this function at short notice which was of grave consequences to the company. See especially the study of G. SIMMER, *op. cit.* note 14.

gain control over their basic instinct for loot, plunder, and exploitation. One can not state that the Crown won this struggle since the land masses were too huge and the seas too vast considering the rather loose dislocation of power centers. However, if one looks at the early European expansion comparatively, it is obvious that Spain was more successful in this attempt than any other European power.

Thus, Spain used the conquistadors while, at the same time, she was at marked tensions with them. Because of the lack of financial resources during the third, fourth, and fifth decades of the 16th century Spain had been allowing the exploration, conquest, and development of whole regions from northern Mexico to Chile by private interests and capital. However, as soon as the infrastructure of the conquered provinces could support administration by its own resources, and as soon as the conquistadors showed desires for more or less independent government, the Crown incorporated the new provinces into the centralized administration of the empire.

This system worked on the basis of complicated contracts between the Crown and individuals or business corporations. The contracts always defined the geographical area which was to be given to the conquistador for conquering as well as the privileges and obligations during and after the conquest. The risk was on the side of the conquistador. If the conquest was successful the conquistadors gained an elevation in social status, landed property, a labor force by the *encomienda* system, and some rights to use the natural resources of the land <sup>9</sup>.

It is important to remember that the Venezuela Charter of the Welser Company has to be considered from this perspective of the Spanish Crown. The only important difference from other contracts of this sort lies in the unusual privileges the Welsers were granted. The company had monopolies in melting gold, dealing in salt in the provinces of Coro and Santa Marta, and trading with Venezuela. It also had the right to fill the highest ranking offices in the provincial administration with individuals of its own choosing. Welser ships were even allowed to sail directly between Coro and Antwerp, thus by-passing the shipping monopoly of the *Casa de la Contratación* in Seville.

The company's duties were comparable to the duties of other contract partners of the Spanish Crown: the province was to be conquered, pacified and settled. Among the settlements, three were to be fortified. Land was to be given out to settlers, a regular civil administration was to be established, and the Indians explicitly were to be converted to the Christian faith and brought under Spanish jurisdiction. In the context of this *asiento*, the permission to

<sup>9</sup> See H. PIETSCHMANN, *Die staatliche Organisation des kolonialen Iberoamerika*, Stuttgart, 1980.

import 4,800 African slaves to the province was given. Later on, these slaves could be sold everywhere in Spanish America since they were of no use in Venezuela. Exactly 4,578 Africans were sold along the lines of these licences by the company until 5 August 1540 <sup>10</sup>.

(3) If we consult the sparse sources on everyday life in the province (letters and petitions of the colonists to the *Audiencia* in Santo Domingo and the Council of the Indies in Spain, reports of several officers of the province, court case minutes from the later part of the period, especially affidavits of witnesses, and chronicles), we realize that two business activities dominated the Welser engagement in Venezuela: Indian slave hunting and trading on the one side and *entradas*, or exploration expeditions and raids into the interior, on the other. All other business activities remained unimportant. No land was given to settlers (we believe this was to preserve the men for the raiding parties), no Indians were distributed for *encomiendas*, and no plantations were set up. Also, there was no stock farming, no mining activity, and no industry. Therefore, the recruited colonists were neither able to earn their income nor to gain any wealth and thus rendering a certain autarchy to the province. They could not barter with the Indians, let alone produce anything for export. On the contrary, from the beginning, all necessities of life had to be imported, partially from Santo Domingo and partially directly from Spain. Since the company had a trade monopoly and, of course, used it to its own advantage, the colonists became increasingly indebted to the company. In 1533, the Welser Company estimated the gross debt of the colonists at 50,000 ducats, of which only 4,000 had been paid back. By 1547, the debts were up to 120,000 ducats, of which in the mean time, 20,000 had been paid back <sup>11</sup>.

We have no information as yet concerning the actual freight carried on Welser ships between Europe and Spanish America <sup>12</sup>.

Not much attention has been paid to the Indian slave business of the Welser Company and several of its officials until recently. According to Großhaupt, Welser officials had already sold about 4,000 Indians to La Española as early as 1533 (afterwards, the exportation of Indian slaves out of the country was officially prohibited). For the period between 1529 and 1538 we have proof of about 1,200 Indian slaves living in Venezuela <sup>13</sup>. However, as Götz Simmer just recently stated, the illegal slave hunting and slave trade of the active senior Welser officers like Limpias, Villegas, Estéban Martín, Federmann, and Mon-

<sup>10</sup> W. GROSSHAUPT, *Bergbau der Welser in Übersee*, in: "Scripta Mercaturae. Zeitschrift für Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte", 25 (1991), pp. 125-177.

<sup>11</sup> K. HAEBLER (see note 3), p. 382.

<sup>12</sup> W. Großhaupt is preparing an article on this subject.

<sup>13</sup> W. GROSSHAUPT, *opp. cit.* note 10, pp. 154-162.

talvo de Lugo, who coordinated their deals, probably greatly exceeded the official figures ascertained by Großhaupt <sup>14</sup>.

As it seems, the Indian slave trade was, to a varying degree, profitable for several company officials but, it could not reimburse the company for the expenses necessary to set up the colony. In the long run, though, the slave trade held dramatic consequences: the regions around Coro were depopulated, which, of course, worsened the economic problems of the province, since it soon lacked the labor force for any agricultural production. Thus, the slave trade, which was illegal anyway, led the Council of the Indies and the *Audiencia* of Santo Domingo to strongly oppose the Welser administration in Coro.

Nevertheless, another branch of the Welser business in Venezuela was, in respect to financial expenditure and manpower, more important than the slave trade: from 1529 on, the governors and the military commanders undertook far-reaching raids into the interior of Venezuela and Colombia, with some of them extending nearly to the Andean region of Ecuador <sup>15</sup>. If we sum up the known raids between 1529 and 1546, we have to deal with an almost incredible duration of about 160 months and a total distance of probably more than 20,000 kilometers. This is more than we know of any other conquest enterprise during the 16th century. The Welser raids were in no respect different from any other conquest expedition of the time. This is true in respect to manpower, the composition and equipment of the expedition parties, the treatment of the Indians, and the casualties among the "Christians", as the Europeans called themselves in order to distinguish themselves from the Indians <sup>16</sup>.

In this context, we come across four prominent Welser officials: the governors Ambrosius Dalfinger (1528-1533) and Georg Hohermuth von Speyer (1534-1540), and the Captains General Nicolaus Federmann (1528-1531) and Philipp von Hutten (1541-1546).

Dalfinger was the first conquistador who reached the Colombian highlands (1531-1533) in the preplanned search for an area which bore rich gold treasures. He knew that the highlands traded salt, gold, and cotton cloth to the northern lowlands. However, far away from his lines of communication and logistics and threatened by hostile Indians, he gave up in 1533 and set out to return to Coro. On the way back he died.

<sup>14</sup> See the dissertation of G. SIMMER, *Die innere Verfassung der Provinz Venezuela während der Welser-Statthalterschaft 1528-1556*, Bamberg (will soon be published). I have learned much from this comprehensive study.

<sup>15</sup> See K. HAEBLER, *op. cit.* note 2; J. FRIEDE, *op. cit.* note 2; V. v. HAGEN, *Auf der Suche nach dem Goldenen Mann. Die Geschichte von Eldorado*, Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1977; and R. WALTER, *Der Traum vom Eldorado. Die deutsche Conquista in Venezuela im 16. Jahrhundert*, München, 1992.

<sup>16</sup> See H. PIETSCHMANN, *op. cit.* note 9; Eb. SCHMITT (ed.), *Dokumente zur Geschichte der europäischen Expansion*, vol. 2: *Die großen Entdeckungen*, München, 1984, pp. 306-463; ID., *Die Anfänge der europäischen Expansion*, Idstein, 1991, pp. 37-74.

Hohermuth von Speyer succeeded Dalfinger in 1534. We have gained some knowledge of his term in office, thanks to the just recently unpublished letters of Philipp von Hutten<sup>17</sup>.

Upon reading them, some particular circumstances are revealed. According to Hutten's reports, there was indeed no mention of any colonization at all during the whole period of time he had been personally engaged in the conquest. Dalfinger seems to have tried to establish one or two permanent settlements and to assign Indians to *repartimientos* in 1529. However, under Hohermuth, the policy of the Welser Company obviously changed to a conscious disobedience of the Charter. Even when confronted by the citizens of Coro in 1535, Hohermuth distributed no land. On the contrary, he postponed any initiative for settlement and left for a new raid.

As early as 1530 the conduct of the Welser company in Coro led to frictions between company officers and Spanish Crown officials. These differences had been growing since that time and ultimately actuated a partial deprivation of the company's power in Venezuela by the Council of the Indies as early as 1534-35. At this point the trading monopoly was restricted and later on gradually invalidated<sup>18</sup>. In addition, the company was obliged to grant longer delays for the payment of the colonists' debts. Furthermore, it had to grant the right of emigration to the colonists, which was contrary to the formerly observed practice, and it was obliged to observe Castilian law in the courts and to grant the colonists the right to appeal to the *Audiencia* of Santo Domingo<sup>19</sup>.

The bishop of Coro, Rodrigo de Bastidas, then wrote in an intimate letter to Charles V that the Indians were being treated badly by the Welsers and security measures were to be taken lest their number would decline further<sup>20</sup>. This letter shows that Spanish subjects of the overseas colonies (Bastidas was the son of the governor of the neighbouring province of Santa Marta, who was murdered in 1526), who were familiar with the local situation and who had experienced the conduct of Dalfinger and of Federmann, did not believe that the country could be developed by Welser officials. This early observation was to be confirmed by the later conduct of the Welser governors and commanders.

I now come to the most important part of my statement: in his letters, Hutten paraphrases the real destination of the expedition of 1535, calling it "the rich country". The Welser officials assumed this rich country to lie somewhere in the Colombian highlands but could not precisely locate it. When

<sup>17</sup> The newly revealed letters of Philipp von Hutten will be edited in 1996: FR. K. v. HUTTEN and Eb. SCHMITT (eds.), *Das Gold der Neuen Welt: Die Papiere des Generalkapitäns Philipp von Hutten aus Venezuela, 1535-1546*.

<sup>18</sup> See G. SIMMER, *op. cit.* note 14.

<sup>19</sup> See G. SIMMER, *op. cit.* note 14.

<sup>20</sup> Johannes MEIER, *Die Anfänge der Kirche auf den Karibischen Inseln*, Immensee, 1991, p. 93.

Hutten arrived at Coro he wrote: "... wir warten allain auff etlich Pfferd, ßo vns von Santo Domyngo komen ßolen. Alsbald die komen, werden wir bey zwayhundert Meylen vberland baß hynein ziehen, do wir gewise Kuntschafft haben. Wan wir vber ain grosse(n) Ryuier, ßo an etlichen Orten zehen Meyl brait ist vnd mynder biß auff ain Meyl, sein vormals die Cristen biß an gedachte Riurier komen, aber kain Geraitschafft gehabt hinuber zekomen, ist das Land vbermaß reich, auch Mynas von Gold und Silber, dan es hierumb, do wir itz ligen, ain arm vnd rauch Land" [transl.: "We only wait for some horses expected from Santo Domingo. As soon as they will arrive we shall march 200 miles inland to an area we have certain knowledge about. When we shall cross a big river, which in some parts is ten miles wide and in others at least one mile and which Christians had reached before but were unable to cross because of the lack of equipment, we shall come to an abundantly rich country. There are also gold and silver mines. In contrast to around here where we are encamped now and where the country is poor and rough"] (letter of 23 February 1535). The "big river" was the Rio Magdalena beside which Dalfinger in 1532 had been marching upstream.

If we read the newly found letters of Hutten carefully, the only aim of the company during Hutten's stay seems to have been, indeed, to lay hands on a bullion bearing Indian kingdom — precisely "the rich country". It seems very likely that the Welser conquistadors then knew where they wanted to go but were not able to exactly fix their destination. Therefore, they had to search for the way and the destination at the same time: therefore, the never ending expeditions into the interior, the marching back and forth, therefore, the obstinate even dogged search for the gold land in the hinterland of Coro for dozens of months! They were not after mere fancy — there was plausible information about it. At the close of 1540, shortly before his second great raid, Hutten wrote to his brother Moritz, the prince-bishop of Eichstätt: "... mus mich meine Glucks beclagen. Hoff aber, sol sich fortan verendern, dan diejenigen, ßo itz diese Rais thun werden, ziehen nit wie wir bißher zogen sein, auff Hoffnung und Relacion der Indier, sunder haben ain Furer vnd Gelaitter, ßo ain Crist ist vnd den Reichtumb mit seinen Augen gesehen hat, vnd iz gar kain Zweifel ist, gros Ehr vnd Gut zw erlangen" [transl.: "I have to pity myself for bad luck. But I hope everything will change from now on, since all who will join this journey don't travel like we have so far, relying on Indians for good will and information, but are able to count on an accompanying guide who is Christian and who has seen the wealth with his own eyes. There is no doubt that we shall obtain riches and honor"] (letter of 6 December 1540). We may suppose this substantial knowledge for all Welser conquistadors on grounds of the indices under consideration.

It is remarkable that Dalfinger on his second raid came as close as a few hundred kilometers to the Muisca culture in the highlands of Bogotá.

This was half a decade before the well known legend of “El Dorado” became popular <sup>21</sup>.

We have every reason to assume that this information about El Dorado, the gilt cacique from the region of the lagoon of Guatavita, determined the direction of the Welser officials from the very beginning on. Modern research, remarkably, located this “gilt man” (the original meaning of “El Dorado”) and his kingdom in its historical essence in the highlands of Bogotá which belonged to the Muisca culture. It is exactly this region to which the Welser conquistadors were incessantly attracted.

In any case, Hohermuth seems to have had the same definite indefinite destination. Between 1535 and 1538, he was struggling along the eastern Colombian Cordilleras with his troops in search of a passage to cross to the West. In this context, Hutten reports that in March 1536, the destination of the expedition lay only a few days of travel ahead of his party. For instance, he writes: “Funden groß Zeitung vom reichen Land, glaub auch nicht, daß wir 30 Meil davon entfernt gewest sein” [transl.: “Gained important intelligence about the rich country. Don’t believe we were more than 30 miles away from it”] (letter of 20 October 1538). And: “Fiengent ain Cassiquen oder Obersten, ßo sagt, er wer auff der andern Seitten des Birgs gewest, gab vns groß Zeittung von Reichtumb. Mochten aber mit den Pfferden nit hynuber, dan der Gouvernador den Paß zway oder dray Mal suchen ließ” [transl.: “Caught a cacique or leader who told us that he had been to the other side of the mountains, and he gave us great testimony of the riches. We did not succeed in crossing it with our horses, although the governor ordered us to search for a passage two or three times”] (letter of 30 July/October 1538).

Exhausted and decimated as they then were, they were not able to cross the mountains. Hutten later blamed the failure of the expedition on the weak command of Hohermuth. Federmann, so he tells us, would have been the more competent man to lead the expedition to success: “Ich bin biß noch Willens, mit dem Hoermuth ze ziehen, wiewol ich lieber auff den Federman warten wolt, wan ich gewißlich wiste, das er keme, dan ich hoffet, ßolt me ausgericht werden, dan der gemelt Federman ain vast geschickter Gesel ist, vnd ich glaub, das Gluck dieses Lands stehe auff im” [transl.: “I am still willing to follow Hohermuth, although I would prefer to wait for Federmann. I only wish I knew he would come or I would receive word, since this Federmann is a very able companion, and I think the fortune of this country lies in his hands”] (letter of 16 January 1540).

In 1538, Federmann, who only became the deputy of Hohermuth in 1534, succeeded in crossing the Cordilleras in the south-east of Bogotá, at a height

<sup>21</sup> See V. v. HAGEN, *op. cit.* note 15, and Demetrio RAMOS, *El mito de El Dorado*, Madrid, 1988.

of more than 3,000 m. This was, indeed, for the most part on the same route Hohermuth had used. He was, however, just a few months late. Jiménez de Quesada, from the province of Santa Marta, had just conquered the land of the Muisca and gained an immense treasure. The sack of the chief's place, Tunja, alone yielded 230 emeralds and 136,500 pesos of sterling gold and 14,000 pesos of inferior gold. At that time, the peso was still a weight measure equaling 4.17 grams. This means Quesada plundered more than 600 kilograms of gold <sup>22</sup>. If the Council of the Indies would have accepted Federmann as governor in 1534, he, and not Hohermuth, would have commanded the expedition of 1535, and he would have made his way to the Colombian highlands two years earlier. This means that without any doubt, he would have plundered the Muiscas prior to Quesada.

Thus, after studying the Hutten papers, I have come to the conclusion that the conquest of a rich, bullion-bearing country was one of the real aims of the Welser enterprise in Venezuela from the very beginning. The head of the company approved of this policy because he was able to gain information earlier than his European competitors thanks to his business connections in Santo Domingo. He wanted to use this information to the advantage of his international business network. This theory is further supported, coincidentally, by information which came to light during the preparation of the above mentioned letters for editing. Hutten mentions about one hundred persons which I tried to identify for the convenience of the reader. Among them are eight Spanish conquistadors apart from the Welser party who tried to make their way to the Muiscas from different directions beginning in 1527. Some of them came from Santa Marta: Bastidas the elder, Jiménez de Quesada, and Vadillo. Some came from the lower Orinoco, the province of Paria, such as Herrera, Ortál, Reynoso and Sedeño. Others, such as Benalcázar, came from Ecuador.

In any event, it is clear that Hutten and his Welser colleagues knew about this permanent competition in the search for the rich country or, as he later paraphrases his destination: "Haus der Sonnen da izt Federmann und die von Santa Marta notitia von gehabt haben" ["The house of the sun, of which Federmann and the ones of Santa Marta recently received notice"] (letter of 16 January 1540).

This passage, as well as the mentioning of the names of the conquistadors from other provinces who had the same destination, shows the attraction of the golden kingdom in the interior. Information about this area had been provided by the Indians, not only to the Welsers, but to all conquistadors between the Isthmus of Panamá, Ecuador, the Amazon region and the Orinoco River.

<sup>22</sup> V. v. HAGEN, *op. cit.* note 15, p. 137.

In the middle of the year 1540, Hohermuth died. Now Hutten became the most important company official in the province. In 1541, he was appointed Captain General and expected to become governor. In his letters dating from that period, there is no mention of the founding of settlements, the building of fortifications, the granting of land to settlers, or Indian missionary work. It is as if he were ignorant of these types of government responsibilities and as if the whole purpose of the government in Venezuela was to search for a golden Indian kingdom.

As for the circumstances in Coro during this period, we know that the resistance against the Welser administration grew steadily and finally took shape. The *Audiencia of Santo Domingo* and the Council of the Indies started a series of investigations into the behavior of the company. Federmann, who quit the service of the Welsers in 1539 and who now wanted to become the governor of the golden kingdom of Bogotá, accused the Welser factors in Coro of cheating the Spanish Treasury. In short, an atmosphere of distrust towards the company either grew or was fabricated and these hostile feelings affected dealings between the Welser officials and the Crown representatives.

In 1541, Hutten left on the second great expedition under his command. This trip continued until 1546 and led him first to the Andes and then to the country of the Omaguas in the upper Amazon basin. This was the last great expedition of the Spanish Conquest and, even while it was still underway, expeditions of its type had already been outdated by substantial political change. After the announcement of the "New Laws" in 1542 which aimed to protect the remaining Indian subjects of the Spanish Crown and to suppress the subsequent uprising of the conquistadors of Peru, Spain wanted to get rid of the privateers who had conquered the New World in her name. On the one hand, they were to blame for major problems, while on the other hand they were of no use for the development of the country. This was exactly the situation with the Welsers in Venezuela<sup>23</sup>. People like the Welser conquistadors and their activities became undesirable and dispensable, since they did not benefit the Crown through the improvement of civilized conditions in the colonies. They brought no new subjects, no settlements, no plantations, no industry, and, perhaps most importantly, no revenues out of which the administration could be paid.

In 1546, when Hutten returned from his altogether unsuccessful expedition with a decimated party, he had already been overcome by the new rapid development. Meanwhile, the Council of the Indies had sent a new governor with far-reaching authority to Coro. This was Juan Pérez de Tolosa. The

<sup>23</sup> See H. PIETSMANN, *op. cit.* note 9; W. REINHARD, *Geschichte der europäischen Expansion*, vol. 2: *Die Neue Welt*, Stuttgart-Berlin-Köln-Mainz, 1985, pp. 32-87; Eb. SCHMITT, *Konquista als Konzernpolitik: Die Welser-Statthalterschaft über Venezuela, 1528-1556*, Bamberg, 1992.

disobedience of the administration in Coro seemed very obvious to the Council now, even though the grievances may have been exaggerated (especially by indebted settlers).

Hutten, along with the son of the Augsburg head of the company, Bartholomäus Welser the Younger, was killed near Tocuyo by Juan de Carvajal, who pretended to be governor, because they insisted on their rights derived from the royal Charter for the company. It was, of course, a crime, but it was at the same time a token, overdone as it may have been, of the deep rooted opposition towards the company officials in Coro <sup>24</sup>.

This opposition dates back to the year 1530. Since then, Spanish activists tried to push the Welser officials out of the province. Notabilities of Santo Domingo played a prominent part in it. Their point was to give Coro the same potential for development as any other province of Spanish America. The lack of any understanding for this development among company officials characterizes, more than anything else, the nature of the Welser administration in Venezuela. It was, after all, this civil trend which developed from the very base of society which led to the political fiasco of the Welsers in Venezuela. The Council of the Indies more or less fulfilled only what was expected by the men on the spot in Venezuela and Santo Domingo.

(4) By the appointment of Tolosa, the company was deprived of all its power in Venezuela. Nominally, it continued governing the province but had to accept Spanish officials who developed the province after the model of other Spanish colonies. Therefore, its actual influence declined, and it stopped all investments in the province and sued the Spanish Crown for the capital it lost in Venezuela <sup>25</sup>. In turn, the Spanish Attorney General, relating to a dossier of the former justice Frías dating from 1546, accused the company of non-performance of the Crown charter in an attempt to completely expel the company from the government of the province.

This series of law suits continued for about ten years and ended in a remarkable judgement of the Council of the Indies on 14 April 1556. The company was deprived of all privileges and rights granted by the Venezuela charter but was found not guilty of mal-administration during its dominion of the province. The financial demands of the company were dismissed. The huge costs of the case were to be paid by the public treasury <sup>26</sup>.

<sup>24</sup> See J. FRIEDE, *op. cit.* note 2, pp. 375-409; an analysis much more precise and differentiated will be found in G. SIMMER, *op. cit.* note 17.

<sup>25</sup> A company factor, Soderini, figured it at 100,000 ducats in 1547 (K. HAEBLER, *op. cit.* note 3, p. 382).

<sup>26</sup> See K. HAEBLER, *op. cit.* note 3, pp. 368-397, and J. FRIEDE, *op. cit.* note 3, pp. 419-491. The problems of these law suits are not sufficiently analysed, yet.

This judgement seems to have been dictated by reason of state<sup>27</sup>. Each side came out relatively well. The colonists got rid of their debts, and the mutual disobedience of the laws was put aside. However, for the historian, there is no reason to take any part of the judgement as a real search for truth, especially if one looks at the conduct of the company on the one side and the abolishment of all its rights by the Spanish Crown on the other.

The Welser Company lost its quarrel with the Council, but this was no surprise since its adversary was also its judge. It is striking, though, that the judgement was not given before the resignation of Charles V as king of Spain on 16 January 1556. We may assume that he, more often than we know, protected the Welser enterprise in Venezuela.

Therefore, what was the character of the Welser enterprise in Venezuela?

During the early period (up to 1534) high levels of investment were made in Venezuela. The company figured them at 50,000 ducats in 1531<sup>28</sup>. Later figures are lacking. For this early period, one may assume with Haebler, Friede and Großhaupt that the company planned to gain by slave trade in the Caribbean and by its own plantations and mines. Venezuela was to be incorporated into an international network of trade.

The political and legal obligations of the *asiento*, however, were of no great importance in the company's plans. These were based strictly on economic and profit considerations. The company probably expected the province to prosper on its own and to develop an acceptable infrastructure. In any case, the Welsers got an overseas base in Coro which was out of reach of the Spanish administration. That is, at least what they thought and was, as they later learned, without justification. However, since there were no immediate revenues to draw from the development of the province (one may suppose small and hidden profits), the company changed its policy. During the second period, which began in 1534, the company exclusively favored the search for precious metals.

Because there were no deposits worth mining in the known parts of Venezuela, the eager raiding activities of the company officials may have been the only promising alternative to get hold of bullion. In this way, the interests of the company coincided with those of the men on the spot whose debts were pressing. The discovery of the "rich country" mentioned by Hutten became imperative for the Welser conquistadors, if they wanted to get rid of their debts. There was not much choice for these men who, to us, seem like pawns on the chessboard of the Welser Company. They could only move forward.

The company was, as a business enterprise, most probably not very interested in ruling and developing the country. The expectations of the conquis-

<sup>27</sup> J. FRIEDE, *op. cit.* note 3, p. 491, calls these law suits an "ejemplo de un verdadero proceso político".

<sup>28</sup> See K. HAEBLER, *op. cit.* note 3, p. 382.

tadors coincided with those of the company on a higher level after 1534. Both of these profit expectations, however, ran counter to the colonizing expectations of the settlers and the Crown.

The beginning of the third period of the Welser dominion of Venezuela was marked by the murder of Hutten in 1546. Afterwards, the company governed in name only while the Council appointed the governors, usually without consultation. For ten years, the company sued for its rights and finally lost in 1556.

In certain respects, the Welser dominion of Venezuela anticipates certain types of colonial rule found during the period of imperialism around 1900. As often was the case, the exploitation of colonial products by a company was the dominating motive for European conquest in this period. The Welser trust, too, only looked for profit and showed no political responsibility, and most probably did not even realize its existence. However, there is a great difference between this case of European overseas involvement in the 16th century and several cases around 1900. The political power which granted the economic usage of overseas provinces in the 16th century, namely the Spanish Crown, accepted exploitation without political responsibility only for a short period of time. Urged by its own subjects, it curtailed the mere profit interests of its contractor by all possible means, even by expropriation. This type of state showed more responsibility for its subjects, including the conquered Indians, than the "modern" type of state found at the beginning of our century, which from our European, or rather "Western", perspective we are used to calling "the Constitutional State".

DES COMPTOIRS  
AUX «VOLKSPLANTINGEN» :  
L'INSTALLATION DIFFICILE  
DES NÉERLANDAIS AU BRÉSIL  
ET EN GUYANE AU XVII<sup>e</sup> SIÈCLE  
(1580-1680)

PAR

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Cette réflexion se situe dans le cadre de nos travaux sur l'histoire de l'Atlantique néerlandais au temps de la République des Provinces-Unies, aux xvii<sup>e</sup> et xviii<sup>e</sup> siècles. Le moteur de ces recherches est constitué par une ambition : celle visant à dépasser une vision trop classique de l'Histoire. Il s'agit de régénérer une conception classique et trop «statique» qui se borne trop souvent à constater une série d'évènements en s'efforçant seulement de dégager une continuité historique.

Cette vision statique n'empêche pas une solide érudition et des recherches documentaires irremplaçables pour interpréter les données et expliquer la dynamique historique. Notre démarche s'inscrit donc simplement dans une autre perspective que la démarche classique de l'historiographie européenne jusqu'au seuil des années 1980. En dépit de sa solide érudition, cette école statique dont Johan de Vries, J. G. Van Dillen ou Rudolf Van Lier sont les hérauts les plus considérables, n'a ainsi pas encore réussi à intégrer — pour l'espace régional et chronologique considéré — la dimension déterminante de l'analyse économique pour expliquer les circonstances et la causalité de l'évolution historique. En revanche, pour ce qui concerne le domaine colonial néerlandais, des auteurs comme Jonathan Israel ou Pieter Emmer, sans doute en raison d'une formation

d'économiste, ont d'ores et déjà commencé à tracer de nouvelles perspectives à l'analyse historique.

### I. COMMENT L'ANALYSE ÉCONOMIQUE PEUT AIDER À REVITALISER LA COMPRÉHENSION DE L'HISTOIRE COLONIALE

Plus précisément encore, la vision statique<sup>1</sup> et classique de l'histoire de l'Atlantique néerlandais a procédé largement d'une démarche macro-économique jusqu'au seuil des années 1990. Seul dans les années 1980 le remarquable exposé d'une vision Atlantique micro-économique par Pieter Emmer<sup>2</sup> a permis d'amorcer une évolution du centre de préoccupation statique des historiens de l'Atlantique néerlandais vers une réflexion dynamique fondée sur l'analyse

<sup>1</sup> Quelques explications sur le concept d'analyse statique : par opposition à l'analyse dynamique, Joseph Schumpeter a parfaitement expliqué les limites de l'analyse économique dans une dimension statique : « Nous avons parlé d'une économie calme, passive, conditionnée par les circonstances, stationnaire, donc d'une économie statique. Mais l'expression 'statique' n'est pas heureuse ; elle éveille l'idée, qui nous est étrangère, que l'on se réfère à la mécanique. Les autres expressions ont, elles aussi, leurs défauts, et des défauts tels que l'on ne peut aussi simplement mettre en garde contre eux. L'économie statique n'est pas en 'repos', le circuit de la vie économique ne cesse de se dérouler ; elle n'est pas vraiment 'passive', elle ne l'est que dans un certain sens. Elle n'est pas conditionnée absolument par les circonstances, les agents économiques pourraient agir autrement qu'ils ne le font ; enfin, elle n'est pas 'stationnaire' ; l'essence de l'économie ne se modifierait pas, si, par exemple, la population augmentait constamment ». Joseph A. SCHUMPETER, *Théorie de l'évolution économique, Recherches sur le profit, le crédit, l'intérêt et le cycle de conjoncture*, Paris, Dalloz, 1935, pp. 76-77. Dans le même ouvrage, Schumpeter précise *ce qui* oppose les deux concepts de statique et de dynamique : « L'évolution prise en notre sens — et *ce qui*, dans l'édition prise au sens *usuel*, est d'une part, spécifiquement économie pure et, de l'autre, fondamentalement important du point de vue de la théorie économique — est un phénomène particulier que la pratique et la pensée savent discerner, qui ne se rencontre pas parmi les phénomènes du circuit ou de la tendance à l'équilibre, mais qui agit sur eux comme une puissance extérieure. Elle est la modification du *parcours* du circuit par opposition à ce mouvement ; elle est le déplacement de l'état d'équilibre par opposition au mouvement vers un état d'équilibre. Mais elle n'est pas *chaque* modification ou *chaque* déplacement analogue, mais seulement chaque déplacement ou chaque modification qui premièrement jaillit spontanément de l'évolution et qui deuxièmement est discontinu, car tous les autres déplacements et modifications sont compréhensibles sans plus et ne sont pas un problème particulier. Et, pour ce qui n'est pas déjà contenu dans le fait d'avoir reconnu la présence d'un *phénomène* particulier, notre *théorie* est un mode d'observation spécial appliqué à ces phénomènes, leurs conséquences et leurs problèmes, une théorie des modifications ainsi délimitées du parcours du circuit, une théorie de passage de l'économie nationale du centre de gravitation donné à un autre («dynamique») ; elle s'oppose donc à la théorie du circuit lui-même, à la théorie de l'adaptation continue de l'économie à des centres changeants d'équilibre, et *ipso facto* aussi à la théorie des influences de ce changement ('statique') ». *Ibid.*, pp. 92-93.

<sup>2</sup> On pense bien sûr à son étude sur la nature de la *West-Indische Compagnie* en tant qu'entreprise : cf. Pieter EMMER, *The West-India Company, 1621-1671 : Dutch or Atlantic ?*, in : L. BLUSSE et F. GAASTRA, *Companies and Trade, Essays on Overseas Trading Companies during the Ancien Régime*, Leiden, Leiden Univ. Press, pp. 71-95. Voir aussi l'ouvrage dernièrement paru (mais qui procède de l'analyse classique et statique) de Henk DEN HEIJER, *De Geschiedenis van de WIC*, Zutphen, Warlburg Pers, 1994, 208 p.

proprement micro-économique que nous avons nous-même tenté un peu après notre collègue du Centre d'Histoire de l'Expansion Européenne de Leyde <sup>3</sup>.

Dans ce contexte, il faut donc souligner qu'un siècle a été nécessaire aux Néerlandais pour établir solidement leurs colonies dans la partie occidentale de l'Amérique du Sud au début du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle. L'histoire de ces efforts est largement constituée par une série de batailles, mais elle ressort aussi d'aspects économiques et techniques qui nous semblent plus essentiels : c'est peut-être à cet égard que se situe notre principale rupture conceptuelle dans l'explication de l'histoire de l'installation difficile des représentants des Province-Unies dans la région qui nous intéresse <sup>4</sup>.

Pour développer ces colonies, les Néerlandais ont eu à combattre l'empire portugais au Brésil de 1580 jusqu'à leur retrait de 1650-1654 <sup>5</sup>. Ils ont dû imposer leur présence dans la «Guayana Essequiba» aux Espagnols, mais en devant se retirer des postes de la rivière Pomeroon entre 1580 et 1640. Ils ont démarré la colonie de Cayenne, mais ont dû la céder aux Français en 1604. Et finalement ils ont conquis la colonie de Lord Willoughby of Parham au Suriname en 1667 presque par accident <sup>6</sup>. Malgré tout, cette conquête a marqué le point de départ d'un siècle de prospérité économique sur la «Wilde Kuste» néerlandaise. Cette *Wilde Kuste* ou Côte Sauvage devait progressivement constituer la Guyane néerlandaise grâce à la juxtaposition de *plusieurs colonies concurrentes* dans le même univers colonial néerlandais : Essequibo, Demerary, Berbice et Suriname. D'un point de vue purement économique, cette juxtaposition de colonies concurrentes gérées dans le même espace géographique (la Guyane) et dans le même espace colonial (le domaine colonial atlantique néerlandais) est particulièrement intéressante : la gestion de ces colonies s'est effectivement faite par l'attribution de monopoles commerciaux octroyés initialement à des entités juridiques différenciées et elles-mêmes concurrentes : la

<sup>3</sup> F. J. L. SOUTY, *Le Brésil néerlandais, 1624-1654 : Une tentative de projection conjoncturelle de longue durée à partir de données de court terme*, in : «Revue d'Histoire moderne et contemporaine», Paris, Avril-Juin 1988, t. XXXV, pp. 182-239.

<sup>4</sup> Il faut ici encore souligner que l'on prend assise sur le démarche scientifique de la théorie de l'évolution économique de SCHUMPETER : cette théorie est «simplement ... l'objet de l'histoire économique, portion de l'histoire universelle ; qui n'en est séparée que pour les besoins de l'exposition et qui par principe n'est pas indépendante...». Mais «nous pouvons constater que le monde de l'activité économique a une autonomie relative, car il remplit une très grande partie de la vie d'un peuple, et une grande partie du reste reçoit de lui sa forme et ses conditions : aussi présenter une histoire économique en soi et une histoire des guerres, ce sont là deux choses différentes». *Op. cit.*, p. 83.

<sup>5</sup> Nous avons rappelé ces circonstances dans notre article consacré à l'économie du Brésil des Néerlandais dans l'article déjà cité à la note 3.

<sup>6</sup> Pour un compte-rendu chronologique et événementiel, voir par exemple Cornelis Ch. GOSLINGA, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and on the Wild coast (1580-1680)*, Assen, Van Gorcum, 1971, xvi-684 p., et du même auteur *The Dutch in the Caribbean and in the Guianas, 1680-1791*, Assen, Van Gorcum, 1985, xii-712 p.

*Societeit van Berbice* fondée par les marchands de Veere, la *West-Indische Compagnie*, dont les principaux capitaux seront détenus par des Régents de grandes villes du centre et du sud des Pays-Bas mais qui sera mise en faillite en 1674, et la *Societiet van Suriname*, dont les capitaux seront distribués par tiers respectivement entre la ville d'Amsterdam, la famille patricienne des Sommeldijk et la W.I.C. elle-même. De ce simple point de vue, il faut apprendre à analyser le développement concurrent de ces colonies et de leurs ensembles gestionnaires *dans le cadre extraordinairement compétitif* de l'Atlantique néerlandais du xvii<sup>e</sup> siècle : c'est même sans doute cette dimension concurrentielle qui a tant contribué à l'établissement initialement difficile de ces colonies mais ensuite à leur extraordinaire expansion au xviii<sup>e</sup> siècle : les théories de l'organisation industrielle au xx<sup>e</sup> siècle démontrent ainsi que dans les phases de démarrage ou de redémarrage d'une économie, il peut être parfois nécessaire de mettre entre parenthèse ou tout au moins de modérer la rivalité concurrentielle <sup>7</sup>, ce qui ne fut pas fait immédiatement dans le domaine Atlantique néerlandais. Il faudra attendre les dernières années du xvii<sup>e</sup> siècle ou même le milieu du xviii<sup>e</sup> siècle pour que ces colonies concurrentes soient intégrées dans un espace économique unique, dont la Seconde *West-Indische Compagnie* sera l'apparente coquille.

Ce long processus de stabilisation se développe pendant un siècle et demi, en permettant de passer de simples «comptoirs» d'échanges aléatoires avec les tribus amérindiennes pour se transformer en véritables tentatives de colonisation. Trois facteurs essentiels permettent d'élucider les conditions de cette entreprise coloniale néerlandaise qui fleurira finalement en Guyane pour y atteindre une apogée au xviii<sup>e</sup> siècle : l'erreur juridique des hispano-portugais qui installe un «no-man's-land» en Guyane au xvi<sup>e</sup> siècle ; l'irruption néerlandaise au cœur de la Guyane (au Suriname) en fonction de critères d'utilité économique qui feront privilégier, (à l'époque) les comptoirs Guyanais à ceux de la Nouvelle-Amsterdam (future New York) d'une manière similaire au choix des Français en faveur de Saint-Domingue contre les «arpents de terre» canadiens un siècle plus tard, et surtout le facteur d'*apprentissage technologique* qui a été jusqu'ici largement sous-estimé dans cette installation néerlandaise en Guyane. Compte tenu de l'espace très limité ici imparti, on ne traitera que le troisième et dernier facteur, en renvoyant le lecteur à nos travaux antérieurs pour les deux premiers <sup>8</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> Voir notamment F. SOUTY, *Mutation industrielle et politique de la concurrence au Japon à la veille du xxi<sup>e</sup> siècle*, in : «Chroniques économiques de la SEDEIS», Paris, 15 mai 1995 ; *Les sources théoriques de la pensée économique antitrust aux États-Unis*, in : «Problèmes économiques», Paris, La Documentation française, 11 janvier 1995 ; *Les clés de l'économie Japonaise au seuil du xxi<sup>e</sup> siècle*, in : «Analyses de la SEDEIS», Paris, Janvier 1995 ; ou *Entre «Concurrence praticable» et contestabilité : les barrières à l'accès au marché dans les théories américaines de la politique de la concurrence*, in : «Revue de la Concurrence», n°80, juillet-août 1994. Du même auteur, *La politique de la concurrence aux États-Unis*, Paris, PUF, 1995, 128 p.

<sup>8</sup> François SOUTY, *Aux origines de l'histoire Guyanaise (xvi<sup>e</sup>-xvii<sup>e</sup> siècles) : El dorado et la*

## 2. L'«ACCIDENT» GUYANAIS ET LES MÉCANISMES D'UN TRANSFERT TECHNOLOGIQUE DE LONGUE DURÉE

En préalable à la colonisation néerlandaise définitive de la Guyane, une dynamique en deux temps va se développer, avec une périodisation qui fait se chevaucher ces deux temps, illustrant d'ailleurs la problématique des cycles de développement de produit imposée par Joseph Schumpeter (théorie des innovations en «grappes» et du cycle de développement du produit fondé sur le phénomène d'imitation routinière par opposition aux comportements destructurants et innovants) : d'une part, l'installation de comptoirs, parfois complétée par de timides tentatives de mises en cultures vivrières essentiellement à usage local, des années 1580 à la fin des années 1660, d'autre part, un apprentissage technologique néerlandais au Brésil temporairement soustrait à la colonisation portugaise, suivi d'une greffe technologique dans l'univers colonial néerlandais tout neuf au Suriname et à Berbice-Essequibo. De ce point de vue, et au plan méthodologique ou épistémologique, on ne peut manquer d'établir un parallèle entre nos investigations et celles présentées par ailleurs dans la communication de M<sup>me</sup> Lyon dans ce colloque <sup>9</sup>.

### *L'installation de comptoirs dans la région des Guyanes*

L'établissement d'une liste exhaustive de l'installation de chacun de ces comptoirs serait particulièrement longue et hors de propos dans ce cadre. Pour conserver une vision synthétique, deux considérations s'imposent dans l'analyse des motivations ou des fonctions de ces installations :

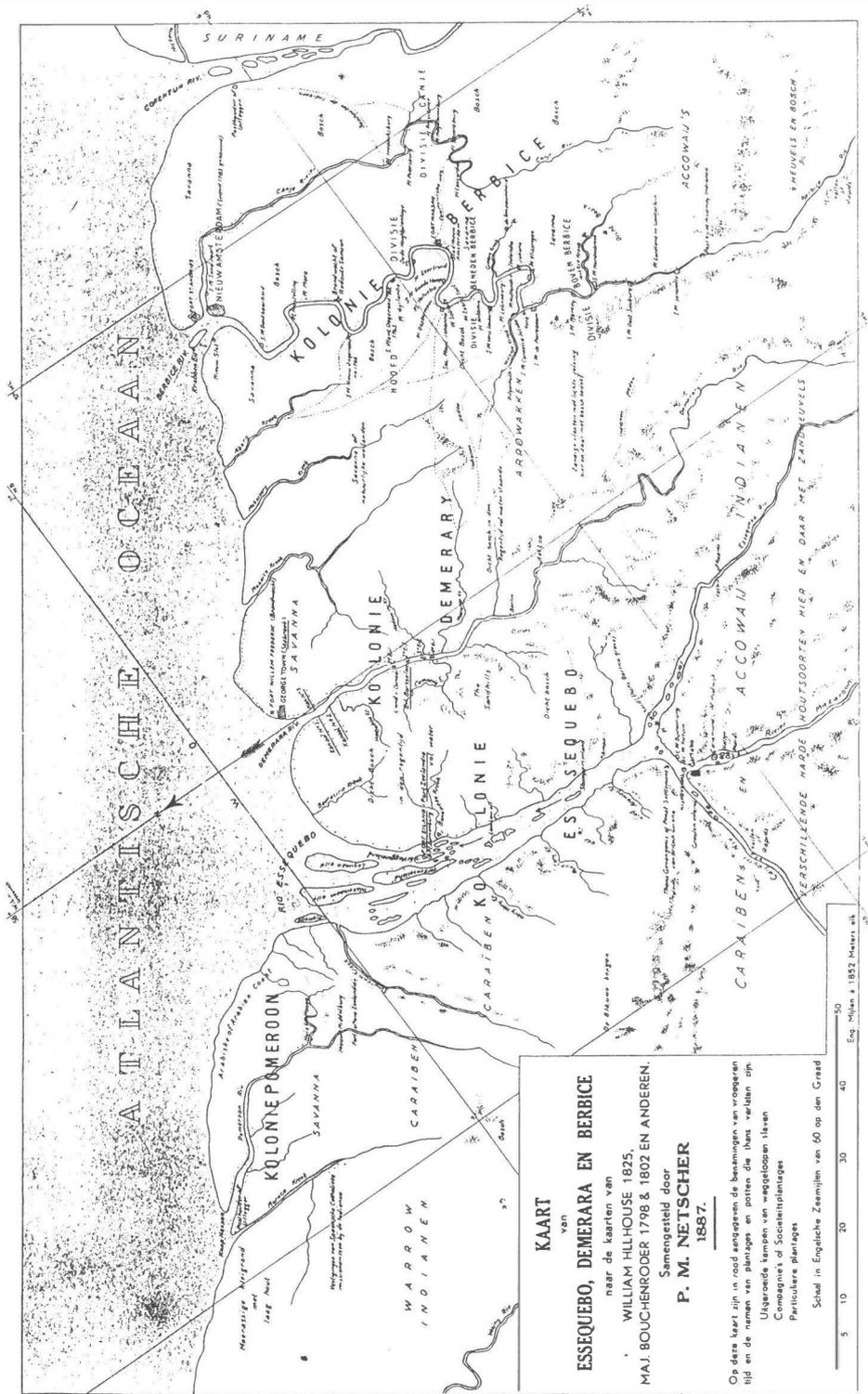
— d'une part, elles sont intervenues au grès des circonstances, sans plan de colonisation, plutôt dans le but d'établir des postes de troc aux embouchures de fleuves. Les circonstances ont été déterminées essentiellement par des opérations ponctuelles de reconnaissance géographique, souvent liées à la personnalité des explorateurs : les installations zélandaises dans les années 1590 dans les Forts Oranje et Nassau à l'embouchure de l'Amazone <sup>10</sup>, les explorations du capitaine Kabeljauw de Kourou au Cuyuni en 1598, la fondation de Cayenne

*Guyane, mythe et réalité*, in : «Rev. Franç. d'Hist. d'Outre-Mer», t. LXXIII (1986), n° 272, pp. 303-304. V. aussi notre article déjà cité sur le Brésil néerlandais.

<sup>9</sup> V. la communication de M<sup>me</sup> E. K. LYON, *Technology Transfer from the Netherlands to New Netherland*, qui examine justement en profondeur les relations entre apprentissage technologique, organisation socio-politique et relations économiques entre les univers coloniaux néerlandais et anglais ainsi que la dynamique compétitive ou concurrentielle qui sous-tend l'existence de *Nieuw-Nederland*.

<sup>10</sup> La meilleure synthèse à ce sujet demeure celle du Rev. G. EDMUNSON, *The Dutch on the Amazon and Negro in the Seventeenth Century*, in : «English Historical Review», 18 (1903), pp. 642-663. Sur les premières années de la présence néerlandaise au Brésil, v. du même auteur, *The Dutch Power in Brazil*, in : «EHR», vol. XI (1896), pp. 231-259 et vol. XV (1900), pp. 38-57.





**KAART**  
 VAN  
**ESSEQUEBO, DEMERARA EN BERBICE**  
 naar de kaarten van  
 WILLIAM HILLHOUSE 1825,  
 MAJ. BOUCHENROER 1798 & 1802 EN ANDEREN.  
 Samengesteld door  
**P. M. NETSCHER**  
 1887.

Op deze kaart zijn in rood aangegeven de benamingen van vroegeren tijd en de namen van plantages en potten die ibens verlaten zijn.  
 Uijgeroede kampen van weggevloden liken  
 Compagnies of Sociëitplantages  
 Particulere plantages  
 Schaal in Engelijke Zeemijlen van 60 op den Graad

Fig. 3. — Carte historique légendée présentant le détail et la localisation des comptoirs néerlandais sur les côtes comprises entre le Pomeroon et le Corentijn.  
 Extrait de P. M. NETSCHER, *Geschiedenis van de koloniën Essequibo, Demerary en Berbice*, La Haye, 1888.

par des Néerlandais en 1614 avant l'installation française, celle de Jesse de Forest à l'embouchure de la Marvini (Maroni) vers 1623/1625, etc. À partir de 1614, ces installations deviendront plus systématiques, après le vote par les États-Généraux d'un Octroi de libre installation de colons néerlandais sur les côtes de Guyanes. Mais avec la fondation de la W.I.C. en 1621, ce régime libéral sera sérieusement restreint par l'étendue du monopole conféré à cette Compagnie sur la région considérée (exceptée la région de Berbice concédée à la Compagnie zélandaise d'Abraham Van Peere à partir de 1627, mais dont les antécédents zélandais remontent aux tentatives impulsées dès 1599 par le Maire de Middelburg Adriaen Hendriks ten Haaf). Certaines de ces tentatives ont été récapitulées en particulier par Jan Jacob Hartsinck, principalement à partir des écrits de Johannes de Laet <sup>11</sup>.

— d'autre part, les premiers comptoirs ont été établis dans des lieux permettant un accès contrôlé, les guerres européennes se poursuivant sous les tropiques par des tentatives d'anéantissement réciproque ou au moins par des opérations régulières de rançonnement (ces dernières ayant encore cours au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, comme en témoigne par exemple le passage de la flotte du corsaire nantais Jacques Cassard dans les Guyanes dans les années 1720). Parmi les comptoirs ainsi fortifiés on compte, outre les forts déjà cités sur l'Amazone, Huis Ter Hooge à quelques lieues de l'océan sur le Pomeroon, Nova Zeelandia puis Fort Kijkoveral à partir de 1600 (à l'embouchure de l'Essequibo), Fort Nassau de Berbice, à quelques lieues de l'embouchure du fleuve du même nom dans l'intérieur des terres, Cayenne sur l'île du même nom à partir de 1614, etc. Des fortins de moindre importance sont également installés du nord au sud de la côte des Guyanes, de la Pomeroon (poste néerlandais le plus avancé de l'espagnole Trinidad, au nord, dès les années 1590) et à l'Oyapock (au sud de l'actuelle Guyane française, par l'amiral Lucifer, en 1627).

### *L'apprentissage technologique*

Il s'effectue lui-même suivant une double dimension :

— d'une part, en matière d'action publique ou collective sur un milieu géographique, physique et social qui présente certaines caractéristiques communes avec celles de la Métropole (terres basses ou «noyées» qu'il convient d'assécher pour les rendre salubres ; développement d'un circuit et de méthodes d'approvisionnement tant des foyers de production que des marchés de denrées coloniales : de ce point de vue, il y a des hésitations entre le monopole ou un régime concurrentiel plus libéral, développement d'une administration coloniale assistée par des organes collégiaux d'essence synodale ou provinciale). Ceci

<sup>11</sup> J. J. HARTSINCK, *Beschrijving van Guiana*, Amsterdam, 1770.V. en particulier le chap. 21, «Ontdekkingen en Bezittingen der Nederlanders», pp. 206-256.

permet le développement d'une société coloniale précocement cultivée au Brésil, en particulier durant le principat de Jean-Maurice de Nassau (voir Willem Piso, Frans Post, Caspar Barlaeus, l'astronome Georg Marcgraff, etc.)<sup>12</sup> : on retrouvera cette société cultivée d'inspiration athénienne en Guyane néerlandaise au xviii<sup>e</sup> siècle, puisque le Suriname possédera l'une des premières imprimeries de presse d'Amérique du Sud, mais aussi une élite cultivée (médecins, planteurs) n'hésitant pas à écrire (Fermin, Cohen-Nassy, Bancroft, Rodscheid) voire à polémiquer (cf. l'échange de lettres entre les planteurs «Aristodemus» et «Sincerus» durant la période des Patriotes à la fin du xviii<sup>e</sup> siècle).

— d'autre part, en matière de méthodes de production et d'organisation proto-industrielle. De ce point de vue, l'apprentissage est total, car les denrées concernées ne ressemblent à rien de ce à quoi ont été accoutumées des générations de paysans pêcheurs et cultivateurs néerlandais avant que certains d'entre eux ne débarquent dans les premiers comptoirs puis dans la Colonie même du Brésil ou celles de Guyane. Cet apprentissage revêtra une dimension également binaire, à travers la maîtrise de deux techniques qui connaîtront leur plein succès en Guyane et dont le Brésil néerlandais fournit une précoce illustration, ne serait-ce que par les capacités productives attestées au début des années 1640 : la maîtrise de l'engenho, raffiné par la science de maîtrise des milieux éoliens et aquatiques par les Néerlandais (poldérisation, moulins à vent plutôt que coûteuses *trapiches* ou *beestewerken*), organisation d'un système d'approvisionnement du système de production en facteur travail (conquête de comptoirs africains subséquentement à la conquête du Brésil néerlandais : ces comptoirs demeureront dans le domaine colonial atlantique néerlandais aussi longtemps que la rentabilité du système de production guyanais le justifiera ou le nécessitera, précisément pour échapper aux prix de monopole mondial organisé par l'Asiento, dont les Néerlandais seront les temporaires détenteurs), organisation du système de transfert de la production sur le marché néerlandais métropolitain voire européen (W.I.C.), qui causera — par son efficacité et les tensions socio-économiques ou politiques qui en découlent entre intérêts métropolitains, administratifs et locaux — de violents troubles. Ceux-ci iront même jusqu'à entraîner la perte de la colonie du Brésil néerlandais ou à justifier une entreprise de police coloniale — alors sans précédent dans l'histoire coloniale mondiale — au xviii<sup>e</sup> siècle en Guyane.

Ceci amène donc à conclure que la difficile implantation coloniale néerlandaise en Guyane au xviii<sup>e</sup> siècle leur a néanmoins permis d'acquérir grâce à leurs comptoirs ainsi qu'à d'autres facteurs une forte capacité concurrentielle

<sup>12</sup> V. en particulier le très bel ouvrage collectif sous la direction de E. VAN DEN BOOGAERT, H. R. HOETINK, P. J. P. WHITEHEAD, *Johan Maurits Van Nassau Siegen, A Humanist Prince in Brazil*, La Haye, 1970, 539 p. Voir aussi F. MAURO, *Le Brésil, de la fin du xv<sup>e</sup> à la fin du xviii<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris, 1977, 253 p, consacrant cinq chapitres à la période néerlandaise du Brésil.

de gestion des plantations coloniales qui formeront l'armature productive de l'économie coloniale d'Ancien Régime au siècle suivant. Les Néerlandais ont amélioré la technique qu'ils ont acquise au cours du xvii<sup>e</sup> siècle chez des tiers, avec leur propre sens de l'organisation financière et économique supérieure si bien décrite par Fernand Braudel. Cette combinaison explique parfaitement par elle-même les résultats économiques de la Guyane Hollandaise, en particulier par comparaison avec les territoires voisins qui disposaient des même pré-conditions physiques et géographiques : Guyanes Française, Espagnole et Portugaise. On retrouvera avec le même succès ce mécanisme d'assimilation technologique associé à une croissance économique exponentielle au xx<sup>e</sup> siècle, notamment avec le Japon, qui a appliqué la recette néerlandaise d'assimilation technologique en la redéployant grâce à son propre sens de l'organisation socio-économique et financière.

# SURINAME AND ZEELAND FIFTEEN YEARS OF DUTCH MISERY ON THE WILD COAST, 1667-1682 \*

BY

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With the peace of Breda (July 1667), which ended the Second Anglo-Dutch War (1665-1667), the Dutch made an extraordinary swap. Under the terms of the treaty, England kept New York, former *Nieuw Amsterdam* [New Amsterdam], but returned St. Eustatius and Saba to the Dutch and ceded Suriname. England also gave up her longstanding claim to Pulau Run in the Banda Island <sup>1</sup>. In fact, New York was exchanged for Suriname. Nowadays, one would think the Dutch were insane : to trade the “Big Apple” for Suriname, but at that time New Amsterdam was on the fringe of the Dutch empire and the main activity of the colony was the export of beaver. The scattered settlements in New Netherland were hardly viable <sup>2</sup>. Suriname, on the other hand, was a potentially rich sugar colony and the English settlement of Torarica, later called *Zandpunt*, was a thriving trading post on the Wild Coast <sup>3</sup>. It was unfortunate for the Zeelanders, who governed the territory for the next fifteen years, that they were not able to make a success of it.

\* I would like to thank W. Flayhart III, H. den Heijer, L. Priester and C. Viallé for their help and comment.

<sup>1</sup> J. I. ISRAEL, *Dutch Primacy in World Trade, 1585-1740*, Oxford, 1989, p. 279.

<sup>2</sup> O. A. RINK, *Holland on the Hudson. An economic and social history of Dutch New York*, Ithaca/Londen, 1987<sup>2</sup> and H. DEN HEIJER, *De Geschiedenis van de Westindische Compagnie*, Zutphen, 1994, pp. 81-88.

<sup>3</sup> G. WARREN, *An Impartial Description of Surinam*, London, 1667. I used the Dutch translation : *Een onpartydige beschrijvinge van Surinam, gelegen op het vaste landt van Guiana in Afrika [sic] : mitsgaders een verhael van alle vreemde beesten, vogels, visschen, slangen ende wormen : gelijk mede van de gewooneheden ende manieren van dese colonie ; ende overgeset uyt het Engels*, Amsterdam, 1671, p. 15. See : L. D. PETIT, *Bibliotheek van Nederlandsche pamfletten. Verzamelingen van de bibliotheek van Joannes Thysius en de bibliotheek der Rijks-universiteit te Leiden*, 's-Gravenhage, 1882-1925, no. 3,711.

The Dutch and the English had been active on the Wild Coast for many years<sup>4</sup>. Around 1651 an Englishman named Francis, Lord Willoughby of Parham, and several experienced planters left Barbados for Suriname. They created the first permanent English settlement in Guiana. On the eve of the Dutch acquisition, the colony of Suriname contained Fort Paramaribo, the town of Torarica with some one hundred dwellings, dozens of sugar plantations, a sugar mill and an estimated population of four thousand : one thousand free burghers and three thousand slaves<sup>5</sup>. In the Dutch Republic the people of the Province of Zeeland had been interested in Guiana since the end of the sixteenth century. In 1616 Aert Adriaensz. van Groenewegen built Fort *Kijkoveral* on the banks of the Essequibo River for Jan de Moor, a merchant from Flushing, which became the nucleus of a permanent settlement<sup>6</sup>.

In 1621 the Dutch West-India Company (WIC) was established. The management of the Company involved five *kamers* [chambers] each located in a city. Each chamber had a share in the activity of the Company : Amsterdam four/ninths, Zeeland two/ninths and the three smaller chambers each one/ninth. The Zeeland chamber was not named after one particular city, but after the province, because the three main towns of the island of Walcheren and the city of Tholen participated in the chamber<sup>7</sup>. In its charter the Company had a monopoly on all trade and shipping in the Atlantic : West-Africa, North and South-America and the West-Indies. Because of this huge and complex area, some regions were the exclusive responsibility of one of the chambers. The Wild Coast was assigned to the Zeeland chamber.

During the Eighty Years' War (1568-1648) the States General, the Dutch government, used the WIC as an instrument in their struggle against the King of Spain. As a result, the Company lacked the capital and resources to invest in factories and plantations. To develop settlements, the WIC, including the Zeeland chamber, granted private entrepreneurs concessions to establish colonies. On the Wild Coast and in the Caribbean several private Zeeland colonies and factories came into being ; for instance those in Berbice and on the Pomeroon River. The island of Tobago was known as New Walcheren<sup>8</sup>. All kinds of

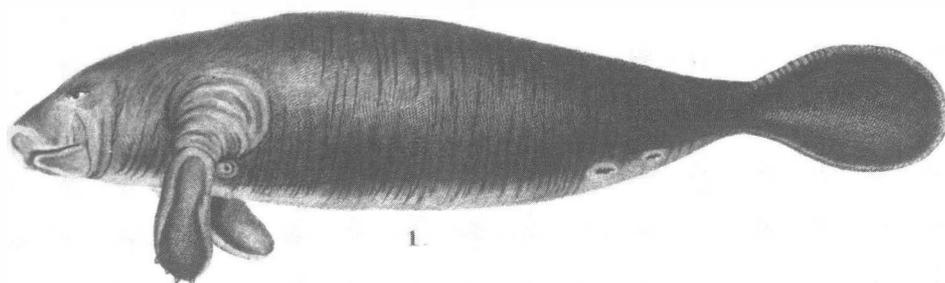
<sup>4</sup> J. LORIMER, "The failure of the English Guiana ventures 1595-1667 and James I's foreign policy", in : *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, XXI (1993), 1, pp. 1-30 and G. EDMUNDSON, "The Dutch in Western Guiana", in : *The English Historical Review*, XVI (1901), pp. 640-675.

<sup>5</sup> G. W. VAN DER MEIDEN, *Betwist Bestuur. Een eeuw strijd om de macht in Suriname, 1651-1753*, Amsterdam, 1987, pp. 19-20.

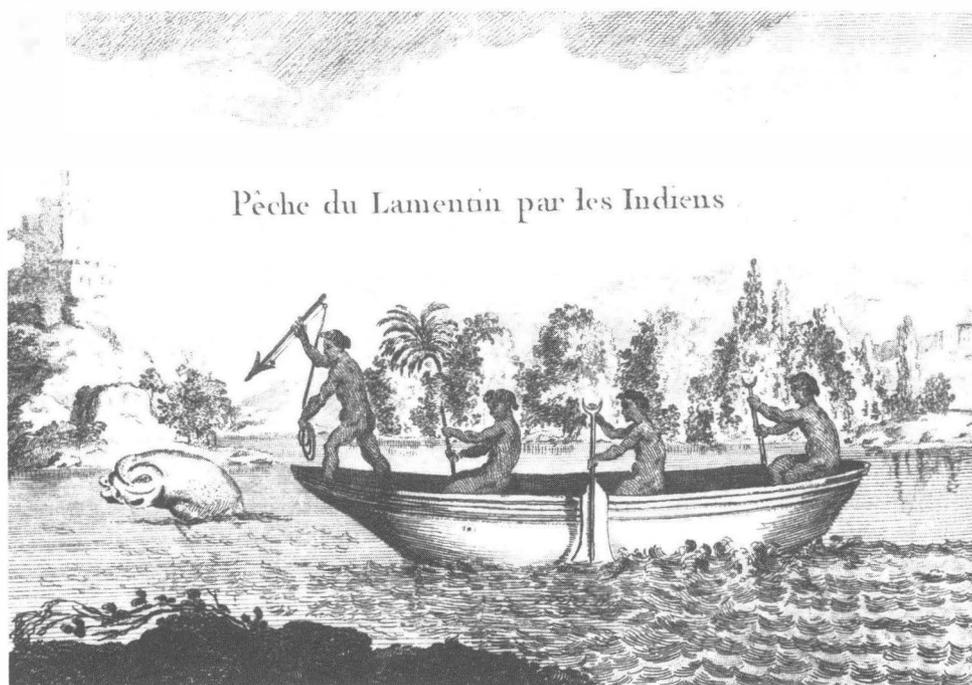
<sup>6</sup> P. M. NETSCHER, *Geschiedenis van de koloniën Essequibo, Demerary en Berbice, van de vestiging der Nederlanders aldaar tot op onzen tijd*, 's-Gravenhage, 1888, pp. 29-44 and EDMUNDSON, "The Dutch in Western Guiana", pp. 651ff.

<sup>7</sup> DEN HEIJER, *De geschiedenis van de WIC*, pp. 28-34 ; ISRAEL, *Dutch Primacy*, pp. 156-159 ; and D. ROOS, *Zeeuwen en de Westindische Compagnie*, Hulst, 1992.

<sup>8</sup> C. Ch. GOSLINGA, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and on the Wild Coast, 1580-1680*, Assen, 1971, pp. 433ff. and EDMUNDSON, "The Dutch in Western Guiana", passim.



*Zeekoei* or manatee (*Manatus latirostris* Harl.).  
A. Fleischmann, *Lehrbuch der Zoologie* (Wiesbaden 1898) plate CCCLXXIX.



Indians hunting manatees.  
J. N. Bellin, *Description géographique de la Guiana* (Paris 1763) p. 65.

private enterprises were active in the territory of the WIC. This is one of the main differences between the WIC and that other Dutch company : the Dutch East-India Company (VOC).

During the Second Anglo-Dutch War, the States of Zeeland, the government of the Province of Zeeland<sup>9</sup>, proposed an attack on the English possessions in the West-Indies. This proposal was frustrated by the other provinces and in the end the States of Zeeland financed their own expedition. Under the command of Abraham Crijnssen a small fleet of seven ships and a thousand men left Zeeland for the West in 1666. They captured the English fort at Paramaribo and Suriname was theirs<sup>10</sup>. Because they had financed the expedition, the States of Zeeland claimed the rule over Suriname, although this was disputed by the WIC, the States General, the States of Holland, and the city council of Amsterdam<sup>11</sup>.

Right from the start, the Zeeland authorities were not capable of maintaining and supporting Suriname, although Governor Philips Julius Lichtenbergh noted in 1670 that the colony was in good shape and he was optimistic about its prospects :

*“Vorders is de colonie in goeden staet, ende is niet te twijffelen, in cas godt sijnen segen daer over gelieve te geven, ende eenichsints de handt aen deselve gehouden wort, of sal in korte jaren floreren [...]”*<sup>12</sup>.

When Daniel van Ommen, a merchant from Amsterdam, arrived in Suriname that same year, he noticed something completely different. There was hardly any (economic) activity going on and the barrels of his ship *De Eendracht* could not be coopered<sup>13</sup>. The next year, 47 inhabitants of Suriname complained about the bad situation in the colony. In addition to a declining population, there was a shortage of horses to operate the sugar mills<sup>14</sup>. As a result, Lichtenbergh had to resign as Governor and was repatriated<sup>15</sup>. After that, the situation only deteriorated further. When the new governor Johannes Heinsius arrived in August 1679, he found the colony in complete disarray. Since the summer of 1678 the Indians had revolted and a guerilla warfare was going on. Several plantations had been destroyed and dozens of settlers and soldiers had been killed. The plantations were deserted and the remaining Europeans were under

<sup>9</sup> The Dutch Republic comprised of seven sovereign provinces, each with its own government.

<sup>10</sup> J. C. M. WARNSINCK, *Abraham Crijnssen : de verovering van Suriname en zijn aanslag op Virginië in 1667*, Amsterdam, 1936 (Werken uitgegeven door de Commissie voor Zeegechiedenis, Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen, IV).

<sup>11</sup> VAN DER MEIDEN, *Betwist bestuur*, pp. 23 and 27-28.

<sup>12</sup> Rijksarchief in Zeeland, Middelburg (RAZ), archief van de Staten van Zeeland (SvZ) no. 2,035-216 (Apr. 30, 1670), Lichtenbergh to *Gecommitteerde Raden*.

<sup>13</sup> Gemeentearchief Amsterdam (GAA), notarieelarchief (NA) no. 3,929, fol. 7 (Jan. 7, 1671).

<sup>14</sup> RAZ, SvZ no. 2,035-225 (Nov. 3, 1671), request of 47 inhabitants of Suriname.

<sup>15</sup> VAN DER MEIDEN, *Betwist Bestuur*, p. 28.

siege in Paramaribo. Heinsius asked the States of Zeeland to send new troops <sup>16</sup>. What had happened ?

After the Dutch conquest, the British planters and their slaves, at the special request of King Charles II, were allowed to leave <sup>17</sup>. By 1668, the most prominent planters had already left Suriname and within another three years 105 families, 517 persons in all, left the colony. The year 1675 was the worst when 250 whites and 980 slaves left. In 1680, 102 persons, white and black, moved and only 39 English remained behind <sup>18</sup>. This exodus had a devastating effect on the size of the population, especially because not enough new Dutch settlers arrived.

In Zeeland, but in Holland also, all kinds of initiatives were taken to convince the population that Suriname was the place to go to. Three years after the conquest, the Zeeland authorities tried to attract people to settle in Suriname. They offered a plot in the colony and freedom from taxes for several years. In the roads of Walcheren three ships were ready to transport the settlers to the New World and on arrival a bonus of thirty guilders <sup>19</sup> was offered <sup>20</sup>. Later, the States of Zeeland also offered a premium in sugar <sup>21</sup>. On February 1, 1679, Charles Tavenier, master cooper, and Jacob Danne and his son were granted free passage to the colony and each adult 300 pounds of sugar. The twelve-year-old son was granted 150 pounds of sugar. They had to stay in Suriname for at least four years <sup>22</sup>.

Despite these measures it was hard to find personnel and all kinds of private initiatives were taken to hire a workforce. Agents of planters in Holland contracted craftsmen such as carpenters, *molenmakers* [mill builders], coopers, tailors, bricklayers etc. <sup>23</sup>. For some specialized jobs foreigners were hired. Jan Vignon, a merchant from Amsterdam, contracted the master of a ship sailing

<sup>16</sup> RAZ, SvZ no. 2,035-308 (Dec. 14, 1678), interrogation of the Indian spy Anthony Barbier ; no. 282 (Dec. 18, 1678), Thisso to Heinsius ; and *Ibid.* no. 341 (Aug. 21, 1679), Heinsius to *Gecommitteerde Raden*. R. BUVE, "Gouverneur Johannes Heinsius. De rol van Van Aerssen's voorganger in de Surinaamse indianenoorlog, 1678-1680", in : *Nieuwe West-Indische Gids*, 45 (1966), pp. 14-25 and J. M. VAN DER LINDE, *Surinaamse suikerheren en hun kerk. Plantagekolonie en handelskerk te tijde van Johannes Basseliers, predikant en planter in Suriname, 1667-1689*, Wageningen, 1966, p. 42.

<sup>17</sup> RAZ, SvZ no. 2,035-216 (Apr. 4, 1670), Lichtenbergh to *Gecommitteerde Raden*.

<sup>18</sup> *Calendar of State Papers. Colonial Series, America and the West Indies, 1661-1668*, nos. 1,710, 1,785 and 1,814 ; *Cal. St. Pap., 1669-1674*, no. 734 ; *Cal. St. Pap., 1675-1676*, nos. 675 and 934 ; and *Cal. St. Pap., 1677-1680*, no. 1,291.

<sup>19</sup> In Zeeland the currency used was the Flemish pound = six guilders.

<sup>20</sup> "Waerschouwing" (July 5, 1669), cited by VAN DER LINDE, *Surinaamse suikerheren*, pp. 51-52.

<sup>21</sup> RAZ, SvZ no. 680, "placcaet Suriname" (June 27, 1678).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* no. 682 (Feb. 1, 1679).

<sup>23</sup> GAA, NA no. 2,230, fols. 920/1 (July 24, 1669) ; no. 2,903 fol. 5 (June 30, 1671) ; no. 2,904 (July 10, 1671) ; no. 3,043, fol. 123 (Oct. 12, 1671) ; no. 4,020, fol. 403 (Sept. 12, 1676) ; and RAZ, SvZ no. 667 (Jan. 6, 1671), no. 680 (Aug. 27, 1678), no. 682 (Feb. 1, 1679) and *ibid.* (Feb. 9, 1679).

to Norway to enlist five or six “boys”, aged between 18 and 20 years, to work as lumberjacks in the service of his brother Daniel Vignon in Suriname<sup>24</sup>. Logging was big business<sup>25</sup> and in 1677 Jan Jacobsen was allowed to operate a sawmill in the colony for a period of nine years<sup>26</sup>. In Amsterdam, the merchant and planter Pieter Pistorius was given a contract to enlist people for Suriname, in order to enlarge the population of the colony<sup>27</sup>. All these initiatives failed and during the 1670s the number of European settlers continued to decline.

In 1671, it was estimated that the European population numbered 800, including Jews, women and children<sup>28</sup>. Earlier, when the Dutch lost Brazil to the Portuguese in 1654, a portion of the Sephardic Jews had left Brazil and moved to Guiana. They established a small but thriving community at Jodensavanne<sup>29</sup>. The new governor Johannes Heinsius noted on his arrival in 1679, that in the last twelve years the number of white people had decreased from 1,500 to less than 500, of whom 400 were settlers<sup>30</sup>. After that, the European population increased slowly and five years later the number of people who paid a poll tax was 652 (see Table I).

For the defence of the colony a garrison was stationed in Paramaribo, for which the States of Zeeland had to pay<sup>31</sup>. In 1675, the non-English able-bodied population comprised only 125 Dutch men, 58 Jews and a garrison of 115 soldiers and four sailors<sup>32</sup>. Four years later, as a result of the skirmishes against the Indians, the number of servicemen declined to 30 and Governor Heinsius asked the States of Zeeland to dispatch immediately 300 or 400 new troops, otherwise Suriname, just as Brazil two decades previously, would be lost<sup>33</sup>. It took until April 1680 before the first hundred or so soldiers arrived

<sup>24</sup> GAA, NA no. 2,230, fols. 933-935 (1669).

<sup>25</sup> Hendrik Hagelis, a merchant from Amsterdam, and Claes Bruyningh Wildelandt, *Politieke Raad* in Suriname, exported *letterhout* from Suriname to Amsterdam. GAA, NA no. 4,088 (Nov. 17, 1678).

<sup>26</sup> RAZ, SvZ no. 679 (Oct. 19, 1677).

<sup>27</sup> GAA, NA no. 2,002, fol. 209 (Oct. 21, 1678), *ibid.*, fol. 473 (Nov. 22, 1678) and no. 4,088 (Nov. 29, 1678).

<sup>28</sup> RAZ, SvZ no. 2,035-225 (Nov. 3, 1671), request of 47 inhabitants of Suriname.

<sup>29</sup> G. БОИМ, “The first Sephardic cemeteries in South-America and in the West-Indies”, in : *Studia Rosenthaliana*, XXV (1991), pp. 3-14; S. OPPENHEIM, “An early Jewish Colony in Western Guiana, 1658-1666, and its Relations to the Jews in Surinam, Cayenne, and Tobago”, in : *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* (PAJHS), XVI (1907), pp. 95-186; ID., “An early Jewish Colony in Western Guiana : Supplemental Data”, in : *PAJHS*, XVII (1909), pp. 53-70; and L. L. E. RENS, *The Historical and Social Background of Surinam's Negro-English*, Amsterdam, 1953, pp. 20-28.

<sup>30</sup> Letter from Heinsius (May 3, 1679) cited by VAN DER LINDE, *Surinaamse suikerheren*, p. 42 and RAZ, SvZ no. 2,035-341 (Aug. 21, 1679), Heinsius to *Gecommitteerde Raden*.

<sup>31</sup> RAZ, Rekenkamer C, nos. 1,270ff. (rekening en te lande), “Summa Suriname”.

<sup>32</sup> F. E. MULERT, “De bewoners van Suriname in 1675”, in : *De Navorscher*, 66 (1917), pp. 401-406.

<sup>33</sup> RAZ, SvZ no. 2,035-341 (Aug. 8, 1679), Heinsius to *Gecommitteerde Raden*.

TABLE I  
Inhabitants of Suriname in 1684

<i>Europeans</i>	Non-Jews	Jews	Total	
males	362	105	467	652
females	+ 127	+ 58	+ 185	
total	489	163	652	
<i>Slaves</i>	Owned by non-Jews	Owned by Jews	Total	
black males	1299	543	1842	
black females	+ 955	+ 429	+ 1384	
total	2254	972	3226	
red males	29	10	39	
red females	+ 54	+ 13	+ 67	
total	83	23	106	
total	2337	995	3332	+ 3332
Total				3984

Source : ARA, SS no. 213, fol. 204, "Alle personen die hoofd- en ackergeld betaald hebben, 1684".

in a WIC ship at Paramaribo. Service in Suriname was not popular and the soldiers had been recruited from 25 different companies all over Zeeland <sup>34</sup>. Not long after the arrival of the troops the colony was pacified. Pieter Muenicx noted in 1683 that the colony was prospering and that the rebellion of the Indians had been suppressed ; there was only a shortage of slaves <sup>35</sup>.

From the beginning of Dutch rule and the consequent exodus of the English planters, the number of slaves had been declining. Because the English had been allowed to take their black property with them, the number of black slaves fell from three thousand in 1667 to 2,500 in 1671 and kept on dropping <sup>36</sup>. In those years the WIC, which held the monopoly on the slave trade from Africa to America, was in disarray and finally went bankrupt in 1674, bringing all activities to a standstill <sup>37</sup>. As a result, during the period of 1668-1679 only fourteen Company slave ships brought 5,000 slaves to Suriname <sup>38</sup>. This number

<sup>34</sup> RAZ, SvZ no. 683 (Oct. 26, 1679), "Accord met de Westindische Comp [...]"; *ibid.* (Nov. 14, 1679), "Soldaten na Suriname [...]"; *ibid.* (Nov. 23, 1679), "Lt. Harman de Huybert als Capitein met 50 man naar Suriname"; and *ibid.* (Dec. 10, 1679), "Uit yder Comp. een soldaet gelicht, om naar Suriname te senden"; BUVE, "Gouverneur Johannes Heinsius", p. 21.

<sup>35</sup> Algemeen Rijksarchief, The Hague (ARA), archief van de Sociëteit van Suriname (SS) no. 212 (Nov 16, 1683), Muenicx to directors.

<sup>36</sup> RAZ, SvZ no. 2,035-225 (Nov. 3, 1671), request of 47 inhabitants of Suriname.

<sup>37</sup> DEN HEIJER, *Geschiedenis van de WIC*, pp. 107-108.

<sup>38</sup> J. M. POSTMA, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1600-1825*, Cambridge, 1990, p. 186, table 8.2.

was not quite enough to fulfil the demand. Apart from the exodus of the English planters taking their slaves with them, a high mortality rate was a second cause for an intense demand for slaves. In 1706 a planter explained that on average a plantation lost six slaves a year<sup>39</sup>. Considering this, the actual demand for slaves during the period of 1668-1679 was probably between 6,000 and 10,000<sup>40</sup>, thus far higher than the 5,000 that entered the colony, although interlopers probably also brought some slaves to the colony<sup>41</sup>. No wonder Pieter Muenicx was complaining about a shortage of slaves. However, from 1683 onward, thousands of slaves were being poured into the colony<sup>42</sup> and already in 1684 3,226 black slaves were in Suriname (see Table 1).

To compensate for the declining numbers of black slaves, the Dutch made extensive use of "red" slaves : Indians. In 1671 they were already using 500 of them<sup>43</sup>. The following years, demands for red slaves increased as a result of the declining numbers of black slaves and the inability of the WIC to bring Africans to the New World. The use of red slaves was the main reason for the Indian uprising. The Dutch learned their lesson well and in 1684 only one hundred red slaves, mostly women, were in their service (see Table 1).

Besides slaves, the plantation economy of Suriname needed food and horses to power the sugar mills. The main supplier of this commodity were the English colonies in North-America, although they also came from Europe<sup>44</sup>. Jonas Jonsz. Swal from Sweden was hired by the factor of Aron da Silvato, merchant from Suriname, as a groom to look after the horses during the voyage to the colony<sup>45</sup>. It was no luxury to have specialized personnel to look after this highly vulnerable cargo. In February 1683 the *Hopewell* from Boston arrived in Paramaribo ; of the original 41 horses, only three survived the journey<sup>46</sup>.

Food was always in short supply in the colonies, especially meat. The main source of meat was the *zeekoe* [manatee]. Shiploads of manatee meat were exported from the Guianas and Brazil to the West-Indies<sup>47</sup>. In Suriname the

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 184.

<sup>40</sup> In those years, there were between 100 and 150 plantations in Suriname.

<sup>41</sup> ARA, archief van de Staten-Generaal (SG) no. 5,769, II (liassen WIC), C. Quina to States General (Aug. 6, 1676) and no. 5,770, I (liassen WIC), C. Quina to States General (March 21, 1679).

<sup>42</sup> POSTMA, *Atlantic Slave Trade*, pp. 356-357, appendix 5.

<sup>43</sup> RAZ, SvZ no. 2,035-225 (Nov. 3, 1671), request of 47 inhabitants of Suriname.

<sup>44</sup> C. Ch. GOSLINGA, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and in the Guianas, 1680-1791*, Assen, 1985, p. 320.

<sup>45</sup> GAA, NA no. 3,589, fol. 543 (Dec. 8, 1671).

<sup>46</sup> ARA, SS no. 212, fol. 21 (Feb. 5, 1683). In 1678, the *Hopewell* from London arrived from Suriname in Amsterdam. GAA, NA no. 4,699, fol. 95 (Aug. 23, 1678).

<sup>47</sup> T. J. O'SHEA, "Manatees. These giant aquatic grazers outchewed their rivals in the New World. Now humans, their sole enemy, hold the key to their survival", in : *Scientific American*, July 1994, pp. 50-55, there p. 52 and C. DE JONG, "De zeekoevangst in Guyana in vroeger eeuwen. Manatee hunts in Guiana in past centuries", in : *De Surinaamse landbouw*, 9 (1961), pp. 93-100.

Indians supplied the garrison of Paramaribo with manatee meat<sup>48</sup>, but the Dutch were also active in this trade. In 1663, David Nassi, a merchant from Amsterdam, contracted Master Joris Govertse of the *Viscorf* [Fish basket] to hunt for manatees in Guiana and to sell the meat in Suriname<sup>49</sup>. Because the supplies of the garrison were running low, Governor Lichtenbergh ordered a ship to sail to the Amazon River and hunt for the mammals<sup>50</sup>. However, not South-America, but New England was the main supplier of food for Suriname<sup>51</sup>.

Before Johannes Heinsius left for Suriname, he signed a major contract with Cornelis & William Darvall, merchants from Amsterdam and New York, for the supply of food to the colony. Every six months they should deliver provisions worth up to 11,500 guilders. In exchange, Heinsius would ship sugar to New England<sup>52</sup>. Sugar, together with its residue molasses, was used for the production of rum. Distilleries mushroomed in New England and their proliferation was so great that the government had to take action against the innkeepers who had been selling beer watered with the cheap sugar drink<sup>53</sup>. For Suriname, sugar export was the main reason for existence.

The dwindling numbers of slaves and Europeans had a negative effect on the number of plantations and consequently on sugar production. While a map made in 1667 listed 175 plantations, after most English planters had left the colony, the number of plantations declined to 107 in 1671, of which only 52 had a working sugar mill<sup>54</sup>. As the Dutch themselves had no experience in the business of cultivation, a lot of the plantations went into the hands of Jewish planters<sup>55</sup>, but during the 1670s a wide variety of Dutch investors became involved in Suriname. In 1678 Gillis van Roosbeke, Haack Freutier and G. van Visvliet, all three from Zeeland, owned a plantation<sup>56</sup>. Jan Vignon inherited the plantation of his deceased brother Daniel<sup>57</sup>. Elsie Wijntjes, widow

<sup>48</sup> RAZ, SvZ no. 2,035-105 (Aug. 2, 1670), Lichtenbergh to *Gecommitteerde Raden*.

<sup>49</sup> GAA, NA no. 1,542, fol. 65-67 (May 10, 1663), cited by DE JONG, "De zeekoevangst in Guyana", p. 99.

<sup>50</sup> RAZ, SvZ no. 2,035-105 (Aug. 2, 1670), Lichtenbergh to *Gecommitteerde Raden*.

<sup>51</sup> WARREN, *Een onpartydige beschrijvinge van Surinam*, p. 9 and GOSLINGA, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and in the Guianas, 1680-1791*, p. 320.

<sup>52</sup> GAA, NA no. 4,316, fol. 303 (May 14, 1678).

<sup>53</sup> J. F. SHEPERD and G. M. WALTON, *Shipping, Maritime Trade, and the Economic Development of Colonial North America*, Cambridge Mass., 1972, p. 49; B. BAILYN, *The New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century*, Cambridge Mass., 1955, p. 129; and GOSLINGA, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and in the Guianas, 1680-1791*, p. 320.

<sup>54</sup> RAZ, SvZ no. 2,035-225 (Nov. 3, 1671), request of 47 inhabitants of Suriname and H. C. VAN RENSELAAR, "Oude kaarten van Suriname", in: *Nieuwe West-Indische Gids*, 45 (1966), p. 11.

<sup>55</sup> RENS, *The Historical and Social Background*, p. 27.

<sup>56</sup> RAZ, SvZ no. 680, "Gillis van Roosbeke, plantage Suriname" (March 29, 1678).

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, Jan Vignon, "Plantage in Suriname" (July 12, 1678). Probably Jan Vignon also inherited his father's plantation. GAA, NA no. 1,562, fol. 555 (Sept. 4, 1677).

of Pieter Hardenberg, owned one. She sent her son to Suriname to look after her property<sup>58</sup>. G. de Backer, *vendumeester* [auctioneer] from Flushing owned a plantation in cooperation with Johan Basseliers, a minister in Suriname<sup>59</sup>. Basseliers was one of the most prominent planters of the colony<sup>60</sup>. Probably the most famous, or infamous and notorious, were the Muenicx brothers. In 1678, the afore-mentioned Pieter Muenicx fell in political disgrace and had to resign as *Gecommitteerde Raad* [member of the government of Zeeland]. His ambition to become governor of Suriname was frustrated and he became only *raadfisikaal* [prosecutor]. Earlier, in 1676, *Stadhouder* Willem III had dismissed Gilles Muenicx as mayor of Middelburg. Two years later, Gillis also had to resign as director of the VOC. Later, he joined his brother in Suriname, and became *Raad van politie* [member of the police council]. They owned the *Zoetendaal* plantation<sup>61</sup>. Because of these new planters, the number of plantations increased and at the end of the Zeeland period there were some 150<sup>62</sup>.

How large the sugar production was during the Zeeland period, is unknown. But one thing is clear: almost from the start, sugar production was declining<sup>63</sup>. In 1668 two ships laden with sugar from Suriname arrived in Zeeland and a merchant complained:

“The amount of sugar which has come to Zeeland from Suriname is not nearly as great as we had first been told, and seems to be about 400,000 Lb [...]”<sup>64</sup>. Without doubt, a part of this cargo was the spoils of victory. At first, Crijnsen demanded 500,000 Lbs sugar from the English, but in the end settled for 100,000 Lbs<sup>65</sup>. The 400,000 Lbs was a tiny fraction of the total productive capacity of the colony. In 1683, fourteen or fifteen Dutch ships left Suriname with some four million pounds of sugar<sup>66</sup>. A tenth of this amount was sold by the Zeeland chamber of the WIC<sup>67</sup>.

<sup>58</sup> GAA, NA no. 4,305, fol. 204 (Nov. 17, 1676).

<sup>59</sup> GAA, NA no. 4,083 (Nov. 6, 1676)

<sup>60</sup> VAN DER LINDE, *Surinaamse suikerheren*, pp. 73-77.

<sup>61</sup> VAN DER MEIDEN, *Betwist bestuur*, p. 36; M. VAN DER BIJL, *Idee en interest. Voorgeschiedenis, verloop en achtergronden van de politieke twisten in Zeeland en vooral in Middelburg tussen 1702 en 1715*, Groningen, 1981, p. 353; and M. G. WILDEMAN, “Eenige acta betreffende de plantage Zoetendaal in Suriname”, in: *Navorscher*, 65 (1916), pp. 69-76.

<sup>62</sup> VAN RENSELAAR, *Oude kaarten van Suriname*, p. 11 and VAN DER LINDE, *Surinaamse suikerheren*, p. 54.

<sup>63</sup> GOSLINGA, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and in the Guianas, 1680-1791*, p. 313.

<sup>64</sup> H. ROSEVEARE (ed.), *Markets and Merchants of the late Seventeenth Century. The Marescoe David Letters, 1668-1680*, Oxford, 1987, pp. 68 en 232.

<sup>65</sup> VAN DER MEIDEN, *Betwist Bestuur*, p. 22.

<sup>66</sup> R. BIJLSMA, “Suriname’s Handelsbeweging, 1683-1712”, in: *De West-Indische Gids*, 1 (1919-1920), II, pp. 48-42 and GOSLINGA, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and in the Guianas, 1680-1791*, p. 315.

<sup>67</sup> J. J. REESSE, *De suikerhandel van Amsterdam van het begin der 17de eeuw tot 1813*, Haarlem, 1908, p. CXXI.

During the fifteen years of the Zeeland rule, at least 96 ships, with a total carrying capacity of 5,455 *last* (one last is two tons) got permission to sail to Suriname<sup>68</sup>. So, on average, fifteen ships of 55 *last* left the Dutch Republic for Suriname yearly. In that respect, the year 1683 was, with fifteen Dutch ships, not exceptional and probably illustrative for the previous years. During the period of June 17, 1682, and December 31, 1683, a total of 39 ships arrived in Suriname. Only one third were private ships from Zeeland (14); another third were private ships from Holland (14), mostly from Amsterdam. The rest were three ships from New England, one from the WIC, and the other seven came from Guinea, Dublin, Brazil, Barbados, Curaçao, Berbice and one unknown<sup>69</sup>. Of the hundred or so ships that left the Dutch Republic for Suriname during the Zeeland years, many came from Holland instead of Zeeland<sup>70</sup>. Dozens of Amsterdam merchants invested in plantations and were heavily involved in the Suriname trade<sup>71</sup>. The Amsterdam sugar-refining industry was the largest in Europe<sup>72</sup>. Although Middelburg also had sugar-refineries, only a small amount of Suriname sugar was sold by the Zeeland chamber of the WIC<sup>73</sup> and most of this sugar went to Amsterdam; directly or via Zeeland<sup>74</sup>.

Although the States of Zeeland governed Suriname, Zeeland merchants had no monopoly on Suriname trade and shipping. The significant involvement of Amsterdam merchants in the Suriname trade and the fact that the States of Zeeland sold the colony in 1682 to the *Sociëteit van Suriname*<sup>75</sup>, a company dominated by Amsterdam merchants, suggests that during the Zeeland years, trade was already dominated by Amsterdam merchants<sup>76</sup>. Not only in that respect did Zeeland not benefit from Suriname.

The colony cost the States of Zeeland a great deal of money and generated hardly any income (see Table 2). After Zeeland had financed the expedition of Crijnsen, costing some 200,000 guilders, expenses continued to rise because

<sup>68</sup> RAZ, SvZ no. 2,036, Account of Joost van Breem and *ibid.*; no. 2,035-478/501, "Lastgeld geheven over de schepen varende naar Suriname, 2 Feb. 1679-13 Okt. 1682".

<sup>69</sup> ARA, SS no. 212, fol. 21, "Lijste van alle de schepen die Suriname hebben aangedaan, 1682-1683".

<sup>70</sup> See note 68.

<sup>71</sup> GAA, NA, no. 2,243, fols. 309-311 (Jan. 31, 1674); no. 3,777, fols. 279-281 (June 14, 1674); no. 2,908B, fol. 1438 (Oct. 30, 1674); no. 3,221, fol. (Apr. 9, 1675); no. 4,698, fols. 198-199 (Aug. 27, 1677); nr. 4,085 (Oct. 3, 1677); no. 4,085 (Oct. 4, 1677); no. 4,087, fol. 951 (Aug. 20, 1678); no. 3,236, fol. 453 (Oct. 28, 1678); and no. 2,002, fol. 473 (Nov. 22, 1678).

<sup>72</sup> ISRAEL, *Dutch Primacy*, p. 265 and REESSE, *De suikerhandel van Amsterdam*, pp. 30-31.

<sup>73</sup> REESSE, *De suikerhandel van Amsterdam*, p. CXXI.

<sup>74</sup> For a shipment of Suriname sugar from Zeeland to Amsterdam see: GAA, NA no. 4,085 (Sept. 4, 1677).

<sup>75</sup> The *Sociëteit* was owned by the city of Amsterdam, the Amsterdam chamber of the WIC and the Van Aerssen van Sommelsdijck family. VAN DER MEIDEN, *Betwist Bestuur*, passim.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

TABLE 2

Receipts and expenditures by the States of Zeeland related to Suriname, 1667-1687 (in guilders)

Revenues		Expenditures	
Sale of sugar	53,310	Costs <sup>77a</sup>	626,310
Lastage	32,076		
Slaves <sup>77</sup>	4,320		
Sale of the colony	248,292		
Result	<u>-/- 288,312</u>		
Total	626,310		<u>626,310</u>

Source : RAZ, Rekenkamer C, nos. 1,270-1,640 (rekeningen te lande), "Summa Suriname".

they had to bear the costs of the garrison in Paramaribo. After the first eleven years, Suriname had cost the Zeeland government 480,000 guilders. In return, they received only a small amount as income. From the money for the sugar confiscated by Crijnsen, they received only 53,310 guilders. Their main source of income was a tax on shipping. Till 1678, they received only 16,200 guilders from this tax. Around 1676-1678 the deficit had risen to 400,000 guilders. No wonder that the States of Zeeland tried to sell the colony during these years <sup>78</sup>. After lengthy discussions and mediation by Willem van Nassau-Odijck, the representative of *Stadhouder* Willem III in Zeeland, they eventually sold Suriname to the *Sociëteit van Suriname* for 250,000 guilders <sup>79</sup>, of which the States of Zeeland received 248,292 guilders. The rest of the money Odijck kept as a commission <sup>80</sup>. Up till 1687, including the cost of the sale, Suriname had cost the States of Zeeland more than 288,000 guilders. For the States of Zeeland, Suriname was a financial disaster. In addition, the Zeeland merchants benefited only modestly from Suriname, most of the trade went via Amsterdam. After fifteen years of misery, the States of Zeeland were glad to get rid of the colony.

<sup>77</sup> Profits from the sale of at least 42 slaves at Curaçao, captured during a Dutch raid on St. Eustatius in 1673. RAZ, Rekenkamer C, no. 1,380 (rekeningen te lande), "Summa Suriname"; C. DE WAARD, *De Zeeuwsche expeditie naar de West onder Cornelis Evertsen den Jonge, 1672-1674*, 's-Gravenhage, 1928 (Werken uitgegeven door de Linschoten-Vereniging, XXX), pp. 31, 108 and 123; and D. G. SHOMETTE and R. D. HASLACH, *Raid on America. The Dutch Naval Campaign of 1672-1674*, Columbia, 1988, pp. 116 and 120.

<sup>77a</sup> The main expenditures were on military personnel, ammunition, guns and food.

<sup>78</sup> *Notulen van de Staten van Zeeland*, (1676) Dec. 9 and *Ibid.* (1677) Apr. 5.

<sup>79</sup> VAN DER MEIDEN, *Betwist bestuur*, pp. 31-34.

<sup>80</sup> For the details of this transaction see : RAZ, Rekenkamer C, no. 1,640 (rekeningen te lande) fol. 43<sup>v</sup>. The States of Zeeland did not forget this inordinate charge. After the death of Willem III in 1702, they removed him from office. VAN DER BIJL, *Idee en Interest*, pp. 97-98.

# CURAÇAO, A DUTCH FACTORY IN THE CARIBBEAN

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In the 17th and 18th centuries, a nation's wealth was believed to be closely bound up with its place in the international political arena. Both power and riches were considered to be dependent upon a favourable balance in its international commerce, and this balance depended upon the profitability of the nation's colonies<sup>1</sup>. One of the articles of faith of mercantilism was that the commerce of a nation's colonies should be closely regulated because the colonies only existed for the benefit of the metropolis. Direct colonial exports to other colonies or rival nations were absolutely forbidden. Likewise, colonial imports could only come from the metropolis, which thus monopolized trade with its overseas territories.

To some degree, the Atlantic empires functioned according to this ideal. But gradually the colonies engaged in various types of extra-imperial dealings which constantly made inroads upon the monopolies. In some cases, the nature of the goods offered made colonials and foreigners well geared to one another, as in the case of North American wheat sellers and French sugar planters. In others, metropolitan merchants made lower bids for tropical crops or were undersold by foreigners, or they were simply ousted because of their inability to meet colonial demands. In this way, particularly the Spanish colonies in the New World fell victim to enterprising outsiders. And this explains the success of Curaçao, the Dutch outpost in the Caribbean which is central in this paper.

The Dutch had first come to the Spanish colonies in the 1590s, both to fight Spain and to trade with its subjects<sup>2</sup>. Violence predominated over

<sup>1</sup> Max SAVELLE, *Empires to Nations. Expansion in America, 1713-1824*, Minneapolis and London, University of Minnesota Press and Oxford University Press, 1974, p. 48.

<sup>2</sup> Of course, individuals from the Northern Netherlands had already arrived in the 1530s. Eddy STOLS, *Gens des Pays-Bas en Amérique espagnole aux premiers siècles de la colonisation*, in: "Bulletin de l'Institut Historique Belge de Rome", XLIV (1974), p. 580.

commerce as long as the war lasted, but this was reversed after the Peace of Munster. Up to the 1660s Dutch merchants preferred to ship goods to Spanish America under Spanish colours, but when the authorities in Cádiz took action against this practice, the Dutch started shifting their activities to Curaçao. Originally conquered because of its qualities as a marine base, Curaçao was now turned into an entrepôt, a factory for the Spanish Caribbean. The island was completely dependent on imports, as hardly anything was growing there, although plantations were laid out at a great pace and by 1725 all arable land was in use<sup>3</sup>. It was not clear at the outset that the island's ground was hardly suitable for agriculture, but yields turned out to be very modest indeed. Since cattle breeding carried more weight than agriculture, all of the island's "plantations" were eventually transformed into mixed farms. Because these farms only brought in small amounts of cash, planters combined agriculture with commercial activities. The Jews among them proved to be the most industrious. Many Jewish planters became merchants and ship-owners, and made use of their assets: their control of the Spanish language, as well as their family networks across the Atlantic with various relatives acting as business associates<sup>4</sup>.

Almost every day sloops and schooners left the island of Curaçao for the foreign colonies, especially the nearby province of Caracas. Certainly before 1717, Spain's merchants and political authorities regarded Caracas as a colonial backwater, and few ships came in from Europe. In 1688, the governor of Caracas complained that not a single register ship, i.e. a ship licensed to sail

<sup>3</sup> W. E. RENKEMA, *Het Curaçaose plantagebedrijf in de 19e eeuw*, Zutphen, De Walburg Pers, 1981, pp. 15-16.

<sup>4</sup> Isaac S. and Suzanne EMMANUEL, *History of the Jews of the Netherlands Antilles*, 2 vols., Cincinatti, American Jewish Archives, 1970, I, pp. 68-70 and 143; Joh. HARTOG, *Curaçao. Van kolonie tot autonomie*, 2 vols., Aruba, 1961, I, p. 339. The planters were not the only ones who engaged in commerce. Some of the Curaçaoans who were less well-off tried to supplement their slender incomes with retail trade. They hired a bark for a single voyage, bought some articles on credit and paid for them after the return of the vessel. The capital of some of these traders was often not larger than the value of one vessel with its cargo. What is more, it was not uncommon for one sloop to have different owners. Governor Isaac Faesch to the West India Company, Curaçao, April 30, 1744. Algemeen Rijksarchief (A.R.A., The Hague), Nieuwe West-Indische Compagnie (NWIC) 591, fol. 162; EMMANUEL, *Jews of Netherlands Antilles*, I, p. 143; Testimony of James Dickinson, Curaçao, August 8, 1741: A.R.A., Oud Archief Curaçao (OAC) 811, fol. 66. There were even sailors participating in this petty trade. When Spain's coastal guards stepped up their watchfulness, the sailors' trade was a risky affair, as all commodities carried on board were lost in case of capture. The proceeds from business sealings had to supply the pittance of 10 pesos sailors earned a month and which often hardly sufficed to feed their families. Reports of pilferage also indicate that they were not to be envied. J. G. Pax and Nathaniel Ellis, delegates of the Council of Curaçao, to Governor Faesch and Council. Curaçao, September 24, 1753: A.R.A., NWIC 599, fols. 912-913. Monthly wages of the sailors are listed in: A.R.A., OAC 814, fol. 482. Reports of pilferage can be found in: Testimony of the crew of "de Mercurius". Curaçao, June 28, 1743; Testimonies of the crew of "Philadelphia", February, 27 and 28, 1765: A.R.A., OAC 814, fols. 456-457; A.R.A., OAC 893, fols. 239, 245-248, 268.

outside the fleets and galleons, had arrived in La Guaira in the last five years. Consequently, he wrote, the dire need of European manufactures is such that some people don't have any clothes left to wear<sup>5</sup>. In the early years of the 18th century, several officials requested the Crown to send ships with goods. Governor Cañas pointed out in 1712 that the province was in want of foodstuffs and textiles. In the same year the Caracas cabildo informed the Crown that the demand for food required the annual sending of a ship of 500 tons. During the War of the Spanish Succession, which by then was coming to an end, both Caracas and Maracaibo did not receive more than three ships with a total of 400 tons of goods, while 200 tons were sent to Cumaná<sup>6</sup>.

In the postwar years, metropolitan authorities took much trouble complying with Venezuelan requests. In the period 1717-1738 34 register ships left Cádiz for Caracas and 37 made the return voyage<sup>7</sup>. The register ships, however, were no panacea. Taxes and customs duties were sometimes so high, that it was impossible for a merchant to make his trade profitable. Often, they could not but ask high prices for their commodities, which made it difficult to sell the shiploads within the time that was stipulated<sup>8</sup>.

The failures of the Spanish system gave the Dutch the opportunity to compete. A good number of Amsterdam firms turned the West Indian trade into their main branch, landing European commodities on the island and loading West Indian products like cacao, tobacco and hides. Dozens of Curaçaoan agents each sent these articles to their Dutch correspondants. Shipowners instructed their captains to sell or barter their goods on Curaçao and to get in touch with the company's correspondent. If trade conditions on the island were unfavourable, the captains could go and trade in the Spanish colonies directly<sup>9</sup>. But this rarely happened. In the years 1701-1755 fourteen to fifteen ships, on average, left Curaçao for the Netherlands each year. The lowest

<sup>5</sup> Diego de Melo Maldonado, Governor of Caracas, to the Crown. Caracas, January 4, 1688 : Archivo General de Indias (AGI, Seville), Santo Domingo 197A, R1 N10.

<sup>6</sup> Analola BORGES, *El inicio del comercio internacional venezolano (siglo XVIII)*, in : "Boletín de la Academia Nacional de Historia" (Caracas), 46, no. 189 (1965), pp. 28 and 29 ; Geoffrey J. WALKER, *Spanish Politics and Imperial Trade, 1700-1789*, Bloomington and London, Indiana University Press, 1979, p. 63.

<sup>7</sup> Antonio García-Baquero GONZÁLEZ, *Cádiz y el Atlántico (1717-1778). El comercio colonial español bajo el monopolio gaditano*, Cádiz, Diputación de Cádiz, 1988, I, p. 170.

<sup>8</sup> Pedro José DE OLAVARRIAGA, *Instrucción general y particular del estado presente de la Provincia de Venezuela en los años de 1720 y 1721*, Caracas, 1965, p. 296 ; Gaspar Matheo de Acosta, Governor of Maracaibo, to the Crown. Maracaibo, May 20, 1696 : AGI, Santo Domingo 200, R3 N75.

<sup>9</sup> See, for instance, the instructions for Pieter Broeder, captain of the "Catharina Galleij" in 1728 : Gemeentearchief Amsterdam (GAA), Notarieel Archief (NA) 8637/337, Act of March 1, 1728.

number recorded for one year was seven, the largest twenty-nine <sup>10</sup>. In the second half of the century, shipping traffic between Curaçao and the United Provinces was more intensive. This was especially so in war years ; in 1783 a record high of eighty ships returned from the island <sup>11</sup>.

Which were the European goods shipped to Curaçao ? Textiles were always in great demand in the Spanish colonies, and the warehouses of Curaçao were therefore constantly filled with fabrics. Flax products and woolen material predominated, but there was a large assortment of lace and silk fabrics trimmed with gold and silver, as well. Most lace came from Brabant, while the linen were partly from Haarlem, where they either had been manufactured or bleached. The major part of the linen, however, was imported by Amsterdam merchants from Silesia, Saxony, Westphalia and France, with the French fabrics being of a higher quality and hence more expensive.

In addition to manufactures, human cargoes were shipped to the factory of Curaçao. After the Dutch lost their colony in Brazil in 1654, the slaves, which were bought by the West India Company on the Guinea Coast and in Angola, were no longer shipped to Brazil, but mainly to Curaçao. Large numbers of them were now exported to Hispaniola, Puerto Rico and, above all, Tierra Firme (La Guaira and Cumaná) <sup>12</sup>. While some Spaniards purchased their labourers on Curaçao, most slaves were sent in Dutch vessels to the Spanish shores. The slaves met an urgent need in the Spanish colonies. Spain itself did not actively take part in the slave trade, even though the economies of some of her American territories were based on slavery. The Treaty of Tordesillas (1494) precluded Spanish possessions along the African coast and made Spain dependent upon Portugal and other countries which did establish factories there. In 1662 the Spanish Crown contracted an *asiento* with two merchants from Genoa, who set up a precedent by purchasing slaves bound for Spanish America in Curaçao. The next *asentistas* followed this example <sup>13</sup>. Between 1685 and 1689 the *asiento* was in the hands of Balthasar Coymans, a Dutchman who had settled in Cádiz. It was stipulated that the slave ships should sail not to Curaçao, but directly to Havana, Portobelo, Cartagena and Veracruz. In practice, the *asiento* ships called at many other ports in the Spanish Caribbean, especially in Caracas. In smaller seaside places, where monitoring

<sup>10</sup> Only seven ships sailed in 1703, 1704 and 1754, while the number of twenty-nine sailed in 1749.

<sup>11</sup> The figures for 1759-1761 are : 49, 39 and 62 ships, respectively. F. SNAPPER, *De generale lijsten van de schepen die in de perioden 1758-1761 en 1783-1786 in Holland zijn binnengelopen*, in : "Economisch en Sociaal-Historisch Jaarboek", 42 (1979), pp. 26-44.

<sup>12</sup> In the first nine years subsequent to the Peace of Munster, at least twenty-two Dutch ships traded in Hispaniola. Jonathan I. ISRAEL, *Dutch Primacy in World Trade, 1585-1740*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1989, p. 237.

<sup>13</sup> C. Ch. GOSLINGA, *The Dutch in Caribbean and on Wild Coast, 1580-1680*, Assen, Van Gorcum, 1971, pp. 360-361.

officials were often lacking, the slaves were sold by the dozen<sup>14</sup>. The importance of these *asientos* should not be overrated. Dutch slave supplies had been larger in the early 1670s, and after these *asientos* the role of the West India Company and Curaçao was not played. During the War of the Spanish Succession, French *asentistas* bought part of their slaves in Curaçao<sup>15</sup>.

Curaçao's merchants were informed in various ways about trading opportunities. News was often provided by Spanish fishing boats, canoes or cargo ships on their way from one Spanish port to another. Likewise, information was obtained on the small Spanish islands of La Blanquilla and Los Roques, which served as meeting places for the smugglers<sup>16</sup>. Transactions were also often prearranged in a correspondence. The usual procedure for a single transaction was as follows. After a meeting between a Curaçaoan vessel and a Spanish sloop, the Dutch captain sent some of his crew members in a canoe. Thereupon the Spanish captain came on board the Dutch craft to drink some cups of soup or have something to eat with his colleague. Then the transaction could take place. The Dutch side made a payment and the Spaniards promised to put their merchandise on the beach the next day<sup>17</sup>. Curaçaoans also dealt directly with Spanish planters. On the Tuy river they would hire local pilots, who concluded business deals with planters. Planters sometimes even came aboard to collect Dutch merchandise in exchange for cacao<sup>18</sup>.

If Curaçao can be considered a factory, a place called Tucacas was made into a sub-factory. It was located near Coro in the part of the province of Caracas that was closest to Curaçao. Though most Spanish-Dutch trade took place on the central littoral of Venezuela, it was only natural for Curaçaoans to extend their activities to the region west of San Juan de los Cayos. The coastal area of Coro was unpopulated, except for a handful of Indian villages, which made it unrewarding for the authorities in Caracas to patrol. Curaçao was thus given the opportunity to establish a colony on Venezuelan soil. In the

<sup>14</sup> I. A. WRIGHT, *The Coymans asiento (1685-1689)*, in: "Bijdragen voor Vaderlandsche Geschiedenis en Oudheidkunde", 6th ser., I (1924), p. 31. Governor Diego de Melo Maldonado to king Charles II. Caracas, May 3, 1686 : AGI, Santo Domingo 744.

<sup>15</sup> Cornelis Ch. GOSLINGA, *Curaçao as a slave-trading center during the War of the Spanish Succession*, in: "Nieuwe West-Indische Gids", 52 (1977-1978), p. 8.

<sup>16</sup> Ship's log of *de Beurs van Middelburg*, October 25 and 29, 1734 : RAZ, MCC 261 ; Statement by Lucas Hansz and Roeloff Zamerberg. Curaçao, May 29, 1751 : A.R.A., OAC 825, fol. 751 ; Petition of Marcos Hernandez Marrero, deputy of the Compañía Guipuzcoana, presented to the governor of Caracas. 1759 ; Report of the Consejo de Indias. Madrid, April 21, 1761 : AGI, Caracas 924 ; Agustín Moreno Henríquez to José de Galvez. Amsterdam, February 11, 1778 : AGI, Indiferente General 2412.

<sup>17</sup> Interrogation of Pieter Taeijste. Curaçao, February 6, 1766 : A.R.A., NWIC 605, fols. 210-211 ; Testimonies of Joseph Gatardo and Ignacio de la Raza. Curaçao, August 7, 1731 : ARA, NWIC 580, fol. 483.

<sup>18</sup> Statement by Juan Lorenzo de Castro. Cumaná, September 4, 1746 : AGI, Caracas 893.

years around 1700 the small settlement grew into a place where contraband was rampant<sup>19</sup>. The multitude of narrow passages of the Yaracuy river near Tucacas were advantageous to Curaçao's trading sloops, which were elusive to Spanish vessels. Governor Cañas of Caracas reported during the War of the Spanish Succession that these sloops usually stayed in Tucacas for ten to fifteen months<sup>20</sup>. The long stay was often dictated by the presence of privateers that were fit out in Spanish ports, but in this war also in French places.

In 1710, the *alcalde ordinario* and *alférez real*, the highest official of Coro, set out for Tucacas with 150 Indian archers. They destroyed several houses and killed the cattle the Dutch had left behind. Unabashed, the Dutch returned to build a fortress and only a few years passed by before another Spanish expedition could report the presence of two hundred armed Dutchmen. The Spanish examining magistrate Olavarriga concluded in 1720 that Tucacas was the place with most transactions between the Dutch and the Spanish. He assessed annual Dutch cacao purchases at more than 12,000 *fanegas* (1.3 million pounds). The *alcalde* of Coro leading the expedition to Tucacas a decade earlier, had arrived at the same estimate. If this figure is correct, over half of all cacao shipped from Curaçao to the United Provinces in 1720 had been bought in Tucacas<sup>21</sup>. The importance of Tucacas is also evident from the numbers of Curaçaoan sloops doing business in the place. Out of 71 sloops carrying cacao to Willemstad in the second half year of 1711, 57 (80.3%) returned from Tucacas. Between July 1712 and May 1713 there were 40 out of 72 (55.6%)<sup>22</sup>.

The leadership of the colony was first with Jurriaan Exsteen alias "Jorge Cristian", who called himself the "Marquis of Tucacas". He was later succeeded

<sup>19</sup> Statement by Domingo Fernandez Galindo Yzaya, *alcalde ordinario* of Caracas. Caracas, December 24, 1676 : AGI, Santo Domingo 196, R3 N77a ; EMMANUEL, *Jews of Netherlands Antilles*, I, p. 90 ; Francisco de Berroterán, governor of Caracas, to king Charles II. Caracas, August 1, 1695 : AGI, Santo Domingo 199, R3 N29a.

<sup>20</sup> Francisco de Berroterán, governor of Caracas, to king Charles II. Caracas, August 1, 1695 : AGI, Santo Domingo 199, R3 N29a ; Celestino Andrés ARAUZ MONFANTE, *El contrabando holandés en el Caribe durante la primera mitad del siglo XVIII*, 2 vols., Caracas, Academia Nacional de la Historia, 1984, II, p. 44 ; Analola BORGES, *El inicio del comercio internacional venezolano (siglo XVIII)*, in : "Boletín de la Academia Nacional de Historia" (Caracas), 46, no. 189 (1965), p. 32.

<sup>21</sup> Statement by Domingo de Arostegui, San Juan de Guaiguaza, February 3, 1718 : AGI, Santo Domingo 697 ; Pedro José de OLAVARRIAGA, *Instrucción general y particular del estado presente de la Provincia de Venezuela en los años de 1720 y 1721*, Caracas, Academia Nacional de la Historia, 1965, p. 247 ; Juan Jacobo Montero de Espinosa to king Philip V, Caracas, April 9, 1711 : AGI, Santo Domingo 697. 12,000 *fanegas* equal 1,32 million pounds, which is 57% of the exports in 1720, when 2,318,494 pounds were sent to the Netherlands. It is even more than the 1,069,341 pounds sent home in 1711.

<sup>22</sup> The main other ports in the second half year of 1711 were La Guaira (4), Borburata (2), Puerto Cabello (2) and Maracaibo (2). Between July 1712 and May 1713 the main other ports were La Guaira (14), Maracaibo (6) and Puerto Cabello (3). Daily registers of Curaçao, June 30 - January 7, 1712, July 12, 1712 - May 14, 1713 : A.R.A., NWIC 1149-, 1150-.

by Samuel Hebreo, who adorned himself with the title “Lord of Tucacas”. In his days, the colony was made up of seventeen houses and a synagogue<sup>23</sup>. It took the Spanish authorities a long time to come up with effective measures. Governor Martín de Lardizábal erected a fort with four cannons, which was put into use in 1734. The soldiers, however, who were told off for manning the fort, deserted because of their low salaries<sup>24</sup>. The fort was destroyed in February of 1740, when some British privateers and six sloops from Curaçao, which sailed under English colours, jointly attacked the hated bulwark. In later years, the Curaçaoans continued to arrive in Tucacas, despite the observations of the coastal guards of the *Compañía Guipuzcoana*. As late as 1767-68, the Dutch were reported to take local products from Tucacas as if they were on their own soil<sup>25</sup>.

When the extent of Dutch contraband in Venezuela became clear to Spain’s metropolitan authorities, the *Compañía Guipuzcoana* was founded. The *Guipuzcoana* was organized as a joint-stock company. Its two chief tasks were to get trade between the province of Caracas and Spain going again and to discourage the clandestine commerce. Every year two company ships would leave the ports of Guipuzcoa with full loads for La Guaira and Puerto Cabello. One or more Company ships had to remain in the southern Caribbean to patrol the Venezuelan littoral together with smaller vessels. After 1732, only the *Guipuzcoana* was allowed to trade in the province of Caracas<sup>26</sup>.

Intensified Spanish control of coastal transactions was reflected in Dutch trade figures<sup>27</sup>. Especially in its early years the *Guipuzcoana* dealt heavy blows to Curaçao’s contacts with the Spanish Main. The island’s merchants were forced to divert to Santo Domingo, Puerto Rico and the Bight of Maracaibo. In the periode 1701-1730 Curaçao’s average share of the cacao exported from

<sup>23</sup> BORGES, *Inicio del comercio*, p. 33. Governor Juan Pedro van Collen later wrote that the erection of a synagogue had been one of the reasons for the foundation of the *Compañía Guipuzcoana*. Juan Pedro van Collen to the WIC, Curaçao, June 7, 1737 : A.R.A., NWIC 583, fol. 301.

<sup>24</sup> Statement by Martín de Lardizábal, governor of Caracas, Caracas, October 15, 1734 : AGI, Santo Domingo 710.

<sup>25</sup> Arauz places the destruction of the fort in July, 1741, while the Spanish ambassador in the Hague gave as a date February 27, 1740. ARAUZ MONFANTE, *Contrabando holandés*, I, pp. 71-72. Marquis de San Gil to the States General, The Hague, December 28, 1741 : A.R.A., Staten-Generaal 7138. See also : “Information collected by delegates of the Council of Curaçao”, September 6, 1743 : A.R.A., NWIC 590, fols. 547-552. Angel ALTOLAGUIRRE Y DUVALE (ed.), *Relaciones geográficas de la Gobernación de Venezuela 1767-68*, Caracas, 1954, p. 91.

<sup>26</sup> Roland Dennis HUSSEY, *The Caracas Company 1728-1784. A study in the history of Spanish monopolistic trade*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1934, pp. 61-62, 72 and 73 ; Marco-Aurelio VILA, *Síntesis Geohistórica de la Economía Colonial de Venezuela*, Caracas, 1980, p. 281. Instructions for the director and the factors of the *Compañía Guipuzcoana*, 1752 : AGI, Caracas 929.

<sup>27</sup> Mario Briceño PEROZO, *Magisterio y ejemplo de un vasco del siglo xviii*, Caracas, Academia Nacional de la Historia, 1965, pp. 188-190.

Venezuela was 36.4%, and this decreased to 7.6% in the first decade after the Basques arrived. The volume of cacao shipped to Holland decreased in the 1730s with almost 60% compared to the previous decade. Decline of tobacco and hides exports was much less : somewhere around 20%<sup>28</sup>.

The outbreak of the War of Jenkins' Ear (1739-1748) was the prelude to the recovery of Curaçao's trade. Between 1740 and 1755 its former position as bulk buyer of Venezuelan cacao was restored. During this war, the Spanish authorities now gave priority to the defence of the province of Caracas against the English enemy, and called the help of the *Compañía Guipuzcoana* in. It organized the transport to the colony of two thousand soldiers, who were subsequently maintained by the Company. These logistic activities and the accompanying costs made the Company neglect its original tasks. Cacao transports to both Spain and New Spain declined markedly and prices plummeted. Defence of the colony was concentrated in the two main ports, La Guaira and Puerto Cabello, and the rest of the coast of Caracas now lay open for smugglers. After the war, the *Compañía* could dedicate itself again to its actual tasks and it was not long before a steep decline set in Curaçao's trade.

Still, the factory survived, and even thrived again in the 1770s and 1780s. Many years later this nostalgic description was made of its condition on the eve of the Anglo-Dutch War of 1781-1784 : "In this port there were ninety richly loaded Dutch merchantmen [...], not counting some one hundred fifty colonial vessels trading in the nearby West Indian colonies. The warehouses were piled up with Dutch goods and colonial products. There was no storage space for sugar, cotton and dyewood. These articles were perforce left on the wharfs and quays in the open air"<sup>29</sup>.

The time of prosperity came to an end in the closing years of the 18th century. From 1791 onwards local commerce was hit by a number of catastrophes. The rebellion in Saint-Domingue led to break-down of supplies from the French colony. The French invasion of the Dutch republic in 1795 made England impede all Dutch shipping to Curaçao. Before 1802 none would drop anchor. And afterwards, the island would never regain its previous position in Dutch overseas trade.

Summarizing, it may be said that the small island of Curaçao played a pivotal role in Dutch trade with Spanish America. It attracted Spanish merchants and merchandise since around 1660, when Curaçao was turned into a slave trading center. The Dutch part in the slave trade diminished after 1713 and ceased completely in the 1770s. In addition to slaves, Curaçao's traders offered a variety of textiles from various parts of Europe. Throughout the

<sup>28</sup> N. W. POSTHUMUS, *Nederlandse prijsgeschiedenis*, 2 vols., Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1943, I, pp. 195-196.

<sup>29</sup> J. DE HULLU, *Curaçao in 1817*, in : "Bijdragen Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde", LXII (1913), p. 595.

18th century, the Dutch succeeded to undersell Spanish textile exporters to a considerable degree. In the process, they acquired bullion and specie, and were also paid in local products. Most commercial contacts were maintained with the nearby coast of Caracas, which supplied large amounts of cocoa, hides and tobacco. A Basque company, which was established to counter contraband trade, was succesful for one decade. Then smuggling resumed at its former rate, helping Curaçao's commercial prosperity to last until the end of the century.



# LA COLONIE BELGE DU GUATÉMALA

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RÉSUMÉ. — En 1840, alors que la Belgique était en crise économique, une occasion se présente de créer une colonie au Guatémala. Une reconnaissance dirigée par R. De Puydt s'y rendit et repéra un site favorable pour y créer un port à Santo Tomas.

De Puydt, qui espérait diriger la future colonie, est remplacé par P. Simons, qui meurt en mer.

Dès lors, la colonie resta sans une direction valable, qui était d'autant plus nécessaire que les colons envoyés n'avaient pas été sélectionnés et, la plupart, étaient sans métier.

Des maladies importées par des étrangers décimèrent la colonie belge quasi abandonnée.

Le consul Blondeel offrit de rapatrier les Belges désireux de quitter le Guatémala. Les autres se rendirent dans la capitale Guatémala, où certains réussirent. Mais en 1846, on peut dire que la colonie belge du Guatémala n'existait plus.

Léopold I<sup>er</sup> approuvait cet effort, mais il ne fut pas suivi par les politiciens trop timorés.

## I. — LES PRÉMICES DE L'EXPANSION COLONIALE BELGE

Lorsque Léopold I<sup>er</sup> devint roi des Belges par la prestation de serment du 21 juillet 1831, il arrivait d'Angleterre, un pays qui connaissait la prospérité grâce à une expansion commerciale considérable, assurée par sa flotte maritime et commerciale et par un important corps consulaire. La Belgique, depuis sa séparation d'avec la Hollande, ne possédait plus de colonie, ni de marine militaire, ni de consuls, car aucun de ces derniers n'était belge à la période hollandaise.

Léopold I<sup>er</sup> veilla à porter rapidement remède à pareille situation. Dès avant la reprise des hostilités, le 31 juillet, par les Pays-Bas, il avait nommé deux consuls belges par arrêté royal du 27 juillet 1831. En fait, ces nominations

avaient un but, : susciter des candidatures, car le Roi se trouvait devant un vide au point de vue représentation extérieure <sup>1</sup>.

Cette situation était encore insuffisante pour assurer l'expansion commerciale belge et, sous la pression des Chambres de Commerce, surtout celle d'Anvers, le ministre des Affaires Étrangères, de Muelenaere, par deux arrêtés royaux des 15 septembre 1831 et 20 avril 1832, avait nommé 35 consuls dans des pays généralement proches de la Belgique <sup>2</sup>.

Mais le budget, modéré, dont il disposait ne prévoyait pas de payer un corps consulaire de carrière et, à l'instar de l'Angleterre, il eut recours surtout aux consuls marchands, belges pour la plupart <sup>3</sup>.

Féru de l'expérience britannique, Léopold I<sup>er</sup>, dès son arrivée en Belgique, estimait nécessaire de doter le pays d'une colonie. Mais ceci postulait une marine militaire et la Belgique n'en possédait point car, en 1830, toute la marine militaire était devenue hollandaise.

Pour pallier cette déficience, on commença par mettre à disposition des armateurs, des officiers de la Marine royale, à charge de l'État, cela à partir de 1834. Ces officiers nouèrent des relations avec les pays d'outre-mer et y firent connaître le pavillon belge, jusqu'alors inconnu.

La Marine royale, qui comptait alors une vingtaine d'officiers, commençait à constituer une flotte modeste ; en 1848, la goélette «Louise-Marie» et, en 1845, le brick «Duc de Brabant» entraient en service. Ils assurèrent la surveillance de la pêche en mer du Nord et participèrent à plusieurs voyages vers les côtes d'Afrique et d'Amérique, associés ainsi à certains projets d'expansion.

Le Roi voyait d'un bon œil les efforts des particuliers, mais la politique trop timorée des autorités officielles n'y était pas favorable <sup>4</sup>.

## 2. — VERS LA FONDATION D'UNE COLONIE BELGE À SANTO-TOMAS DE GUATÉMALA

Ce que l'État ne pouvait réaliser, des particuliers, dans un élan de générosité, l'entreprirent sur une échelle appréciable, avec l'appui du Roi.

En 1834, «The Eastern Coast of Central America Commercial and Agricultural Company» s'était établie au Guatemala, un des cinq états indépendants

<sup>1</sup> J. WILLEQUET, *Un facteur d'expansion commerciale : le système consulaire sous Léopold I<sup>er</sup>*, in : «L'expansion belge (1831-1865)», recueil d'études publié par l'Acad. r. Sc. d'Outre-Mer, Bruxelles, 1965, p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> WILLEQUET, *ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>3</sup> WILLEQUET, *ibid.*, pp. 33-34.

<sup>4</sup> A. DUCHESNE, *Sous l'égide de Léopold I<sup>er</sup>, la Belgique à la recherche d'une colonie*, in : «Museum Dynasticum» ; 1990-92, Bruxelles, 1990, pp. 2-3 ; L. LECONTE, *Les ancêtres de notre Force Navale*, Bruxelles, 1952, pp. 82-88 et 105-107.

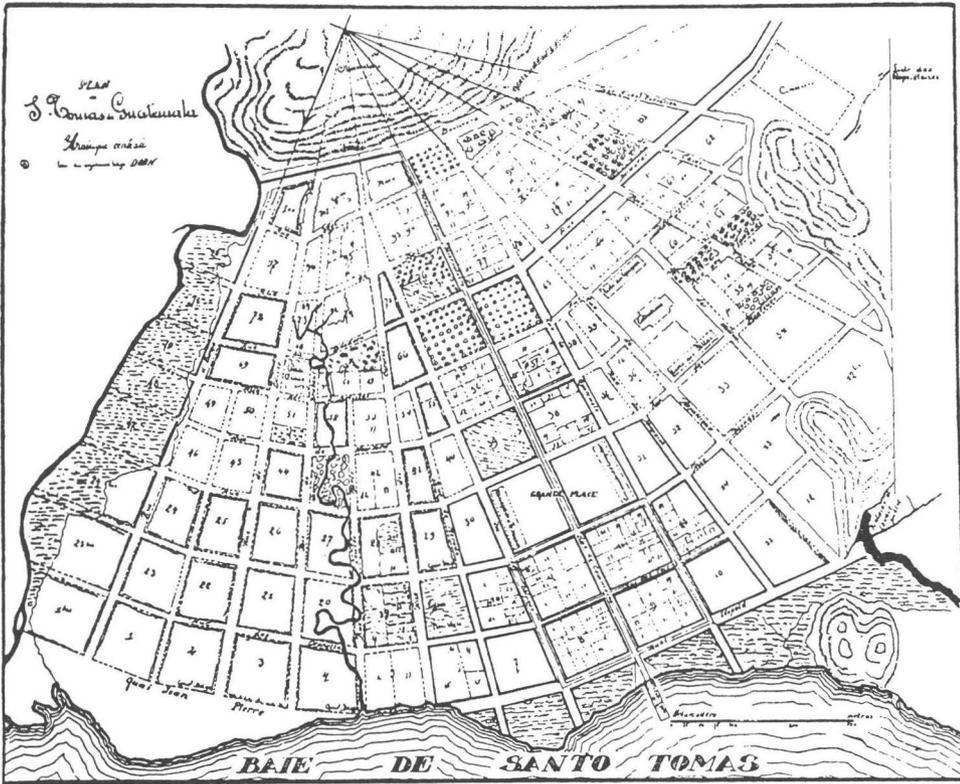


FIG. 1.

de la République de l'Amérique Centrale. Cette Compagnie anglaise agissait dans le territoire de Vera Paz, situé à la côte Atlantique. Elle s'était engagée à introduire, en dix ans, mille immigrants de nationalités diverses, qui deviendraient automatiquement citoyens guatémaltèques, jouissant de tous les droits et de la protection du gouvernement.

Le recrutement ne connut pas le succès espéré, ni en nombre ni en qualité, nonobstant le droit de propriété des terres exploitées et les efforts de la Compagnie pour attirer les colons.

Le 15 octobre 1838, la Compagnie se fit accorder, aux mêmes conditions, les territoires de Santo Tomas qui comportaient un site remarquable pour y créer un port. Seul un certain Abbott avait érigé une localité constituée de 35 masures en planches et perches de palmier en piteux état. Le site sur le rio Polochic était agréable et, malgré les avantages octroyés, le recrutement ne suivait pas ; on y envoya des fainéants errants dans les rues de Londres, des femmes de petite vertu, des individus sortis de prison avec promesse d'émigrer

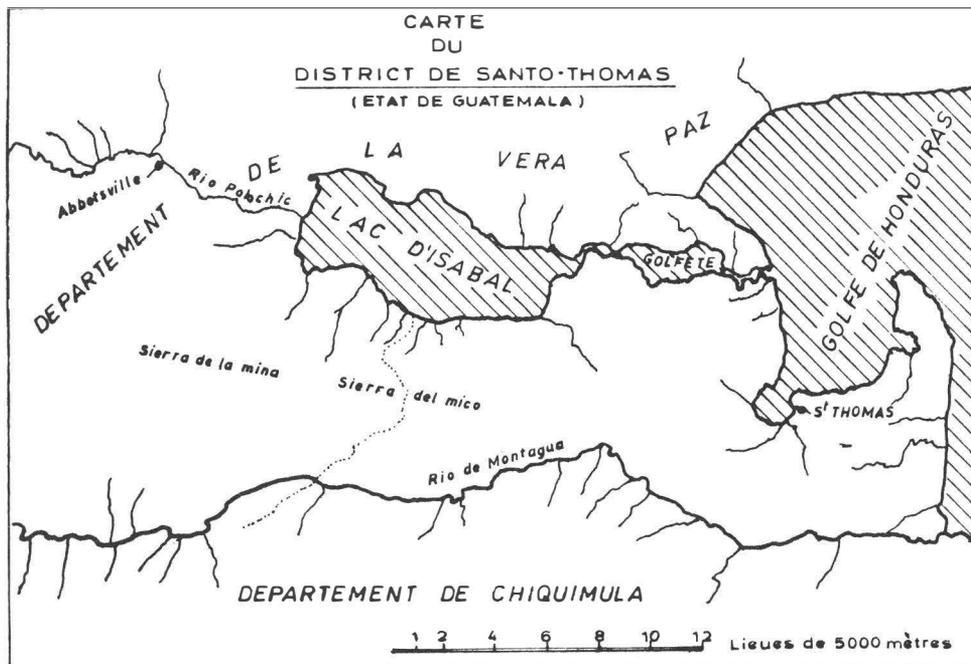


FIG. 2. — Carte du District de Santo-Thomas.

aux colonies, au lieu de sélectionner des artisans connaissant leur métier, des familles de cultivateurs ou d'honnêtes commerçants<sup>5</sup>.

Or, en 1843, la Belgique était dans un marasme d'autant plus profond qu'à la crise industrielle vint se superposer une crise alimentaire ayant pour origine une série de mauvaises récoltes et l'invasion de la maladie de la pomme de terre.

Un ensemble de mesures fut décidé pour y porter remède et, peu à peu, le progrès l'emporta sur la routine<sup>6</sup>.

La situation économique de la Belgique attira les offres d'aide de l'étranger et, notamment, celle de la Compagnie commerciale et agricole britannique, par l'intermédiaire d'un certain Obert qui, le 24 juillet 1840, s'adressa à Liedts, ministre de l'Intérieur, qui était favorable à l'idée de créer une colonie belge à l'étranger pour utiliser la main d'œuvre sans emploi plutôt que de la faire survivre par la charité. Les classes aisées avaient un devoir d'établir, au profit des moins fortunés, une occasion de trouver du travail, au besoin en s'expatriant dans les colonies.

<sup>5</sup> J. FABRI, *Les Belges au Guatemala (1840-1845)*, in : «Mém. de l'Acad. r. Sc. col.», Bruxelles, 1955, vol. II, fasc. 1, pp. 19-24.

<sup>6</sup> N. LEYSBETH, *Historique de la colonisation belge à Santo-Tomas, Guatemala*, Bruxelles, 1938, p. 9.

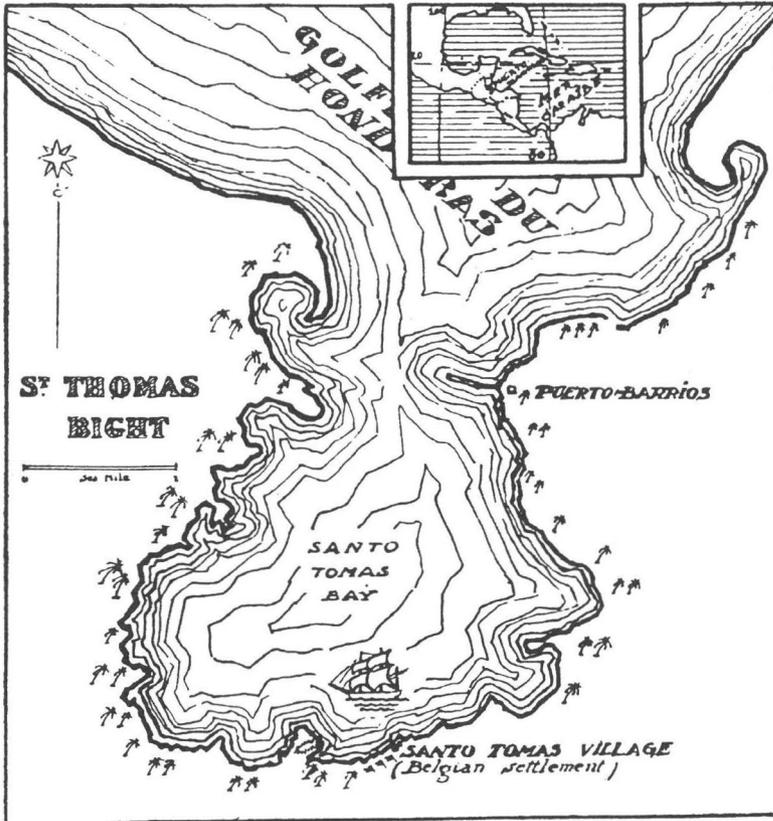


FIG. 3. — Baie de Santo-Tomas.

Comme ceux qui possédaient la fortune étaient généralement des catholiques, il semble qu'ils aient voulu s'inspirer de l'exemple des Réductions des Jésuites au Paraguay<sup>7</sup>.

### 3. — LA CRÉATION DE LA COMPAGNIE BELGE DE COLONISATION

Les démarches d'Obert avaient attiré l'attention du Gouvernement belge ; cependant, celui-ci préférait laisser l'initiative aux privés, tout en appuyant leur action.

La nouvelle compagnie, créée à cette occasion le 18 septembre 1841, adopta pour principe l'association du travail, du capital et de la propriété. Son but essentiel était d'ouvrir de nouveaux débouchés aux produits de l'industrie nationale ; elle cherchait à asseoir l'entreprise sur des bases solides et durables.

<sup>7</sup> FABRI, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-30.

Il fallait s'enquérir sur la contrée dont la position géographique paraissait excellente.

La «Compagnie belge de Colonisation» n'acceptait l'offre d'Obert et de la Compagnie britannique que sous réserve que le district de Santo-Tomas corresponde bien aux descriptions mirifiques qu'on en avait faites. Pour s'en assurer, il fallait envoyer sur place une Commission d'exploration.

Les statuts de la «Compagnie belge de Colonisation» prévoyaient la création d'établissements agricoles, industriels et commerciaux ; tous les intérêts de la Compagnie étaient régis par un «Conseil général» de dix-sept conseillers au plus et de douze au moins. L'administration journalière était confiée à un comité directeur composé de sept membres choisis parmi ceux du conseil. Le Roi nommait deux commissaires près de la Compagnie, ainsi que le Président et le Vice-Président <sup>8</sup>.

#### 4. — LA COMMISSION D'EXPLORATION

Conformément aux décisions de la «Compagnie belge de Colonisation» une «Compagnie d'Exploration» fut mise sur pied ; elle était dirigée par le colonel Remy De Puydt, un brillant ingénieur et un des fondateurs de l'Université Libre de Bruxelles ; dès le début, il avait marqué une vive sympathie pour les offres de promotion de colonisation présentées par le Français Obert.

Une première réunion des fondateurs de la Compagnie de Colonisation eut lieu le 25 février 1841 chez le comte de Mérode.

Finalement, on adjoignit à R. De Puydt, pour représenter le gouvernement, un jeune employé, spécialisé en questions bancaires, Auguste t'Kint, le commandant de la «Louise Marie», Petit, et le médecin de ce bateau, le docteur Dechange.

De son côté, la Compagnie envoyait Guillaume De Puydt, demi-frère de Remy, un dessinateur-interprète, Bernard van Lockhorst, et deux officiers, le capitaine Devercy et le lieutenant Carette <sup>9</sup>.

Si les conclusions de la Commission d'Exploration étaient favorables, on créerait une expédition qu'on enverrait au Guatemala et ainsi on installerait une première «Communauté de l'Union» ; celle-ci n'était pas à confondre avec la Compagnie belge de Colonisation.

Le 9 novembre 1841, la goëlette «Louise-Marie» quittait Ostende à destination du Guatemala, emportant dans ses flancs la Commission d'Exploration et les délégués du gouvernement.

Chacun des membres de la Commission et ceux de la Compagnie avaient reçu des missions bien spécifiques.

<sup>8</sup> LEYSBETH, *op. cit.*, p. 38-42 ; FABRI, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-68.

<sup>9</sup> LEYSBETH, *op. cit.*, p. 67-69 ; FABRI, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-41.

Au cours du voyage, l'entente ne fut déjà pas parfaite, car le commandant Petit était un fanfaron, se donnant une contenance et jouant à l'homme fort. Il s'en prit également à t'Kint, délégué du gouvernement, par qui il se croyait espionné <sup>10</sup>. La goëlette arriva au port de Santo-Tomas le 6 janvier 1842, après 56 jours de traversée.

Alors que R. De Puydt s'extasiait devant la beauté de la baie de Santo-Tomas, le commandant Petit et le docteur Dechange ne partageaient pas la même admiration ; le premier soulignait le danger des accostages qui obligeait les bateaux à se maintenir à distance respectable de la rive, tandis que le second remarquait que le côté de la baie situé à l'est était malsain, car marécageux.

De son côté, De Puydt trouvait tout admirable et il était tout guilleret de circuler dans ce pays où il espérait créer une voie d'eau réunissant les deux océans ; la longueur de la traversée lui avait permis de bien se reposer des fatigues de la préparation de l'expédition et de se remettre des symptômes d'une crise rénale naissante avant le départ <sup>11</sup>.

Les délégués du gouvernement étaient porteurs d'un message à remettre au chef du gouvernement à Guatémala. Tandis que R. De Puydt parcourait la région à la recherche d'un col de passage pour son canal, t'Kint avait dû se rendre à Guatémala-city pour y porter le message au chef du gouvernement en lieu et place de R. De Puydt.

Il faut savoir que ce dernier avait réalisé la canalisation de la Sambre, avec un succès mitigé ; il avait aussi participé, à l'époque hollandaise, à l'étude d'un canal interocéanique par le fleuve San Juan, le lac de Nicaragua et un des petits fleuves côtiers du Pacifique. Il rêvait toujours d'assurer pareille liaison qui aurait sérieusement rapproché la Chine et l'Extrême-Orient de l'Europe, ce qui était de nature à favoriser l'exportation des produits de l'industrie belge vers cet immense marché. Rappelons aussi que le canal de Suez ne fut mis en service qu'en 1869, soit vingt-huit ans plus tard <sup>12</sup>.

Il est assez étonnant de constater que R. De Puydt, au lieu de porter lui-même le message au Président de la République ait envoyé son jeune adjoint à Guatémala-city, pendant qu'il s'attardait à Abbotsville, où il était parvenu en traversant le rio Polochic en pirogue ; le 31 janvier, enfin, on était à Abbotsville. Pour tous, sauf pour R. De Puydt, ce fut la désillusion <sup>13</sup>.

Alors que les membres de la Commission d'Exploration s'apprêtaient à partir pour Guatémala-city, tout d'un coup, Petit décida qu'il devait rejoindre la «Louise-Marie» et ramener son bateau en Belgique.

<sup>10</sup> FABRI, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-50 et 56.

<sup>11</sup> FABRI, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-50 et 56.

<sup>12</sup> A. LEDERER, *La participation belge aux études et à la réalisation du canal interocéanique en Amérique Centrale*, in : «Bull. des Sc. de l'A.R.S.O.M.», 29 (1983), 4, pp. 432-433.

<sup>13</sup> FABRI, *op. cit.*, pp. 50-53.

Il fallut rappeler d'urgence t'Kint, tandis que De Puydt partait pour la capitale du pays. La malchance voulut que R. De Puydt et t'Kint ne se rencontrèrent pas, car ils avaient pris deux pistes différentes. t'Kint réussit à rentrer au pays avec la «Louise-Marie» et, malgré la brièveté de son séjour à Guatémala-city, y avait fait de la bonne besogne.

Il avait fait comprendre que les Belges arrivaient dans un but de relations commerciales sans aucune idée de conquête militaire, ce qui facilite les tractations de R. De Puydt pendant son séjour à Guatémala <sup>14</sup>.

##### 5. — LES RAPPORTS DE REMY DE PUYDT

Pendant que le capitaine Petit ramenait la «Louise-Marie» à Ostende, avec la plupart des membres de la Commission, De Puydt poursuivait son exploration et adressait cinq rapports à Bruxelles entre les 13 janvier et 28 avril 1842. Il décrivit le pays de façon très favorable et envisageait de créer, en plus de Santo-Tomas, une colonie dans le nord de la Vera Paz. Il parlait de ses tractations avec les Anglais et déconseillait de paraître arriver dans leur sillage, vu certaines bévues commises par eux. Il faut se présenter non comme Belges, qui n'étaient pas encore connus ici, mais comme Flamands, car les «Flamencos» s'étaient aussi trouvés sous régime espagnol comme le Guatémala. Il parle des cultures, du climat et des transports. Il note qu'antérieurement ce sont les ports de la côte du Pacifique qui ont été développés, alors que le Guatémala aurait eu intérêt à favoriser le trafic sur le golfe du Honduras pour augmenter les échanges avec les pays industriels ; à ce point de vue, Santo-Tomas était idéalement placé. De ce port pourraient partir des voies de communications vers le Motagua, le Honduras et le San Salvador.

Au cours d'un voyage par le Polochic, R. De Puydt a conversé avec les Anglais et il a choisi des terrains le long du Rio Soledad. Le poste d'Abbotsville comptait 35 maisons. De Puydt estimait que, pour les débuts, il fallait envoyer 15 à 20 familles de 4 personnes ayant de quoi subsister pendant quatre mois ; passé ce délai, le terrain pouvait produire et rapporter, à condition d'avoir des hommes de métier et laborieux.

Arrivé à Guatémala le 26 février, De Puydt rendit compte des démarches effectuées. Il indiquait, notamment, qu'il ne fallait plus s'attendre à des concessions gratuites de terrains de la part des Guatémaltèques depuis que les Anglais avaient vendu ceux reçus gratuitement <sup>15</sup>.

Un autre Belge, parti du Guatémala à la même époque, confirma aux membres du gouvernement les dires de De Puydt et estima que, si l'on envoyait

<sup>14</sup> FABRI, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

<sup>15</sup> LEYSBETH, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-80.

des hommes connaissant leur métier avec leur famille, on remédierait à la crise qui sévissait en Flandre <sup>16</sup>.

#### 6. — SIMONS, DIRECTEUR DE LA COMMUNAUTÉ DE L'UNION

De retour en Belgique, Remi De Puydt, persuadé qu'il prendrait la tête de l'entreprise belge au Guatemala, continuait l'étude des territoires concédés en constituant des dossiers et en dressant des plans.

Tout à coup, vers la mi-décembre 1842, Pierre Simons, un ancien directeur du chemin de fer, fut chargé de le remplacer <sup>17</sup>. Simons était un ancien adjoint de l'Inspecteur Général J. B. Vifquain, qui, après avoir créé, en 1819, les boulevards de la ceinture de Bruxelles, avait été chargé, en 1822 par le roi de Hollande, de réaliser une voie d'eau permettant le transport du charbon du Hainaut vers Anvers et les Flandres. Pour ce travail, on lui donna comme adjoint le jeune Pierre Simons ; afin de suppléer aux absences pour raison de santé de ce dernier, on lui adjoignit Gustave De Ridder. En 1826, ils achevèrent le canal Antoing-Pommerœul qui répondait aux vœux du roi Guillaume I<sup>er</sup>. À partir de 1823, Vifquain et ses deux adjoints entamèrent les études du canal Charleroi-Bruxelles qui comportait un tunnel de 1283 m de long et 55 écluses. Malgré la révolution de 1830, Vifquain réussit à poursuivre les travaux sans interruption et le canal put être inauguré le 25 septembre 1832.

J. B. Vifquain avait épousé une veuve qui, d'un premier mariage, avait eu deux filles, qui épousèrent P. Simons et G. De Ridder.

Il faut savoir qu'à l'époque hollandaise, le roi Guillaume s'était intéressé à créer un canal interocéanique en Amérique centrale ; R. De Puydt et J. B. Vifquain avaient étudié le problème auquel Simons avait été mêlé <sup>18</sup>.

En 1828, J. B. Vifquain avait étudié avec ses deux adjoints, les chemins de fer en Angleterre et, en 1829, il avait remis un projet de voie ferrée établi avec Cockerill, Coppens et Polaris, mais le roi de Hollande ne voulait pas de ce système dans son royaume <sup>19</sup>.

Lorsque Léopold I<sup>er</sup> arriva sur le trône de Belgique, Vifquain jugea le moment opportun pour présenter un projet de chemin de fer Bruxelles-Anvers avec raccordement vers l'Allemagne, via Liège, pour éviter la traversée de la

<sup>16</sup> Van den Berghe de Binckum au Gouvernement belge, Rapport expédié de Guatemala, in : LEYSBETH, *op. cit.*, pp. 81-83.

<sup>17</sup> FABRI, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

<sup>18</sup> A. LEDERER, *Vifquain (Jean-Baptiste)*, in : «Biographie Nationale de l'Acad. r. des Sc., des L. et des B.A. de Belgique», t. 43 (1984), fasc. 2, pp. 711-715 ; Alg. Rijksarchief, La Haye, Waterstaat, 2<sup>e</sup> division, dossier 2034 ; 3<sup>e</sup> division, dossier 4 ; inventaire 1147, dossier 67 ; J.-B. VIFQUAIN, *Des voies navigables en Belgique*, Bruxelles, 1842.

<sup>19</sup> LEDERER, *Vifquain (J.-B.)*, *op. cit.*, pp. 720-721.

Hollande ; il envisageait aussi une ligne ferrée vers Paris et une autre vers Ostende, pour desservir l'Angleterre.

C'était la première fois au monde qu'on imaginait un réseau intégré raccordant entre eux des centres industriels et commerciaux avec des ports maritimes.

Des différends importants opposèrent Pierre Simons et Gustave De Ridder à J. B. Vifquain. Alors que ce dernier voulait faire construire le chemin de fer par l'entreprise privée, les deux ingénieurs intriguèrent auprès des ministres Rogier et Lebeau pour que cette construction soit réalisée par une entreprise publique. Le 24 août 1831, les deux ingénieurs mis à la disposition de J. B. Vifquain furent chargés de l'étude du vaste projet du réseau des chemins de fer belges.

Le 31 mars 1832, un arrêté royal autorisait la mise en adjudication d'un «chemin à ornières en fer» entre Anvers et Liège. Il en résulta un conflit exposé dans un étonnant document intitulé : «Mémoires de M. l'Inspecteur Vifquain, Réplique des Ingénieurs Simons et De Ridder».

Une loi du 1<sup>er</sup> mars 1834 confiait la construction du réseau belge à l'État et faisait de Malines le centre ferroviaire belge. On commença par le tronçon Malines-Bruxelles, qui fut inauguré le 5 mai 1835. Le réseau ferré se développa rapidement. Parmi les différences essentielles entre le projet des ingénieurs et celui de Vifquain, notons le terminus du chemin de fer à l'Allée Verte, alors que Vifquain l'avait prévu à la place de Cologne (place Rogier actuellement) et au-delà de Liège, une double voie pour atteindre Aix-la-Chapelle en longeant plus ou moins la vallée sinueuse de la Vesdre <sup>20</sup>.

Le terminus à l'Allée Verte avait été voulu par De Ridder, car cela valorisait la maison de ses parents qui habitaient à Molenbeek ; quant à la voie au-delà de Liège, elle avait été très mal étudiée par Simons, dont le devis était notoirement insuffisant et le tracé de voie inacceptable. Des expropriations avaient été oubliées et les trains ne pouvaient se croiser que dans les gares. Vifquain, ne pouvant accepter cette situation, mit à pied Simons et, après un an, lui ordonna d'aller habiter Liège pour inspecter de près la ligne en construction et surveiller les modifications à apporter. Simons refusa d'aller à Liège car, pour lui, c'était une rétrogradation. Pour éviter les graves sanctions qui l'attendaient de la part du ministre, Vifquain lui conseilla de prendre la tête de l'expédition au Guatemala. Il partit en mauvaise santé et décéda en mer le 14 mai 1843 ; il fut immergé à hauteur de Ténériffe pendant le voyage de la «Louise-Marie» vers le Guatemala <sup>21</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> Mémoire de M. l'Inspecteur Vifquain, Réplique des Ingénieurs.

<sup>21</sup> Edm. MARCHAL, *Simons, Pierre*, in : "Biographie Nationale de l'Acad. r. des Sc., des L. et des B.A. de Belgique", t. 92 (1914-1920), col. 620-625.

## 7. — UNE EXPÉDITION À LA DÉRIVE

Avec la mort de Simons, l'expédition arrivait décapitée au Guatemala. On ne pouvait songer à recourir à Remi De Puydt, souffrant de crises rénales, dont il décéda à Schaerbeek le 20 septembre 1844.

D'après l'ordre hiérarchique établi avant le départ de l'expédition, le second en dignité était le directeur ecclésiastique, un jésuite, le R.P. Walle. L'ordre créé par saint Ignace avait été supprimé par Marie-Thérèse le 2 septembre 1773. Il venait d'être rétabli progressivement à partir de 1831 ; créer une mission au Guatemala était un succès pour les Jésuites.

Le départ des colons avait eu lieu le 16 mars 1843 par le «Théodore» ; c'est le moment qu'avait choisi de Hompesh, d'accord avec Obert, pour annoncer au R.P. Walle que la direction de Bruxelles avait décidé de lui confier la direction de la Colonie, en cas du décès de Simons. Il survint alors que l'entreprise se trouvait dans une situation difficile. Depuis le 19 mai 1843, la capitaine Philippot, avec ses pontonniers, dirigeait la colonie militairement, selon les ordres reçus. Mais il s'y prenait maladroitement. Si les heures du lever étaient sonnées au clairon, chacun vaquait à sa besogne sans former d'équipe, sauf ceux affectés aux travaux routiers. Aussi, le rendement était médiocre. De plus, on se servait au magasin sans payer, ce qui était ruineux pour la Communauté de l'Union. Aucune comptabilité n'était tenue.

La «Louise-Marie» n'arrivait à Santo-Tomas que le 7 juin et la «Ville de Bruxelles», qui avait fait un arrêt non prévu à Funchal, n'était à destination que le 8 juin 1843. Au total, ces trois navires avaient amené 79 personnes, dont 54 seulement pouvaient être considérées comme colons.

Dès le 15 juin, Cloquet, consul de Belgique au Guatemala, rédigea une lettre destinée au Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, A. Goblet d'Alviella. On ne peut dire qu'il faisait l'éloge du travail des colons. Pour commencer, ceux-ci n'avaient pas fait l'objet d'une sélection ; au lieu de choisir des familles d'hommes de métier, on avait envoyé de jeunes célibataires courant l'aventure, sans aucune formation.

De plus, le capitaine Philippot, par sa familiarité avec ses subordonnées, les froissait et perdait toute autorité<sup>22</sup>.

Le R.P. Walle avait du scrupule à assumer la direction de la colonie dès son arrivée ; il devait d'abord prendre contact avec les autorités à Guatemala et une décision serait prise dès son retour. Ce qui fut fait le 24 octobre 1843.

Le conseil se réunit à Santo-Tomas ; Philippot était destitué et, à l'unanimité, le R.P. Walle était élu président du Conseil des Directeurs. Cette nomination était loin de recueillir la faveur de tous les colons car, déjà pendant

<sup>22</sup> M. Cloquet, consul de Belgique, à Goblet d'Alviella, Arch. Min. Aff. Étrang., dossier 2029, Santo-Tomas, 20 déc. 1843, in : LEYSBETH, *op. cit.*, pp. 139-151.

le voyage, un certain nombre d'entre'eux avait fait montre de leur anticléricalisme. Le docteur Fleussu fut adjoint comme secrétaire du Conseil.

À peine installés, le R.P. Walle et le docteur Fleussu s'attaquèrent à la mise en ordre des inventaires et de la compatibilité, ce qui était une grosse besogne<sup>23</sup>. Quant à Philippot, lorsqu'on voulut contrôler ses inventaires et ses comptes, il partit au Honduras et se suicida à Omoa peu après.

Le 17 avril, c'était au tour du baron de Bulow, un Prussien, président du Conseil Colonial en l'absence du R.P. Walle ; il se rebiffa, mais Guillaumot, remplaçant de Philippot, tint bon et le baron préféra s'en aller au début de mai. Petit à petit, on nettoyait les écuries d'Augias<sup>24</sup>.

Mais il fallait réapprovisionner les magasins de la colonie. On ne pouvait attendre des approvisionnements commandés en Belgique, aussi le major Guillaumot partit avec le «Dyle», le 26 décembre 1843, pour acheter dans les pays voisins l'indispensable pour la vie de la colonie. Il était de retour à Santo-Tomas le 6 mars 1844<sup>25</sup>.

Pendant ce temps, sur la foi de rapports tendancieux expédiés de Santo-Tomas à Bruxelles, on continuait à envoyer des bateaux avec des nouveaux colons, si bien qu'au 3 juillet 1843 la colonie comptait 777 colons.

La plupart de ceux-ci étaient logés dans des conditions déplorables et un manque d'hygiène préjudiciable à l'état sanitaire entraînait des décès assez nombreux. Il faut noter qu'une partie des colons était logée à Santa-Maria, un site sur un cap joutant Santo-Tomas<sup>26</sup>.

Des problèmes entre le R.P. Walle et le R.P. Ganon n'améliorèrent pas l'atmosphère de la colonie. De plus, depuis le 1<sup>er</sup> novembre, le major Guillaumot était déchargé de l'administration de celle-ci, qu'il ne quitta que le 22 février 1845. Il en résultait que le capitaine Dorn, qui avait reçu la direction de l'administration locale de Santo-Tomas depuis le 1<sup>er</sup> novembre 1844, a travaillé sous la présidence de son prédécesseur pendant encore trois mois et demi.

Le capitaine Dorn eut cependant un grand mérite de dresser le plan de la station de Santo-Tomas avec des artères se coupant à angle droit et des avenues baptisées du nom de personnages, belges pour la plupart. De plus, il remit en ordre des canons et fit construire deux forts pour la défense du port<sup>27</sup>.

La période de direction du capitaine Dorn fut bien courte, puisqu'elle se terminait le 1<sup>er</sup> avril 1845. Elle fut caractérisée par une sérieuse réduction du nombre des colons à la suite des décès et des départs. Le 1<sup>er</sup> avril 1845, la colonie ne comptait plus que 285 colons. Le nombre de cases pour le logement

<sup>23</sup> FABRI, *op. cit.*, pp. 151-163.

<sup>24</sup> FABRI, *op. cit.*, pp. 194-201.

<sup>25</sup> LEYSBETH, *op. cit.*, pp. 158-159.

<sup>26</sup> LEYSBETH, *op. cit.*, pp. 156 et 158.

<sup>27</sup> FABRI, *op. cit.*, pp. 184-191 et 293.

était encore toujours notoirement insuffisant ; aussi, on ne peut dire que l'enthousiasme régnait parmi ces hommes expatriés <sup>28</sup>.

Sous la direction de de Bulow, l'achèvement de bâtiments fut poussé et, surtout, il fit reconstruire l'accostage qui s'était déjà écroulé. Il avait également fait défricher 11 hectares de terrain par les Caraïbes et entamer la construction de trois chemins dont aucun ne fut achevé.

Sous la direction de de Bulow, pratiquement le Communauté a cessé d'exister lorsque les colons purent devenir propriétaires de leur case et de leur terrain. Au fond, les colons n'avaient pas un grand esprit communautaire et puis, pourquoi travailler pour les pontonniers de Guillaumot qui n'étaient pas des colons. L'esprit de propriété et l'ardeur au travail se sont développés et les travaux avancèrent beaucoup plus rapidement <sup>29</sup>.

Blondeel van Cuelebroeck, consul à Mexico, fut chargé de faire un rapport sur la situation réelle à Santo-Tomas, ce qu'il fit de façon objective. Il offrit aux militaires qui, tout en étant au Guatemala, touchaient leur solde, de rentrer en Belgique. Mais certains se trouvaient bien au Guatemala et sur 210 Belges résidant dans la région de Santo-Tomas, seuls 63 acceptèrent d'être repatriés <sup>30</sup>.

#### 8. — LE PROBLÈME DES TRANSPORTS AU GUATÉMALA

Il est étonnant qu'on n'ait pas accordé plus d'importance au problème des transports lors de l'expédition belge au Guatemala, alors que, depuis plus de trois siècles, on cherchait le tracé d'un canal qui aurait permis la jonction des deux océans à travers l'isthme de Panama.

Dans un rapport de Hompesch au Roi, le président du conseil des directeurs de la Compagnie de Colonisation rappelait que les buts poursuivis étaient :

- fournir aux Belges l'occasion d'entreprendre des voyages lointains ;
- créer des exploitations agricoles en Amérique Centrale ;
- créer des entreprises propres à régulariser l'émigration ;
- entreprendre le creusement d'un canal interocéanique.

Si l'on s'était préoccupé des trois premiers buts, il semble qu'on ne s'était guère soucié du quatrième, bien qu'il ait été probablement inscrit à la demande de Remi De Puydt <sup>31</sup>.

En 1845, Édouard Blondeel van Cuelebroeck avait été nommé consul à Mexico, mais avait été prié, en qualité de Commissaire du Roi, de passer

<sup>28</sup> LEYSBETH, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

<sup>29</sup> LEYSBETH, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

<sup>30</sup> FABRI, *op. cit.*, pp. 234-235 et 244-245.

<sup>31</sup> de Hompesch à Léopold I<sup>er</sup>, note s.l., s.d. (1843?), Arch. Min. Aff. Étrang., dossier 2029, pièce 14.

par Santo-Tomas au Guatemala, afin d'informer objectivement le Gouvernement belge sur la possibilité de mise en valeur d'une colonie dans ce district.

À son arrivée à Santo-Tomas, Blondeel trouva la colonie dans une situation moins alarmante que ce qu'on décrivait à Bruxelles. De Hompesch avait été remplacé à la tête de la colonie par le Suisse Aguet. Blondeel dressa un rapport sur les modifications à apporter pour poursuivre l'œuvre entreprise.

Comme les pontonniers de Philippot étaient toujours au Guatemala, Blondeel offrit de les rapatrier en Belgique, offre étendue à tous les colons belges. Lorsque le bateau belge «Adèle» aborda à Santo-Tomas, sur 210 habitants seuls 63 acceptèrent de revenir au pays.

Pourtant, entretemps, il y avait eu un grave incident ; de Hompesch avait accueilli plus de cent colons allemands qui arrivaient dans un état de santé pitoyable, important des maladies inconnues en Amérique centrale, ce qui entraîna des décès.

Les colons restés au Guatemala étant propriétaires de leurs logements et des terrains qu'ils cultivaient, travaillaient avec plus d'enthousiasme, car ils demeuraient propriétaires du fruit de leur travail. Au fond, ils n'avaient pas un esprit très communautaire et préféraient travailler pour leur propre compte <sup>32</sup>.

Alors que la Société de Colonisation n'existait plus à Bruxelles et que le Gouvernement ne manifestait guère l'intention de venir en aide aux colons, de son côté Blondeel était actif et obtenait des mesures du Guatemala en faveur de nos colons.

Le 11 mai 1847, deux décrets furent pris. Le premier déclarait :

- 1° Santo-Tomas port franc.
- 2° L'exemption pendant deux ans de droits d'importation pour les objets personnels des colons.
- 3° L'exemption de droits de tonnage pour les navires de la Compagnie ou frétés par elle et arrivant à Santo-Tomas.

Le second décret stipulait :

- 1° L'ouverture d'un chemin transitable entre Santo-Tomas et le Motagua.
- 2° Charge le Consulat de l'exécution de ces travaux sur les informations de la direction coloniale de Santo-Tomas, employant des colons qui désiraient du travail et une partie des prisonniers d'Yzabal.

la colonie fonctionnait de façon satisfaisante, lorsqu'en juillet 1850 des Allemands, débarqués à la côte du Honduras par le navire «Norma», arrivèrent par petits groupes en état lamentable à Santo-Tomas. Nombre d'entr'eux

<sup>32</sup> FABRI, *op. cit.*, p. 244-295 ; LEYSBETH, *op. cit.*, pp. 178 et sv. ; A. DUCHESNE, *Blondeel, Édouard*, in : «Biographie B. d'Outremer, Acad. r. Sc. Outre-Mer», t. 6, col. 71-72.

décédèrent. Les colons fuyant la maladie, refluèrent en grande partie à Guatemala-city et Santo-Tomas redevint une plage quasi déserte. C'était la fin d'une expédition qui avait suscité un grand espoir. De Hompesch, qui avait leurré ses compatriotes, mourut en prison, criblé de dettes.

De leur côté, Blondeel, t'Kint de Roodenbeek et Cloquet aidèrent le plus possible leurs compatriotes et firent de brillantes carrières <sup>33</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> LEYSBETH, *op. cit.*, pp. 200-210.



## V. ARCTIC REGION



# WHALING STATIONS AS BRIDGEHEADS FOR EXPLORATION OF THE ARCTIC REGIONS IN THE SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

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## INTRODUCTION

In 1966 the economist Friedmann put forward a set of ideas about the processes which take place in the economic development from a subsistence to a market economy (Friedmann, 1966). He constructed a core/periphery model which deals with the general principles for the economic development in such a transitional phase. In this article I will make an attempt to use this model to explain the relations between the core and periphery during the sixteenth and seventeenth century European expansion period. Seen from this perspective Western Europe is considered to be the core, and the tropical and polar regions on earth are the periphery.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth century Western Europe became an expanding core, a centre of growth dependent on flourishing urban centres. This development was possible because Western Europe gained access to resources over a wider area thanks to technical advance in the field of navigation and the resulting voyages of discovery. In this way the core could expand thanks to a large periphery. The tropical and polar regions on earth were used by the West Europeans as resource regions which are associated with the exploitation of raw materials to satisfy the needs of the core region. Because of their position on the edge of the then known world, these regions could be called : resource frontier regions.

The relations between the core and the periphery were maintained by ships with or without stations or trading posts in the periphery. The intensity of the relation between the core and the periphery was dependent on the demand for a resource, the technical advance (e.g. transport) and the social

pressure together forming the vitality of the core, and the difficulties experienced at the periphery presented by temperature and remoteness. The limit of exploration or exploitation is a balance between the vitality of the core and the difficulties experienced at the periphery (Sugden, 1982). Although it would be very interesting to explore this concept in the tropical regions, we will start our exploration in the polar area where in the sixteenth and seventeenth century some nations started to hunt whales.

#### TEMPORARY LAND STATIONS

From the 1530s until the early 1600s Basque whalers sailed to the coastal waters of Southern Labrador in Canada to hunt large whales every year. On more than a dozen places along the coast of Southern Labrador they built ovens to render the whale blubber into oil. These ovens were stone constructions with tile roofs and consisted of three to five fireboxes with an average diameter of 1.3 meter. The oil was stored in wooden casks, made by coopers in primitive cooperages on the coast. These cooperages were small structures with tile roofs and walls of sail-cloth. Red Bay in Labrador was the most important place with at least sixteen cookeries (Tuck & Grenier, 1989). The simple construction and the great number of the cookeries and cooperages point out the temporary character of the stations.

In this period whaling was a *long distance trade* with no real footing in the hunting areas. Therefore the impact of the installations on nature was very limited. The cultural impact, however, was important in Labrador; in the winter many natives, Indians as well as Eskimos, migrated to the Basque installations gathering nails and other iron objects which they re-used as hunting tools (Tuck, 1987).

In 1611 and 1612 West European whaling started using hired Basque whalers in Spitsbergen also as a *long distance trade*. The Basque system was to flense the whale alongside the ship and cook the blubber in very temporary installations on the coasts of the islands of the Spitsbergen archipelago. The whale was flensed and the blubber cooked wherever the whale was killed. On accessible places on the coast of Spitsbergen ovens were built of sand and rocks.

In this way temporary English cookeries were established in Fair Haven (Scheibukta), Maudlen Sound (Trinity harbour), Deer Sound (Krossfjorden), Sir Thomas Smith's bay (Engelsbukta), Ice Sound (Grönfjorden or Green Harbour and Trygghamna or Safe Harbour), Bell Sound (Recherchefjorden) and Horn Sound (Goosebay) (Conway 1906) (fig. 1).

In the same period Dutch whalers built their cookeries in Fair Haven on Amsterdam Island, in Sir Thomas Smith's bay on Fair Foreland, in Ice Sound (Safe Harbour), in Bell Sound on Axel Island and later in Recherchefjorden



FIG. 1. — Map of Spitsbergen with the land stations established by the different nations. Drawing H. J. Waterbolk.

(Schoonhaven) and Horn Sound (Goosebay) as well. Soon opposition of the English whalers of the 'Muscovy Company', however, forced the Dutch to concentrate their whaling activities in the bays of Northwest-Spitsbergen and the bays around Jan Mayen (Hacquebord, 1991).

Some English interlopers built cookeries on Edge Island (Russebukta) and the small islands Ziegler Island and Delitsch Island south of Edge Island in east Spitsbergen (Hacquebord, 1988). On such places tents made of spars, stones and sails were built behind the ovens to lodge the blubber cookers and the coopers.

Conway gives a description of an early cookery in Hornsound in Spitsbergen based on historical material and remains in the field: "A whalers' cookery consisted essentially of two parts, a 'tent' and a 'cauldron'. The tent was a building of four low stone walls roofed with sail-cloth passed over a ridge-pole and held down by rocks round the edges. The walls of the tent are still standing on a mound. Close by are the wrecks of the brickwork belonging

to two cauldrons for boiling down blubber. Quantities of coal-slag showed the nature of the fuel employed" (Conway, 1898 : 162).

The presence of these cookeries was very limited. As soon as the whales killed were processed the whalers left the place, leaving only the ovens and garbage behind. Therefore the whalers did not penetrate very deep into the arctic islands in this first phase and their environmental impact was very small. Since there are no native peoples in Spitsbergen, the cultural influence of the whalers was nil.

#### SEMI-PERMANENT LAND STATIONS

However, soon more permanent, substantial cookeries made of wood and bricks (brought from the home ports), were established on places on the coasts of Spitsbergen and Jan Mayen. Ovens with a diameter of more than two meters, and a chimney to improve the draught were built. In a letter from Fanne to Heley, dating 24 June 1623, Fanne stated that the Dutch "are building Houses and Tabernacles to inhabit, for they make new and substantiall : also they told us, they expected one or two Ships more everie day..." (P.H.P., 1906, vol. XIV, chap. VIII, p. 103).

In these cookeries English, Danish, Basque, and Dutch whalers cooked the blubber of the whales they caught during the summer season. However, beside the production of oil these cookeries also functioned as a manifestation of the territorial claims on Spitsbergen of the different countries.

In the beginning there was strong competition in the waters of Spitsbergen between the whalers of the different nations. There were many hostilities especially between English and Dutch whalers. Initially these whalers were whaling in the same bays of the west coast of Spitsbergen, mostly Fair Haven, Sir Thomas Smith's bay, Ice Sound, Bell Sound and Horn Sound. They snatched away each others blubber, destroyed each others installations on the coasts, and once English whalers of the Muscovy Company even captured a Dutch ship.

Due to this strong competition the companies withdrew from some of their stations and concentrated their activities in one or two bays. In this way the English whaling company the 'Muscovy Company' established shore stations in Spitsbergen in the Ice Sound (Green Harbour), Bell Sound (Recherchefjorden) and Horn Sound (Goosebay). The storehouse built by Dutch whalers on Fair Foreland was demolished and rebuilt by whalers of the 'Muscovy Company' in Green Harbour in the Ice Sound. The Dutch storehouses in Bell Sound (Schoonhaven) and Horn Sound (Goosebay) were taken over by English whalers. The Dutch whaling company the 'Noordse Compagnie' initially concentrated its activities in the seas around Jan Mayen, but after 1621 the company also



FIG. 2. — Remains of a double oven of Smeerenburg on the sandy beach of Amsterdam Island (Spitsbergen). (Photograph Ben Bekooy).

focused on the northwest corner of Spitsbergen where it built its main station on the southeast spit of land of Amsterdam Island (fig. 2).

The Danish whaling company also built a cookery on Amsterdam Island but did not use it every season. When the Danes were not there in 1624, whalers from Rotterdam and Delft used the Danish cookery to render the blubber of the whales they caught that season. When the Danish whalers returned to the place in 1631 they found it occupied by Dutch whalers and decided to move to Kobbefjord in the nearby Danish Island. This cookery was destroyed by Dutch whalers after it was used by Basque whalers in 1634.

In the first years Basque whalers from San Sebastian probably had a cookery established in Birgerbukta, a bay east of Fairhaven. However, they did not fit out ships to Spitsbergen very regularly. Later some Basques whalers were whaling in cooperation with or under orders of the Danish whaling company.

#### PERMANENT SEASONAL LAND STATIONS

On the southeast spit of land of Amsterdam Island six Dutch cookeries were established. Together with the Danish cookery they formed the settlement

Smeerenburg. This settlement became the most important Dutch base on Spitsbergen. It was a manifestation of the Dutch power in Spitsbergen. National colours and arms were set up in front of the houses to demonstrate the nationality of the owner of the cookeries.

To extend the knowledge of the geography and the nature of the settlement some of the cookeries of Smeerenburg were excavated recently (Hacquebord, 1984). The archaeological research showed that the settlement consisted of 16 buildings (dwellings and storehouses), seven double and one single oven, and a small fortress with place for two canons.

On Jan Mayen only Dutch cookeries were established. They were situated at the North Bay, South Bay and some smaller bays of the island. The most important whaling station was the station at the North Bay. Here six or seven double ovens, and dwellings and storehouses have been erected, and on the north and south side of the settlement there were small platforms on which two canons were placed to protect the settlement there were against whalers from other nations. The other Dutch whaling company, the 'kleine Noordse Compagnie' had a cookery north of the North Bay in Maria Mus Bay.

In the same period the English whalers built their main land station on the Bell Sound. Here several ovens, storehouses and dwellings were built. Beside this station the 'Muscovy Company' had cookeries in Green Harbour and Horn Sound. All these stations were used for several years and are to be seen as permanent land stations. However, they were only used in the summer season.

#### PERMANENT YEAR-ROUND LAND STATIONS

Two attempts were made to winter in the land stations in order to protect the stations against whalers of other nations in the off-season and to study the weather situation in the winter. In 1623 volunteers had already approached the directors of the 'Noordsche Compagnie' with the offer to spend a winter in the Arctic (Wassenaer, 1623, vol. VIII, fol. 110). The directors, however, believed this to be unnecessary and did not accept the offer. But the idea still occupied the ranks of the 'Noordsche Compagnie', especially when it seemed that a permanent establishment would be a forceful element in the struggle with the competition, and in 1626 a new plan was put forward. In this plan 25 men would stay the winter on Spitsbergen, liberally supplied with provisions and medicines, in a spacious, well insulated dwelling with a kitchen and a stove. Besides, they would have a 50 ton boat at their disposal. This wintering team would occupy itself hunting bears and foxes, which would give them enough distraction and exercise and would acquire some revenues for the company. As soon as the sun would be back and the ice would break they would start whaling, so that many whales would have been killed by the time the ships from the Netherlands would reach Fair Haven in Spitsbergen (Wassenaer, 1626,

vol. XI, fol. 57v). Moreover, meteorological observations could be made which could answer the question whether the polar regions were habitable during winter or not. Eventually this last goal became the main object. Further consideration resulted, however, in the idea that research and more thorough preparation was necessary, before exposing so many men to the danger of a polar winter. The perilous adventure of the Dutch pilot Willem Barentsz and his men on *Novaya Semlya* (1596-1597) was not yet forgotten. Therefore the wintering was postponed until further notice (Wassenaer, 1626, vol. XI, fol. 56-58, and 1627, vol. XII, fol. 9).

In 1628 due to new problems with the Basques, a wintering was discussed again by the Dutch whalers. However, nothing was tried that year. The 'Muscovy Company' had also contemplated the idea of organising a wintering. The company was prepared to pay a considerable premium, but until then no volunteers had been found. The company even made an unsuccessful attempt to convince people under sentence of death, who were taken there from England, to stay over the winter. When they saw the desolate land where they were supposed to winter, they preferred the hangman's rope over a supposedly slow death (White, 1855, pp. 263, 264). When in addition nine Englishmen, left behind on Spitsbergen accidentally, were found dead the following spring, awfully mutilated by beasts of prey, the enthusiasm dropped to zero (Scoresby, 1820, II, p. 48).

This changed when in the springtime of 1631 eight English sailors were found in a healthy condition on the west coast of Spitsbergen. They had been left behind accidentally by the same captain as the other nine. They had kept themselves alive by eating reindeer meat and whale remnants of the previous whaling season. If these Englishmen could succeed in wintering without any preparation, this should be possible too in Smeerenburg and on Jan Mayen, according to the directors of the 'Noordsche Compagnie'. When in 1632 Basque whalers plundered the company's storehouses on Jan Mayen and caused serious damage the Dutch were soon convinced of the profit of a wintering on Spitsbergen and Jan Mayen. That is why at the end of the season of 1633 a team of seven men was left behind in each of those places. The wintering on Spitsbergen was successful; all seven winterers were alive when the ships returned the following spring. The winterers on Jan Mayen, unfortunately, died one month before the ships returned. It was decided the following year that no wintering should be tried on Jan Mayen but on Spitsbergen it was tried again. When in the second wintering all men died on Spitsbergen also, the directors of the 'Noordsche Compagnie' decided to stop the attempts to make Smeerenburg a permanent year-round land station.

## STATIONS AS INDICATORS OF CLAIMS

Although the stations were established to render the blubber into oil in the first place, they had a political function as well. In this way Smeerenburg and the cookeries on Jan Mayen functioned as a manifestation of the Dutch claims on Spitsbergen and Jan Mayen and the hunting grounds there. To show visitors who the owner of the station was, the colours and arms of the port where the department of the 'Noordse Compagnie' was established, were placed in front of the buildings of the cookery. The position of the posts of the colours and arms was discovered by the excavation (Hacquebord, 1984).

The English whalers did the same in the more southerly bays of Spitsbergen : placing their national colours and arms to mark their property and their claims. The Danish whaling company also had placed the national colours on the station on Amsterdam Island. The very similar paintings of Abraham Speeck (1634) and Cornelis de Man (ca. 1639) demonstrate this role of the stations. The buildings in Speeck's painting fly the Danish flag and the buildings in de Man's painting fly the Dutch flag.

Beside this the stations were used as a sally-base for explorers. The 'Muscovy Company' for example sent an exploration ship yearly ; and the Dutch sent expeditions as well to explore the hinterland, to find new harbours and, to kill animals to supply the sailors with food. Ships left the stations on Spitsbergen to search for new land and new hunting grounds. In the Dutch case this happened because the government, 'the States General' issued an act by which the discoverers of new lands received a charter for four years to exploit the newly discovered lands and seas exclusively. That is why it was very attractive to discover new lands.

The voyages of discovery, however, had further goals. They also were organized to discover a new sea passage to China and Japan and last but not least to find new minerals.

Beside all this the stations were starting points for mapping activities as well. In this way they played a major role in the mapping history of the Arctic. The maps indicated how far the whalers explored the coasts of the islands in the Arctic.

The stations were abandoned around 1650 when the climate had become so severe that the labour seasons were too short to process all the whales caught. The blubber was stripped off the whale alongside ships again and put into barrels. The blubber was rendered into oil in the homeports of the ships. Whaling changed back into a long distance trade without shore stations.

## CONCLUSIONS

The early exploration and exploitation of the polar areas fits in the core/periphery model of Friedmann very well. After the exploration of the area

the Europeans tried to exploit the ice-free coasts and the coastal seas of the Arctic as well as possible. After a period with temporary land stations, semi-permanent and permanent land stations were built, firstly to produce whale oil for the world market as efficiently as possible, and secondly to consolidate the claims on the hunting areas. However, as soon as the demand for the resource decreased in the core, the resource was depleted or the circumstances became too difficult in the periphery the Europeans abandoned the places they had occupied for several years, leaving everything behind. In the twentieth century terminology the boom towns developed into ghost towns.

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## VI. CULTURE & TECHNICS



# DUTCH CLASS THE DUTCH LANGUAGE AS VEHICLE TO WESTERN SCIENCE

BY

Paul VAN DER VELDE

The precondition for the flowering of Rangaku was a thorough understanding of the Dutch language by Japanese scientists. This introduction will examine the beginnings of Dutch language instruction on a regular basis in between 1760 and 1780, the period covered in this volume. Numata Jiro has pointed out that during the Tanuma Era (1769-) : "... the economic developments and the Bakufu's effort to cope with them resulted in an increased study of applied sciences and technology, a trend that had already started at the end of Yoshimune's reign" <sup>1</sup>.

Because this study of the applied sciences was based largely on Western learning, it had a clear linguistic component. Only through use of the Dutch language could the scientist gain direct access to foreign technology or otherwise indirectly via the Japanese translators working on Deshima.

Up till the 1770s only a few translators had attained a level of proficiency in the Dutch language which could guarantee a succesful transference of Western science. Most famous of them was Imamura Genemon Eisei (1681-1736) whom I consider, certainly linguistically spoken, to be the founding father of Rangaku <sup>2</sup>. The Dutch language had never been taught in a classroom at Deshima. Some interpreters did receive individual instruction from

<sup>1</sup> Numato JIRO, *Western Learning*, Tokyo, 1992, p. 52. Whereas Numato Jiro believes that the trend started at the end of Yoshimune's reign, I am of the opinion that it already started at the beginning of his reign. (See : literature quoted in note 3).

<sup>2</sup> Paul VAN DER VELDE, *Die Achse um die sich alles dreht. Imamura Genemon Eisei (1671-1736) Dolmetscher und ebenburtiger "Diener" Kaempfers*, in : D. HABERLAND (ed.), *Engelbert Kaempfer — Werk und Wirkung*, Stuttgart, 1993, pp. 174-193 ; ID., *Interpreter Interpreted. Kaempfer's Japanese Collaborator Imamura Genemon Eisei*, in : B. BODART-BAILEY and Derek MASSARELLA (eds.), *The Furthest Goal ; Engelbert Kaempfer's Encounter with Tokugawa Japan*, London, 1994 (forthcoming).

VOC servants, mostly physicians. Therefore, only interpreters with a talent for languages, such as Imamura, could attain a high level of fluency and understanding. Most interpreters had only a vague notion of the Dutch language. This lack of knowledge was noted over and over again by the Dutch chiefs in their diaries. Nevertheless, scholars wanting to gain access to Western science were dependent on the few interpreters who mastered Dutch. With the increase of interest in the applied sciences the need for direct access to the Dutch language became self evident. Therefore scholars must have welcomed the news that Sinsabro (Nishi Zenzaburo) took the initiative of compiling a dictionary. In the 1767 diary of the Dutch chief H. C. Kastens, it is noted on July 13th, that: "Sinsabro has not visited our island in months. Neither has he left his house. He says he is ill and no longer fit to act as an interpreter. All interpreters say that he is feigning his illness and are laughing about him. They say that he is compiling a Dutch-Japanese dictionary and will tender his resignation. It seems that he is quite wealthy"<sup>3</sup>. Nishi Zensabro was working on the translation of P. Marin's, *Groot Nederduitsch en Fransch Woordenboek* (Comprehensive Dutch-French Dictionary) but he only reached the letter B. It would take, however, another 30 years before a Dutch-Japanese dictionary was printed which would facilitate the opportunity of independent study of Western science by scientists.

#### DUTCH LANGUAGE INSTRUCTORS

In 1777 an important development occurred which was bound to increase the language proficiency of the interpreters some of whom would become scientists themselves.

Daijsero, one of the Japanese interpreters at Deshima told the Dutch chief, A. W. Feith, that the apprentice interpreters had received permission to stay on the island for a couple of days a month, so that they could receive lessons in the Dutch language from Dutch personnel in the house of the ottonas. Feith objected on the grounds that he could not miss his assistants in view of the pressure of Company business, but he must have been aware of the great advantages the increased language skill of the interpreters would entail. Daijsero's fellow interpreter, Gisabro, tried to counter Feith's objections suggesting that it would be better if the apprentice interpreters were taught Dutch in the houses of the VOC assistants because there were more objects of Dutch origin at hand<sup>4</sup>. He also told Feith that the edict forbidding the apprentice interpreters to come to Deshima, which had been issued in 1774,

<sup>3</sup> Paul VAN DER VELDE, *The Deshima Dagregisters. Their original tables of contents, 1760-1780*, Leiden, 1994, 1767, pp. 112-113.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 1778, p. 4.

would soon be revoked. This must have happened before 4 December, 1777, because on that very day the apprentice interpreters assembled for the first time in the house of the ottonas to attend lectures in the Dutch language. By this time, Feith must have given in to the Japanese demands either under pressure or of his own accord. The assembly marked the beginning of Dutch language instruction for the interpreters on a regular basis <sup>5</sup>. The diary does not state which Dutchman taught the first lesson but it must have been one of the following persons who Feith later assigned to the job : M. A. van Groenberg, J. van Vlissingen, or F. W. Schindeler. These three assistants can be considered to be the first official Dutch language instructors in Japan <sup>6</sup>. So far little is known about their background apart from the fact that Schindeler assisted the famous physician, C. P. Thunberg, who spent the year 1778 on Deshima, collecting herbs in the vicinity of Nagasaki.

#### NATURE AND FREQUENCY OF DUTCH LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

According to the diary, language instruction was continued on the 13 February, 1778. Other entries in the 1778 diary mention instruction on February 17, 21, 25, and 28 ; on March 3, 7, and 23 ; on April 22, 28 ; on May 27, 28, 29 ; on June 7, 11, 15, 19, and 23. On 19 February a language examination took place at the Governor's residence but, to the amazement of the Dutch, they were not allowed to be present <sup>7</sup>. If this situation persisted later on remains uncertain but clearly at that time the examinations remained a prerogative of the interpreters themselves. As to the nature of the language instruction, one can assume that it was partly teaching by demonstration either by showing objects for everyday use and other objects on Deshima or from engravings in books. We can infer this from the remark made by Daijsero who as mentioned above, thought it would be better to teach in the houses of the Dutch where more objects were at hand. Into this category one can also place the use of illustrated alphabet lists which seem to have been available in Japan <sup>8</sup>.

We also have a written source about the nature of the language instruction. It is a statement by one of the language instructors, Van Groenberg, which is included in Feith's diary <sup>9</sup>. From it becomes clear that the Japanese had to write letters and make translations which were corrected by Van Groenberg. The latter wrote his statement on the orders of the Dutch chief, Feith, who had put him under house arrest after he had refused to copy the diary of

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 1778, p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 1779, p. 23. The assistant Moyer also acted as language instructor.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 1778, p. 41.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 1778, p. 43.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 1778, pp. 78-79.

the former <sup>10</sup>. He bluntly told Feith that he had more important things to do than copying his diary. These more important matters referred to his teaching Dutch to the interpreters and he told Feith to have someone else do the dull and boring work <sup>11</sup>. It was clear that Van Groenenberg derived a degree of self-confidence and status from his profession as a language instructor. He remained under house arrest for 31 days and was released on the 25th May. Two days later the lessons were postponed so that, according to Feith, the assistants should occupy themselves with Company's business. The interpreter Kosajemon protested about the suspension of the lessons. Feith gave in and the lessons were continued in June according to his diary <sup>12</sup>. Probably the lessons were interrupted during the trading season.

According to the diary, kept by Isaac Titsingh (who arrived 15th July, 1779), the language instruction recommenced on 30th January, 1779. On 28th February they were suspended during the so-called "Stille Tijd" (time when the chief was undertaking the court journey) because it had caused trouble in the preceding year. Here we see a curious example of the nature of a society which was ruled by precedents. It is obvious that during this period the assistants had virtually nothing to do <sup>13</sup>. The last entry on language instruction in Titsingh's diary is dated 11th July when he and the interpreters agreed that language instruction should take place at a frequency of eight times a month <sup>14</sup>. Whether the language instruction was continued during the trading season and the "Stille Tijd" remains unclear. Therefore, it is safe to assume that the interpreters received instruction between 60 and 100 times a year. Unfortunately, nowhere is there any indication of how many hours a language session entailed.

#### THE IMPACT OF DUTCH LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

In his statement Van Groenenberg remarked that the lessons much improved the interpreters' mastery of the Dutch language <sup>15</sup>. This improvement in the mastery of both spoken and written Dutch language certainly must have eased day to day communication and mutual understanding between the Japanese and the Dutch. This is exemplified by the Isaac Titsingh, who even engaged in a correspondence with Japanese scientists in Dutch <sup>16</sup>. Al-

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 1778, p. 75.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 1778, p. 82.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 1778, p. 92.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 1779, p. 31.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 1779, p. 94.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 1778, p. 78.

<sup>16</sup> Frank LEQUIN (ed.), *The Private Correspondence of Isaac Titsingh 1, 1785-1811*, Amsterdam, 1990.

though it never became an official policy, an open attitude towards the West was entertained by a lot of influential Japanese during the Tanuma Era. There were even plans to send 150 Japanese to Batavia to learn the craft of building seagoing ships.

The improved mastery of the Dutch language also laid the foundation for Rangaku to become a scientific movement from the 1780s onwards. Slowly Japanese scholars became acquainted with Western thought.



# COLONIAL HEALTH CARE *IN STATU NASCENDI*

BY

Iris D. R. BRUIJN

Contemporaneous Western man, used to the modern “blessings” of the welfare state, the apparently limitless advance of medical science resulting from the applications of discoveries made by the basic sciences, and the information instantly available by virtue of ever-more sophisticated means such as fax, E-mail and Internet, generally is hard put to imagine the “medical” care for groups, communities or populations about 300 years ago. Even the professional historian, used to exercise the sense of relativity in knowing that the passage of time and context of space changes the relevancy of events, will welcome a moment of reflection, such as afforded by the present Conference on Shipping, Factories and Colonization, on e.g. medical health care in a geographical area subjected to the West-European expansion, notably in Asia.

This paper gives a general overview of the health-care inaugurated by the Dutch East India Company (Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie, VOC) as practised in the factories and settlements of the VOC ; comparison with health-care systems of other empires of those days, viz. Portugal, Spain, France and England would exceed the allocated time. It will not deal with medical health care during the genuine colonial period because that is truly a 19th and even early 20th century affair in which Western states, rather than a semi-private enterprise such as the VOC, subjugated indigenous people to Western juridical-political systems after having invaded, occupied and annexed their lands or countries. It will start, after a short introduction on West-European medicine, with a medical case-history from one of the first Dutch ships that sailed out to Asia.

West-European medicine in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries was still largely based on Galenic concepts. Galen, together with Celsus one of the leading classic physicians around 100 AD, tutored that mixture of the humours (blood, phlegm, yellow and black bile) decided the health of a human being. All diseases were in origin referred back to an ill-balanced mixture of these fluids. This system is known as “Humoral Pathology”. Health and disease



depended also on a certain constellation of earth, moon and planets (an astrological root, accordingly) as well as on the proportional balance of the 4 essences of nature, viz. earth, fire, water and air (a metaphysical root, therefore). Physicians, and to a lesser extent surgeons, were trained in this prevailing paradigm and therefore sought the causes of disease in changes of climate, environment and bodily juices, that disrupted the harmonious mixture. Despite the fact that, from about 1350 onwards, the practice of autopsy had produced a growing and firm body of anatomical evidence culminating in Vesalius' *De humani fabrica corporis* (1543), and shown that Galen's anatomy was based on porcine instead of human cadavers, and despite the data on the heart's action and blood circulation (William Harvey, 1628), the medical and surgical body of the 17th and 18th centuries remained caught in a metaphysical web, that had next to nothing to do with reality. Post-Renaissance Rationalism clearly penetrated the medical field rather slowly, as suffering, anguish, misery and death rendered it an emotional charge and less open to mere rational approach<sup>1</sup>.

The Dutch fleet of merchantmen to set sail for Asia in April 1595, actually reach it and successfully sail back to Holland, included four ships: the "Hollandia", "Mauritius", "Amsterdam" and the "Duyfken". This fleet was an exploratory forerunner of the VOC, founded in 1602. On this fleet barber-surgeons were employed, an employment the VOC subsequently was to effectuate on a regular basis on all its ships. This was a new phenomenon: although the presence of ships' surgeons aboard some men-of-war was not unknown to various admiralties, the routine "part-of-the-crew" presence of one to three surgeons aboard mercantile vessels was not seen before. The surgeons Master Janszn. and Master Joost respectively aboard the "Hollandia" and "Amsterdam" probably have been among the first Dutch surgeons to arrive in Asia. During the part of their voyage in the Far East they were commissioned by the ship's council to investigate the sudden death of skipper Meulenaar, a healthy man who died unexpectedly within an hour after experiencing the sudden onset of pain in his chest in the afternoon of 26 December 1596, when the fleet sailed between the Molucces and Surabaya<sup>2</sup>.

The rumour quickly spread on board that Meulenaar had been poisoned. The autopsy was done the next morning, i.e. after a delay of ca. 15 hours. An eye-witness later told that "the autopsy had shown the dead body in such a distorted state that even a child would have judged him to be poisoned, this also being the verdict of the surgeons, the entire ship's council and all the bystanders. The deceased was blue and purple all over; the blood and

<sup>1</sup> D. DE MOULIN, *A History of Surgery*, Dordrecht, 1988.

<sup>2</sup> *De eerste schipvaart der Nederlanders naar Oost-Indië onder Cornelis de Houtman, 1595-1597*, 's Gravenhage, 1929 (Werken uitgegeven door de Linschoten-Vereeniging, XXXII, III), pp. 53-54.

poison emerged with force, not only from the mouth but also from the throat. The hair on Meulenaar's head had become so loose, that one could not pull at it, without it coming out immediately, so much so, that all were sufficiently convinced that he had been killed with an overdose of poison. God alone knew who perpetrated this crime, but it was noted that it had not been his friends, who did it"<sup>3</sup>. The fact that Meulenaar died acutely, his body blue and purple all over, with blood pouring from his mouth and that his hair had becoming loose, gave the surgeons grounds to render the verdict of poisoning. One may assume, that they had not become familiar with the putrid changes that occur rapidly in a corpse in tropical circumstances, and therefore did not ascribe the discoloration and loose hair to putrefaction.

Captain Meulenaar while having lunch suddenly developed chest-pain, of such severity that, after he had drank some water, he left the table, clutching his chest, and retired to his cabin, expressing the fear that his last moment had come. Despite the administrations of the surgeons, he expired an hour later. His skin showed a blue discoloration from the lower face down to his navel.

In retrospect, the acute chest-pain most likely indicates a cardiac infarction. The blue discoloration of the skin (which, when patchy, is also seen in scorbout and in victims of the plague, but develops gradually in those cases) is known as cyanosis, and indicates severely deficient oxygenation of the blood, such as occurs either in a perforation of the wall separating the right and left cardiac halves, or in impairment of the blood-circulation in the lungs, where the blood is enriched with oxygen. The latter possibly may occur with stenosis (narrowing) of the valve of the pulmonary artery, or with acute edema of the lungs, or with an infarction involving the right half of the heart-muscle. Any of these will produce congestion of the blood-circulation. The mention of blood coming out of the mouth might make one think of rupture of varices in the oesophagus, such as develop in (alcoholic) liver-cirrhosis, but, then again, the course of the disease would be a chronic one, extended over years, instead of a two hour lap from start to finish. Finally, the item of the captain's hair coming out as soon as one pulled at it, is a symptom seen in thallium or arsenic intoxication and may have been the main element upon which the suspicion of poisoning was based. This, however, would hold up only, if the surgeons were familiar with the effects of thallium intoxication, an unlikely supposition as the metal was discovered only in 1861. Arsenic (as rat-poison) was neither known nor used as such. The alternative disease, of which loss of hair was known at the time, viz. small pox (*Variola minor*, caused by the rod-like bacterium *Yersinia pestis*) is to be excluded in the present case, because the patient becomes severely ill, develops cutaneous pustules that may fill with blood (giving rise

<sup>3</sup> J. C. MOLLEMA, *De eerste schipvaart der Hollanders naar Oost-Indië, 1595-1597*, 's Gravenhage, 1936, p. 315.

to blue-purple patches : the black pox) and usually dies after eight to twelve days. An exceptionally rare disease, occurring in gluttons who continue eating quantities that exceed the capacity of their stomachs and therefore start to fill their oesophagus, leading to rupture of the oesophagus (known as “Boerhaave’s disease”, because Boerhaave was the first to describe it) may cross the mind of the reader, because Meulenaar developed his complaints while having lunch. This diagnosis cannot apply here, however, because the symptoms are quite different <sup>4</sup>.

The report of the autopsy on Meulenaar serves as an example of the unusual aspects of practical VOC’s health-care on board. The back-bone of the latter, viz. the daily consultation-hours for the ill and the treatment of crew-members by simple barber-surgeons with a few years formal training followed by two examinations not including the field of internal medicine, was subsequently introduced throughout the factories and settlements in Asia. At home, the surgeons would never have been allowed to do a *post-mortem* in the absence of a physician. A physician was, after all, an university-trained doctor and the surgeon was merely an empirically trained craftsman, whose education was limited to external medicine (in contrast to that of the physician). Curiously, physicians were rarely employed by the VOC abroad or aboard, whether as a result of VOC’s false thriftiness (if not avarice) or of the doctors’ lack of animus, or as a feature of the deep divide between the lower-middle-class surgeons and the middle-upper-class strata that commanded the means and right connections to send their young to Parnassus. As a consequence, all medical treatment on board and in Asia was, in general, done by these ship’s surgeons, who had been trained first to trim beards, and subsequently to set broken bones, to bleed people in case of fever, to amputate, to suture wounds, to incise abscesses, to pull teeth, and to trepan skulls <sup>5</sup>.

Outside the Republic, they were suddenly confronted with the plight to diagnose and to cure internal (tropical) diseases, which in North-Western Europe was the physician’s competence. If scurvy and typhus did not ravish the crew of the East-Indiamen, there were a number of other internal diseases which regularly visited the ships : dysentery, after the fresh water-supply had run out ; respiratory disorders such as pleurisy, bronchitis and pneumonia, due to extreme climatic changes and quite infectious because of the coughing, sneezing and close interindividual contact in the crowded sleeping quarters, that accommodated up to 300 wretched people on a surface area of less than a 1,000 square feet. Stomach upheaval and bowel diseases could be caused

<sup>4</sup> J. A. M. VAN SON a.o., “Het syndroom van Boerhaave”, in : *Nederlands Tijdschrift voor Geneeskunde*, 133 (1989), no. 24, pp. 1201-1204.

<sup>5</sup> A. E. LEUFTINK, *Harde Heelmeesters. Zeelieden en hun dokters in de 18de eeuw*, Zutphen, 1991.

by contaminated, Salmonella-containing, food and water and were most contagious because the vomit and faeces were often deposited next to or under the hammocks, the sick being too weak to hurry to the single “toilet” : a small platform astern outside the hull. Venereal diseases manifesting after their incubation period generally were not a major problem nor were the cases due to injury (vocational or war) ; falling overboard was almost certain to end fatally as the sailors generally did not know how to swim and the ships were scarcely manoeuvrable. The VOC attempted to meet these health-problems on board by providing the luxury of three surgeons per East-Indiaman, viz. a chief-, a second- and a third-surgeon, the latter two being assistants to the chief. Not only did the ships’ surgeons hold a daily “clinic” on deck, visited twice daily the sick, they also decided on the necessary treatment, and prepared and administered the medications. Their treatment was mainly directed towards the symptoms observed on the basis of Galenic and humoral concepts <sup>6</sup>.

As the Company established factories throughout an area extending from South Africa up to Japan with its headquarters in Batavia, hundreds of thousands of Europeans poured into the Asian theatre. They were needed as sailors, soldiers, craftsmen, governors, and tradesmen. Some of them settled there, lived there and the better part of them died there. These people were essential to the trade of the Company : without a healthy crew it was bad sailing and without a healthy army, the settlements and trade remained in jeopardy. In Asia, the organisation and the structure to take care of the ill employees had to be built from scratch. In the presence of a principally hostile environment, both with regard to the population and to the tropical climate, and in the absence of family, friends, and familiar surroundings, the necessity of providing a health care that replaced the latter was felt much more acutely and sharply than would have been the case in Europe. One of the priorities in every VOC settlement therefore was the construction of a hospital, manned by surgeons. Initially small (sometimes only consisting of one or two rooms) and simple, built of wood, rattan and thatched roofs, the hospitals were repeatedly enlarged or rebuilt in stone to accommodate the growing number of in-patients. This was especially the case in Batavia, where more often than not, an exhausted and ill crew arrived, after the long voyage from Holland.

Ship’s surgeons, working in these hospitals, were confronted with diseases unknown and unheard of in their home country, such as beri-beri, framboesia, dysentery and malaria. They had to depend on their empirical experience in treating these diseases, as their theoretical education was minimal. Hesitantly, a certain professionalism emerged in the hospitals of Batavia, the medical centre of the Dutch settlements in Asia. First, throughout the various districts and quarters of growing Batavia, medical health care was distributed ; at several

<sup>6</sup> See note 5.

points in the city, (ships') surgeons served as General Practitioners and a system of city-physicians and city-surgeons was introduced <sup>7</sup>.

Second, several hospitals were built during the course of the Company's stay in Batavia. The late 17th and 18th centuries, in particular, presented the Company with some major health problems with respect to its employees. Typhus epidemics raged among the outward bound ships during the years 1690 and 1695, as well as 1770-1775 <sup>8</sup>. In addition, from 1733 onwards, Batavia and the settlements along Java's northern coastline were ravished by malaria, most probably due to the construction of fish-ponds on the shore by the local population <sup>9</sup>. All this, together with the patients from the arriving ships, produced an intolerable situation: the City Hospital designed for 600 in-patients had to accommodate sometimes more than 1,500, and mortality figures rose to such heights that VOC's employees tried anything to avoid being admitted.

Where the City-hospital served quite adequately during the 17th century, the crises during the 18th century, as described above, necessitated the construction of more hospitals. As was custom in Western Europe, lepers were singled out from the community by screening Batavia's population and separated from the community by sending them to the Leprosy-House on the island Purmerend. The insane were concentrated in an institute on the island Onrust. Subsequently, the more severely ill patients were allocated to the City-hospital, the moderately ill patients admitted to the Extra-Mural Hospital (*Buitenhospitaal*), the convalescents sent to Tjipanas Spa, 80 kilometres south of the city, and the incurable were dismissed and either sent home or put in the local Poor-House <sup>10</sup>. For those who were sent home as invalids due to injury incurred in the Company's service there was some financial provision.

Third, the 18th century epidemics in Batavia as well as the prevalence of typhus on board the ships at the end of the 17th and in the second half of the 18th century, led the Company to issue the obligatory reporting of surgeons on the diseases they came across, aboard in the form of surgeons' journals <sup>11</sup>; in the hospitals they had to account for the distribution of medications. These reports were checked by the board of the hospitals' trustees; the surgeon's journals were examined by the Inspector of the Roadstead. This essentially is the very beginning of a medical service inspection or audit.

<sup>7</sup> Based on research by the author to be presented in her Ph.D. thesis.

<sup>8</sup> J. R. BRUIJN, "De personeelsbehoefte van de VOC overzee en aan boord, bezien in Aziatisch en Nederlands perspectief", in: *Bijdragen en Mededelingen voor de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, XCI (1976), p. 223.

<sup>9</sup> P. H. VAN DER BRUG, *Malaria en Malaise. De VOC in Batavia in de achttiende eeuw*, Amsterdam, 1994.

<sup>10</sup> See note 7.

<sup>11</sup> Dutch State Archives The Hague, VOC 111, 10.12.1695.

Fourth, the developing medical organisation was rendered a hierarchical structure : at the lowest level, there were the surgeons, stationed on the ships and in the hospitals ; then came the practitioners (*practisijns*), who were experienced surgeons, stationed in the City-hospital of Batavia, accountable to the trustees of the hospital, who — in their turn — advised the Government of Batavia on medical aspects ; the top, in the Castle of Batavia, where the government had its seat as did the Health Authorities of Asia, viz. the Head of Surgery (*Hoofd der Chirurgie*) and the Inspector of the Roadstead to whom all ships' surgeons were accountable <sup>12</sup>. At the pharmacy of the Castle, medicines were prepared, stored and distributed to the VOC settlements throughout Asia as well as to the hospitals in Batavia. At major settlements such as Makassar, Amboina, Malakka, etc., the Batavia pattern of a major hospital with hierarchical surgical staff, ward rounds, free provision of medicines, bedding, clothing, food and drink, was reiterated.

During the course of two centuries a health-care organisation was developed in the settlements of the VOC, with Batavia as its centre. Batavia was the hub of Asian trade, the staple-place of all goods to be transported, the headquarters of administration, accounting, government, military and legislation. Of all settlements, this city was the most populous. Clearly, it was in Batavia, that the health-care organisation was most needed. This included the Company to build at least seven hospitals in and around the city and to shape the organisation along the lines of health-care systems as they were then known in West-Europe, be it that the Company had to make the best with available surgical personnel. It included the distribution of general practitioners over the various city-areas (districts) as well as distribution of ships' surgeons among the settlements and factories in Asia ; a separation of patients according to their diseases and severity of illness ; obligatory reporting on the diagnosis and treatment of diseases ; examination of these reports ; a supervisory hierarchy, and a compensation rule for the incapacitated. Most, if not all, these measures were inspired by a strange mixture of commercial interest and a christian awareness of one's duty to fellow men.

The Company did not extend its health care service to the indigenous population ; it was primarily meant for its own (European) employees. Conversely, and on an individual basis, contact was sought with native healers, and native plants and herbs were studied and sent to the Botanical Garden of Leiden University. Javanese healers believed in the decisive influence of demons and deities on the health of the human being and as such did not connect with the Galenic concept of disease which, though being equally and essentially wrong, had at least the "virtue" of being more rational and consistent. Their botanical knowledge, however, did serve to broaden the medical

<sup>12</sup> See note 7.

knowledge of the Europeans, as medication at those times was still mainly resting on knowledge of the medicinal effect of plants and herbs. In this context one should mention Dr. J. Bontius, one of the first and few physicians in the Company's employ, who arrived in Batavia in 1627, and who was convinced that herbs grew in every country useful for the indigenous diseases. He studied the Asian vegetation, acquainted himself with Javanese medicament therapy, and was the first to write a methodic survey of the principal diseases occurring in the Archipelago <sup>13</sup>.

Unguided by theory, the surgeons' empiricism remained the cornerstone for practising internal medicine. They learned to use *cortex Peruviana* (quinine) to abate fevers, had ship's decks washed and between-decks aired (as primitive hygienic measures, in the traditional belief that "bad air" (*mal air*) was the root of contagion), ordered fresh fruits to combat scurvy and insisted upon the provisions of washed clothing for the patients. They urged that training in anatomy was to be formalised in the main hospitals which sometimes was implemented. The Government in Batavia took additional measures: city-physician positions were created, midwives installed, a patient-referral system introduced and social medicine (for the incapacitated) initiated. As already mentioned, leprosy- and mental-hospitals were built, be it as a segregatory measure. The Company repeatedly issued formal "Instructions to Surgeons", had the central Amsterdam pharmacy compose an updated *Pharmacopeia* for obligatory use by the surgeons, and even turned to the famous Hermanus Boerhaave of the Leiden Medical Faculty requesting his advice to turn the tide of rising mortality among the VOC personnel in and around Batavia <sup>14</sup>. But it was only after modern research that a rational health-care system became feasible. One had to wait to the late 19th century before Pasteur and Koch clarified infectious disease, and to the early 20th century before Eykman defined the cause of beri-beri as a carencial disease, i.e. deficiency of a factor (thiamin/vitamin B<sub>1</sub>) in the food. All that time, health care remained stagnant. The system continued to exist, after the British interlude from 1811 to 1814, on a much smaller scale. Its back-bone, the ship's surgeons of the VOC, was not longer there. They had walked in ignorance with good intentions through an *obscuratium* lasting nearly two centuries and stumbled on the floundering of Galen's humoral pathology. Academic medical knowledge, sequestered in the traditional Galenic humoral paradigm, had failed to stand in their good stead. The fact that the ingestion of fresh lemons and other fruits would cure scorbut, a fundamental observation made already in the 16th century, could have led to the concept of deficiency-disease, as it was done for beri-beri and

<sup>13</sup> J. BONTIUS, *De Medicina Indorum...*, Leiden 1642.

<sup>14</sup> I. D. R. BRUIJN, "The health care organization of the Dutch East India Company at home", in: *Social History of Medicine*, 7 (1994), no. 3, pp. 359-381.

pellagra much later<sup>15</sup>. This did not happen, because the appropriate attitude, viz. to analyse by experimentation the essence and import of one's experience, was a thing neither the surgeons nor the physicians had been trained to acquire. Their nebulous notion that "mal air" was at the root of contagious disease (the "miasma" theory) led them to clean ship's and hospital's quarters by sprinkling of vinegar and burning of salpeter. Amazingly, the essentially correct germ theory of contagious disease had been advanced by Girolamo Fracastoro as early as 1546 (who, after the many epidemics that ravaged the Mediterranean populations, advocated the avoidance of contact with patients' clothes and furniture) never got a fair chance, until John Snow, as late as 1854, convincingly demonstrated the truth of it by tracing all London cholera cases to a single source of contaminated drinking water<sup>16</sup>. This underlines the astounding fact, that hopelessly inept paradigms such as the "humors" and "miasma" controlled medical concepts for centuries, just like the "vitalism" theory dominated the "materialistic" concept in Dutch medical thinking of the early to middle 19th century. The germ concept, from this humble and essentially correct beginning, might have led them to the concept of strict (personal) hygiene, of the importance of boiled water, of washed clothing and cleansed living quarters. Strict hygiene, since Lister and Pasteur, has done more to reduce morbidity and mortality than all other medicosurgical discoveries together. The pressure of the exclusive task set by the employer, viz. to cure, left these surgeons no choice but to continue to follow methods and apply techniques that were doomed to failure. Pursuing a road that would not lead to a solution, the VOC's overhead for health care rose exponentially and became a major one of the factors that produced its ultimate break-down. But Dutch tropical medicine was since then bound to Asia, to the Dutch Indies, from the moment Master Janszn. and Master Joost set foot on the islands of the Archipelago, up to the time that the Republic Indonesia became an independent, sovereign state.

<sup>15</sup> F. J. TICKNER and V. C. MEDWEI, "Scurvy and the health of European crews in the Indian Ocean in the seventeenth century", in: *Medical History*, 2 (1958), p. 40; T. J. S. PATTERSON, "The medical practice of the East India Company", in: *Social History of Medicine*, 2 (1980), pp. 40-43.

<sup>16</sup> Girolamo FRACASTORO, *De contagione*, Venice, 1546; F. H. GARRISON, *Introduction to the History of Medicine*, Philadelphia, 1961.

# TRAVEL LITERATURE AT THE TIME OF THE DUTCH EAST INDIA COMPANY (1602-1795)

BY

M. L. BAREND-VAN HAEFTEN

What can a scholar of literary history contribute to an International Conference on “Shipping, Factories and Colonization”, at which contributions can naturally be expected from maritime historians who will be sure to present a lot of hard facts and data. It sometimes seems in studying maritime history that the cultural dimension is a little underexposed, although, at least as far as the functioning of the Dutch East India Company is concerned, that seems to be changing. In studying the cultural history of the Dutch overseas, the historian not only has the customary archival sources at his disposal, but a number of material sources as well, such as colonial structures, forts, churches, churchyards with gravestones, paintings, drawings and engravings, and furniture and other religious and domestic objects of common use.

In reconstructing the colonial overseas past, in my opinion, texts of literary fiction can also play a role. The journals and descriptions which were written in connection with the great commercial voyages informed and naturally influenced contemporary readers. Texts are, after all, not only mirrors of reality, they influence that reality to the same degree. Consequently, in determining the informative value of texts, the function of the texts should be studied as well. In this contribution I want to give a — necessarily — very brief outline of the various kinds of texts that were produced as a result of journeys to Batavia, the main factory of the Dutch East India Company; of one or two themes frequently handled in those texts, and of the function the texts served in their time. I hope that by the end of this contribution I will have been able to convince this company of maritime historians that that is worthwhile: in the historiography of literature, fortunately, that is no longer doubted.

Someone who played a comparatively large role in forming a picture of the East in the Republic is the ship's surgeon Nicolaas de Graaff, who lived from 1619 to 1688 and made sixteen voyages all around the globe. Of these,

no less than five were to the East. In 1701 his “Journeys of Nicolaus de Graaff, to the four quarters of the world” (*Reisen van Nicolaus de Graaff, na de vier gedeeltens der werelds*) together with the “East-Indian Mirror” (*Oost-Indise spiegel*) appeared posthumously, and were followed in 1704 by a second edition. In 1719 a French translation was brought out. The “East-Indian Mirror” in particular would impress its readers and frequently be cited or used as a model. In its reception, the emphasis was not placed on the wide range of information the author gives about the Dutch East India Company, its settlements in Asia and the voyage there, a part of the exemplary function of his mirror, but on the condemnation of the morally repugnant activities and motives of many of the more highly placed officials in their forbidden private trade. The long passage about the lazy, lascivious and extravagant way of life led by the colonists’ wives, who were said to handle their slaves with exceptional cruelty, has become especially familiar. De Graaff emphatically declared in his text that he did not only see the wives in Batavia, but also those in all the other places in which the Company had factories, as in Malakka, Ceilon, Cochin, Coromandel, Bengalen, Ambon, Banda and Ternate.

In reading the surgeon’s accusation, one must not lose sight of the fact that mirrors were textbooks with, in addition to an encyclopedic, informative function, an exemplary one. In mirrors you could read how you should and how you should not behave. That could be done with positive and negative examples or a combination of both. De Graaff chose a description that was functional within the genre but that in style was excessively negative about the behavior of various kinds of wives of colonists in the East. In his lengthy passage on these women’s behavior, the author, a representative of the conventional middle class of society, seems to put into words the cultural shock he experienced on seeing the mixed colonial society which was created by Dutch East India Company policy. This was alien to his own ideas, norms and values. The form of living together in the East, for instance, deviated from the conjugal family in Holland, where the transition from a multi-generational family to a nuclear family had taken place.

Not only have the writings of Nicolaas de Graaff been preserved, but a number of tangible proofs of his presence in the East have survived in the form of maps and drawings. In combination with the texts in his accounts of journeys, they provide us with data concerning the way in which the Dutch East India Company mapped countries, regions, cities and factories at the time. In 1671 he was asked, as a kind of spy, to draw a plan showing the principal places, palaces and castles along the Ganges, when he made a trip to the highest point where the Company owned a factory, Chiapra. He also painted a watercolour of the factory itself. And in compiling the large atlas of the Dutch East India Company that was made at the end of the 17th century in Amsterdam, Isaac de Graaf (no relation) used some sketches by Nicolaas

de Graaff, who in 1678 drew, for example, the Dutch trading posts on the Malabar coast <sup>1</sup>.

In the 17th and 18th centuries, travel texts were popular with an international public. They fit in with the familiar tradition of instruction and amusement; consequently, many intellectuals had them in their libraries. A figure such as Petrus Rabus repeatedly stressed the pleasure he and his literary friends derived from reading travel writings. As he put it, he read them not only for relaxation, but also because of an urge to learn about the unknown. In choosing summaries of travel texts to put in his scholarly journal, the "Book Hall of Europe" (*Boekzaal van Europe*) (1692-1702), in which he also considered Nicolaas de Graaff's work, he looked for veracity, amusement value and educational character <sup>2</sup>. That first criterion, veracity, was important. In forewords and notes stating that they had experienced everything themselves, many authors of travel texts did their best to defend themselves against accusation of falsehood. At the time, "traveller" was considered a synonym for "liar", and indeed, a number of travel texts were entirely or partially fictitious. So the forewords in accounts of journeys should be regarded as stereotypes, and often each one has to be examined on its own merits to discover whether the author's statement that he is describing reality corresponds with the contents of the text.

For the lower ranks of society, in which there were people who were unable to read or could not afford to buy travel texts, songs played a role in forming a picture of the East. In a number of song texts about the area allocated for trade by charter to the Dutch East India Company, a certain propaganda function can be recognized. They often emphasize the attractive products supplied by the East: not only costly materials and jewelry, but also, for example, herbs, fruits and spices. Although the trip to Batavia was long and dangerous, and fewer than half of the people returned to their homeland, they were obliged to sail because of these products and the commercial advantages for the Company, and so people were obliged to depart.

To sweeten the bitter pill of that departure and the dangerous trip, the praises were regularly sung of another subject. Not only was there female beauty in the East for frequent and intense enjoyment, but many dark-skinned women made themselves available, and were even willing to pay for male favors. While for the Company the attraction of the East Indies was commercial returns, for the seafarers it was mirrored as an erotic land of plenty. However, it was also necessary to sail back. So in songs dealing with that, the dark-skinned

<sup>1</sup> See an account of the work of Nicolaas de Graaff and his maps in M. BAREND-VAN HAEFTEN, *Oost-Indië gespiegeld. Nicolaas de Graaff, een schrijvend chirurgijn in dienst van de VOC*, Zutphen, 1992.

<sup>2</sup> See B. MARRES-KORTMANN and G. SCHUURMAN, *De belangstelling van Pieter Rabus voor reisbeschrijvingen*, in: H. BOTS (ed.), *Pieter Rabus en de Boekzaal van Europe (1692-1702)*, Amsterdam, 1974, pp. 397-407.

women are portrayed as lewd, black cows, that just give you venereal diseases. The white women in Europe in those song texts are far preferable to the cursed brood of Ham. This name refers to the book of Genesis, with the story of Noah's drunkenness after the flood and the reactions of his sons, Ham, Shem and Japheth. Ham jeered at his naked father and was cursed by him, while Shem and Japheth covered his nakedness with a garment. Theologians designated the black Africans as the lineage of Ham, the Christians in Europe as the issue of Japheth and the Jews were said to descend from Shem. Asiatic peoples were often considered descendants of Ham, too. References to this curse have long served as the biblical justification for slavery, the slave trade, exploitation and discrimination, and are regularly found in songs <sup>3</sup>.

Apart from the oral information circuit, of course, the Republic's inhabitants mainly had to depend on printed texts written by male servants of the Dutch East Indies Company to form a picture of the East Indies and of the behavior of colonists and their wives. Just a few individuals could gain information from letters written by the women in the higher social circles in Batavia to family in the homeland, as from a letter Johanna de Beveren wrote to her great-aunt in 1688. The letter written by her sister Cornelia a year later is also known. Cornelia and Johanna were European immigrants from a prominent lineage of Dordrecht regents. Their father, a lawyer by profession, was appointed Councillor Extra-ordinary of the East Indies in 1685. In the epistle, Johanna attempts to tell her aunt something of the country and its people. She writes that the only servants the family has are black slaves, whom she qualifies as murderous and lazy. Since those slaves do not work nearly so hard as a Dutch maid, the family needs ten of them for the large household <sup>4</sup>.

Her sister Cornelia's letter gives a description of the way in which she, one of the elite of Batavia, was married in 1689 with a great show of pomp and circumstance. The bride devotes elaborate detail to her expensive gown and to the many precious jewels she wore on that occasion. She goes on to describe the lavishly furnished bedroom she received from her husband, a free burgher born in Malakka. While Johanna tells of the need for ten slaves, Cornelia can reckon 59 slaves to her household, which was exceptional at the time, even in the homes of higher officials. We learn nothing about the treatment of the slaves, but Cornelia does relate their various activities <sup>5</sup>.

Printed Dutch texts written by women from the period of the Dutch East India Company are unknown. That is largely the result of the Company's

<sup>3</sup> As a source on the songs, I used B. PAASMAN, *Lof van Oost-Indiën. Liedjes uit de VOC-tijd*, in: "Indische Letteren", 6 (1991), pp. 1-17.

<sup>4</sup> Regional archive Nassau-Brabant, collection Van der Hoeven, Van Beveren papers.

<sup>5</sup> The letter was published in G. D. J. SCHOTEL, *Het Oud-Hollandsch Huisgezin der Zeventiende Eeuw*, Haarlem, 1868, pp. 307-310.

policy on marriage, which had been the subject of discussion in the first half of the 17th century. A few early attempts to bring orphans from the Netherlands as suitable wives for men serving the Company resulted in complaints about the limited origins and the dissolute lives of these women. It was decided that only the wives of higher Company employees would be permitted to go to the East Indies. The Company favoured marriages between its employees and Asiatic women, most of them redeemed slaves, and Eurasian women, the daughters of European men and Asiatic women <sup>6</sup>.

There were therefore not many Dutch women in the Company settlements, and the women of mixed blood had only a limited command of Dutch. Even as it is, we do not have many texts in general by female writers of the period of an "egodocumentary" character. Out of the more than a thousand bibliographically described "egodocuments" from the 17th or 18th centuries in the Netherlands, less than five per cent were written by women <sup>7</sup>. At present, the importance of "egodocuments" like diaries and letters is recognized within the disciplines of both the history of ideas and the history of mentalities, while they have also started to play a role within the historiography of literature <sup>8</sup>. Even though writings by women about the East Indies and the voyages there and back are few and far between, we still have a few at our disposal.

As for diaries kept up to date on board ship, the journal of two daughters of Hendrik Swellengrebel, a former governor of the Cape of Good Hope, has been the only one known up to now. In 1751 they wrote down the events of their trip to the Republic from the Cape where they were born. Their journal is important mainly because of the quantity of information they give about the size, composition and variation of meals and the (cultural) activities on the trip <sup>9</sup>. Helena and Johanna Swellengrebel noted, for instance, that officers and passengers performed one of Vondel's plays, and that they regularly read passages in that same author's book. And there was also some new information given about the music people played and the various party games they engaged in on board ship.

Recently a journal was discovered in a family archive that was written in 1736 by Maria Wilhelmina and Johanna Susanna Lammens, again two sisters. They travelled from Vlissingen to Batavia in the company of their brother, who had been appointed Councillor Extra-ordinary of Justice. The journal

<sup>6</sup> See J. G. TAYLOR, *The Social World of Batavia: European and Eurasian in Dutch Asia*, Madison, 1983.

<sup>7</sup> R. LINDEMAN, *Ego in Clivia. Korte en vermakelijke inleiding tot de studie van de vroegmoderne Nederlandse egodocumenten*, Amstelveen, 1990, p. 5 and p. 45, footnote 15.

<sup>8</sup> Dealing with the history of the evaluation of "egodocuments", see R. DEKKER, *Wat zijn egodocumenten?*, in: "Indische Letteren", 8 (1993), pp. 103-112.

<sup>9</sup> G. J. SCHUTTE, *Een damesverlag van een scheepsreis in 1751*, in: "Tijdschrift voor Zee-geschiedenis", 36 (1978), pp. 34-39.

is not only unique because it is fifteen years older than that of the Swellengrebel sisters, it is also better written. The women, from a wealthy burgomaster's family in Axel, did not write down their travel experiences exclusively for themselves, a pattern seen in other "egodocuments". The writers often wrote those texts to record their experiences and reflections for posterity. Maria and Johanna Lammens are addressing an audience consisting of their friends and family<sup>10</sup>. Their journal must have been intended for circulation in that set, which was done more than once at the time.

This journal is not only of value because the sisters from Zeeland had such a fluent style of writing. The information about life on board an East Indiaman as seen from the perspective of the quarterdeck is also extremely valuable. In no text of that period other than this journal do we obtain such a comprehensive and precise look at the daily experiences of passengers on board a ship of the Dutch East India Company and during their stay at the Cape of Good Hope. The detailed, feminine, witty description of run-of-the-mill matters is important for our knowledge of life on board ship and the way in which female passengers from the better social circles spent their days. In a personal and direct style, and probably not very bothered by literary conventions, Johanna and Maria describe their activities on board and all the events able to catch the attention of both.

On this occasion, I can not go into any more detail about this journal. However, I hope that you will agree that studying both the printed texts I called to your attention and those passed down in handwriting is worthwhile. In this way the discipline of the historian of literature can contribute to the study of the Dutch East India Company, like that of economists, social historians, anthropologists and maritime historians.

<sup>10</sup> The Hague, family archive D'Aulnis de Bourouill / Eyck van Zuylichem.

# SOME REMARKS ON THE LINES OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN DUTCH FACTORIES IN THE EAST INDIES AND THE NETHERLANDS BEFORE 1800

BY

P. J. MOREE

National Library of the Netherlands, The Hague

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries — in the era of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) — communication between the Netherlands and the factories and strongholds of the Company in South Africa and Asia was not without problems. On average it took a vessel — loaded with both official and private letters — at least nine months to reach Batavia (present-day Jakarta). By the time of arrival many a letter had already become archival material. Nevertheless, the sea route was the only way — apart from a risky land route via the Middle East — of exchanging strategic, commercial and private information between employees of this trading company and its overseas factories <sup>1</sup>.

Until the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War (1780-1783) the Company had never encouraged its servants to write to their acquaintances and relations overseas. Despite of this, the yearly number of private letters sent from and to the East Indies must have been enormous. The greater part of these letters was probably *illegal*, i.e. sent along with crew members or passengers on Eastindiaman, thereby avoiding censorship <sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The author is grateful to the Board of Directors of the National Library of the Netherlands, The Hague, for allowing him to participate in the international conference “Shipping, Factories & Colonization” in Brussels in November 1994, where this text was presented as one of the lectures. He is also much obliged to drs. J. J. Pijpers for his comments on the English text.

<sup>2</sup> F. DE HAAN, *Oud Batavia. Gedenkboek uitgegeven door het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen naar aanleiding van het driehonderdjarig bestaan der stad in 1919*, 2nd part, Batavia, 1922, pp. 375-377.

It was not until the end of the eighteenth century that the VOC established a packet service with small, fast sailing ships. For the first time in VOC-history, the sending of private mail to Asia was actually *promoted* by the Company.

This short article deals with the changing attitude of the VOC towards the sending of private mail overseas. With the aid of contemporary sources — in particular private letters — it will be shown how much daily life at the factories was influenced by the availability of the latest news from home. The article will be concluded with an example of private correspondence between an East India Company servant and his family during the first quarter of the eighteenth century.

#### THE ATTITUDE OF THE VOC TOWARDS PRIVATE MAIL

It is a well known fact that during the two centuries that the VOC existed, the Dutch were to be found almost everywhere in the region between the Cape of Good Hope and Japan. Living and working at these overseas factories and other establishments were Company-servants whose daily monotonous life was relieved by the arrival of oral and written news from the Netherlands and other factories in Asia. For this news they were almost completely dependent on the ships of the VOC. These people rarely missed an opportunity to send a letter — often in triplicate — along with these ships. Phrases like “dear brother, this is the *second* letter I have written to you today” are not uncommon <sup>3</sup>.

When one is doing research in a former Colonial Archive and one is lucky enough to discover private letters which were sent from the Netherlands to the East Indies or vice versa during the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries, one will notice that along with the addressee on most of the letters usually the words “Met Vriend, die God geleide” (= With friend, guided by the Lord) are written. These words are not just to be interpreted as a talismanic inscription, but they actually tell us something about the way in which private persons in Europe and the East Indies communicated. Most of the letters were in fact carried illegally ... *by friends* <sup>4</sup>.

The reason for this illicit postal traffic is to be found in the attitude of the VOC towards private letters. The Company preferred to avoid private mail but, as they realized that this was impossible to achieve, allowed it to a certain extent. As the directors of the VOC were very afraid that all sorts of strategic information was going to leak to competitors in Europe through these letters,

<sup>3</sup> The quoted letter, dated August 31, 1788, was sent by Mrs. J. L. Loets from Gouda to her brother in the East Indies; see A.R.A. (General State Archives, The Hague, the Netherlands), VOC-archive, no. 4772, brieven van en aan particulieren verzonden met VOC-schepen, 1780-1803 (= letters sent by and to private persons with ships of the VOC, 1780-1803).

<sup>4</sup> DE HAAN, *Oud Batavia, op. cit.*, p. 376.

all incoming and outgoing mail was being censored. The letters were to be handed over to Company officials who would put them in the ship's box <sup>5</sup>.

It is therefore very likely that persons who were leaving the Netherlands, the Cape of Good Hope or Batavia on vessels of the VOC were not only crew-members or passengers, but also unofficial mailcarriers. Let us look at two examples of this practice, one from the seventeenth and one from the eighteenth century.

In the city of Hoorn a certain *Anthonius Scherius* wrote a letter to a friend, stationed at the Cape of Good Hope, in November 1672. Apart from describing the brutal murder of Johan and Cornelis de Witt at The Hague in August of that year, he also mentioned that "The bringer of this (letter) is a person, whose parents are known to me and my wife as honest people, (...) and who is of good humour and honourable".

As a favour in return, Scherius wrote a letter of recommendation for this anonymous mail carrier, who was looking for a modest position at the Cape <sup>6</sup>.

More than one hundred years later — in April 1786 — a woman from Rotterdam wrote a letter to her sister in Batavia. In this letter she complained that she had not received any message from her since a number of years. She mentioned that she had been awaiting the arrival of the Eastindiaman the "Mentor" in Rotterdam and had asked "the captain whether he had brought letters for me", which was not the case. Another member of the crew had then told her that letters from the sister — who was alive and well in Batavia — would be delivered by a certain lieutenant, who never showed up. The woman from Rotterdam then took the initiative herself and wrote: "My dear sister, the gentleman who is carrying this letter for me used to be an intimate friend of your husband. Hope to receive tidings from him when the Lord saves his and your life. (...) Have to stop because the gentleman is waiting for the letter (...) Greetings from your ever loving sister" <sup>7</sup>.

These are only two out of hundreds of examples, which I have found in various collections of so-called East Indian letters. They show us that during both the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries people in the Netherlands, the Cape and Asia preferred to send their private mail via friends or vague acquaintances instead of trusting them to the ship's box and thus exposing them to censorship.

<sup>5</sup> P. VAN DAM, *Beschryvinghe van de Oostindische Compagnie*, ed. by F. W. STAPEL, vol. III, The Hague, 1943 (Rijks Geschiedkundige Publicatiën), pp. 382-383.

<sup>6</sup> The quoted letter, dated November 4, 1672, was sent by Anthonius Scherius from (probably) Hoorn to Coenraed Bredembach at the Cape of Good Hope; see P.R.O. (Public Record Office, London), High Court of Admiralty, no. 30, box 228.

<sup>7</sup> The quoted letter, dated April 20, 1786, was sent by Mrs. A. Brink née Aarnout from Rotterdam to her sister in Batavia; see A.R.A., VOC-archive, no. 4772.

This way of mail transport had one disadvantage, however : lots of private letters were lost, never delivered to the right address or, in the case that the illicit carrier died during the voyage, were just thrown away. This situation lasted from the early days of the Company till the 1780's.

#### THE PACKET SERVICE OF THE VOC : INNOVATION

During the difficult period after the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War, the years 1783-1795, there has been an important innovation in Dutch-Asiatic shipping. In order to approve communications between the directors in the Netherlands and the South-African and Asiatic factories of the Company, a packet-service with ten small, fast-sailing brigs came into operation.

If there was one thing the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War had pointed out to certain officials of the VOC, it was the deficiency of correspondence between the Netherlands and Asia. During the war the communication had been very scarce. In fact only neutral ships, sometimes chartered by the VOC itself, were able to reach Asia. Although from 1783 on, the VOC theoretically had been able to restore communications by sending out numbers of East Indiamen, in fact the lines of contact remained very much distorted during the first post-war years. This was felt not only by the Company, but also by certain Navy officials, who had sent warships to Asiatic waters as defensive support to the Company, and who were very anxious to keep in touch with them. The *Heeren XVII* — the directors of the Company — concluded that the VOC needed a number of fast-sailing ships, in order to deliver urgent messages to the East Indies. Especially after the appearance of a new competitor in Asian waters in the year 1785 — the Royal Philippine Company — the States-General, the Navy and the VOC all agreed that measures should be taken immediately. If the Dutch Navy-ships were to take action against the Spaniards, a good and speedy line of communication with the Dutch Republic was necessary <sup>8</sup>.

In 1786, a solution to the deficiency of communication was found. The VOC was recommended to introduce a packet-service between the Netherlands and the East Indies. At fixed times in the year small packet-boats, designed for speed, were to sail between the Netherlands, the Cape of Good Hope and Batavia, and vice-versa, and also between the Cape and Ceylon. To establish

<sup>8</sup> Literature used for this section : J. DE HULLU (probably), *Oost-Indische pakketbooten in de 18e eeuw*, in : "Jaarverslag Nederlands Postmuseum 1966", pp. 18-23 (article originally published in 1909) ; J. R. BRUIJN e.a. (eds.), *Dutch-Asiatic Shipping in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, vol. I, The Hague, 1987 (Rijks Geschiedkundige Publicatiën), p. 50 ; P. J. MOREE, *Aangelegd om snel te zeilen. De pakketvaart van de Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Leiden, 1987), *passim*. The author is currently working on a Ph.D. thesis on the history of mail transport between the Netherlands and Asia during the 17th and 18th centuries.

a regular service with small ships, with the sole purpose of delivering messages, was quite a revolutionary idea.

Every three months a packet-boat was to leave a Dutch harbour, carrying the latest news and orders from the *Heeren XVII* and the chambers. The High Government in Batavia was to send a packet-boat every three months in return. In order to guarantee the continuity of these departures, five packet-boats were needed. A sixth boat was needed to sail twice a year between the Cape and Ceylon. Also, four other boats were to be built as spare ones, in case of calamity or delay. Thus, a total of ten packet-boats was to be built. In some of the names of these ships — for example the “Vlijt”, the “Haasje” and the “Snelheid” a reference to speed can be found.

The packet-boats were, according to the detailed plan, to have crews of only 24 men, including able and experienced officers. In order to recruit these people successfully, the VOC was recommended to pay them higher wages than those on ordinary East Indiamships. These brigs, as was stated in the plan, were meant to sail from the Netherlands to Batavia and vice-versa in no more than eleven months.

An innovation like this was likely to have its costs. Company officials knew this and they came up with a simple but effective solution : the packet service was to be financed out of the proceeds of *a private mail service*. The mail had to be paid by the receiving party and the largest part of the revenues of this reasonably prized service were to flow directly into the petty cash of the various chambers of the VOC.

On the first of September 1788, the “Maria Louisa” sailed away from the Texel roadstead. This small ship sailed to Batavia via the Cape and returned to Texel on August 3, 1789. The total duration of outward and homeward voyage was eleven months and two days. The three officers were given a bonus, because of their rapid journey. The “Maria Louisa” returned to the East Indies next October.

During the period 1788-1795 there were 28 outward voyages of packet-boats and 21 return voyages. This packet-service actually *flourished* from 1788 till the end of 1792. And — one might ask — what about the private letters ? Did people in the Netherlands and Asia actually send their personal messages with the official new mail service of the VOC ? Although I have found a few examples of illegal mail transport by private persons during the early 1790’s, the postal administration of the VOC provides us with a positive answer : during the six year period 1788-1794 a total of 56,000 letters were shipped to the Cape and Asia, and almost 51,000 were sent from Asia and the Cape in return. Without getting over-enthusiastic, I think we can safely say that the packet-service has been a success, at least till the end of 1792. From 1793 on, when the period of war started that would ultimately destroy the VOC, it was quite a different story.

During the two years of war with the French Republic the VOC lost three of the ten packet-boats. Two were captured by the French and a third one had been sold by the VOC to the Dutch Navy earlier. The remaining seven packet-boats were much hindered by the times of war. Nevertheless, all of them were sent out to Asia in 1793 and 1794, although none of them would ever return to the Dutch Republic. In 1795 British ships of war captured two packet-boats near the Cape of Good Hope. Two other packet-boats were sold to the Danish East India Company in Bengal (India), just before they could be seized by the British. Another two packet-boats had found the relative safety of Batavia in 1795 and the last one had completed its return-voyage to Europe, but could not reach Holland and ended its wanderings in Norway. The innovative packet service, which had improved the lines of communication between the Netherlands and Asia, died down along with the Company itself.

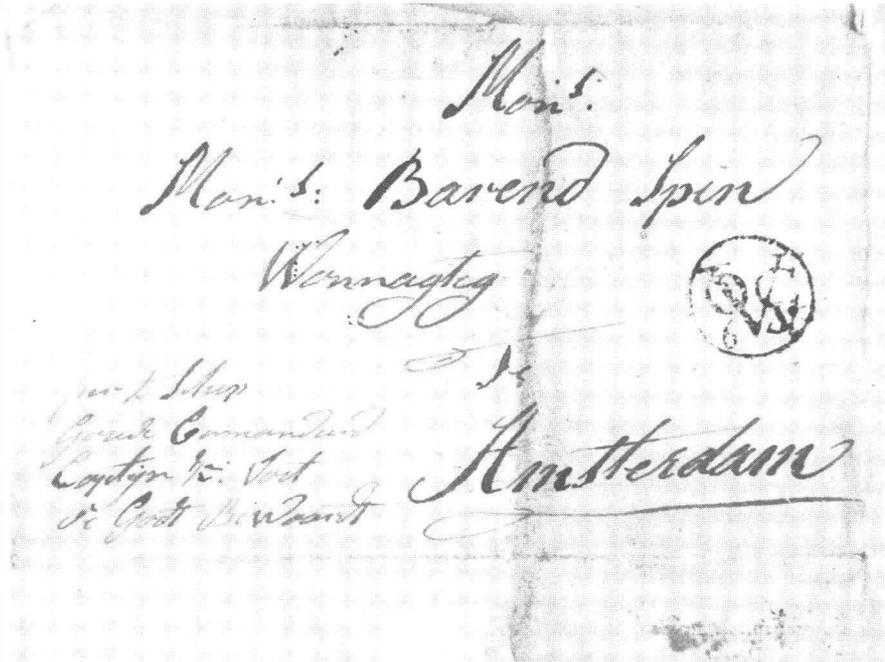


FIG. 1. — Enveloppe of a letter dated October 21, 1790, sent by Mrs. Kathariena Roos from Batavia to her brother Barend Spin in Amsterdam. Note the "6 st" (= six stuivers) stamp (A.R.A., VOC-archive, no. 4772).

#### THE EAST INDIAN LETTERS OF MATTHEUS VAN HOOGSTRATEN (1690-1722)

I mentioned earlier that frequent mail from home was highly appreciated by VOC-servants in the East Indies. Let us look at one example of this pheno-

menon. I will shortly describe the first results of an investigation of a collection of letters written by a Dutch East India Company servant to his family in Amsterdam in the first quarter of the eighteenth century<sup>9</sup>.

The servant, Mattheus van Hoogstraten, born in Amsterdam in September 1690, was not a very fortunate person. His family resided in an artistic environment and was very well connected with the literary circles of that era. Mattheus was the second son of the physician and poet David van Hoogstraten (Rotterdam 1658 - Amsterdam 1724), the author and translator of a large number of literary works, such as *Aesop's Fables by Phaedrus* (full Dutch title: *Ezopische fabelen van Fedrus, gevrijden slaaf des Keizers Augustus, in Nederduitsch dicht vertaalt en met Aenmerkingen verrijkt*), first published in 1703. Mattheus' great uncle was the famous writer and painter Samuel van Hoogstraten, a former pupil of Rembrandt, the master of light. Mattheus' younger brother François became a painter of portraits in London. Although apparently Mattheus shared his family's interest in literature and the arts, he never really followed in their footsteps. On the contrary, before his twenty-first birthday, he already was involved in "many unfortunate errors", as he would later describe himself.

Although I have not yet discovered a primary source in which the nature of these errors is revealed, it is clear that his father had to save him from his creditors. David van Hoogstraten provided his unfortunate son with lots of reference letters, but apparently insisted that he was not to return to the Netherlands for a very long time.

Mattheus van Hoogstraten thus left the Netherlands at the age of twenty-one and he never returned. He went on board of the Eastindiaman "Arion" in April 1712 as a so-called assistant or clerk. He left behind his father, by then principal of the Latin School on the Prinsegracht in Amsterdam, two brothers, Jacob and the above mentioned François, and one sister, Maria.

As soon as the first opportunity arose, various people on board of this ship would start to write letters to their families or acquaintances at home. In this case, the "Arion" and three other Eastindiemen were accompanied by two small vessels from the Dutch West India Company. As these two ships were destined to return to the Netherlands via Curaçao and the Gold Coast, they left the fleet after some time. Mattheus handed over three letters, dated May and June 1712, to crewmembers of both vessels, two for his father and one for his grandfather. He wrote his father to be very remourseful and he promised "never to lose courage, but to live an orderly and thrifty life". Both letters were delivered in Amsterdam.

<sup>9</sup> The author is indebted to Mr J. S. F. van Hoogstraten of Thompson, CT, USA, who has generously given permission to quote from the collection of letters of Mattheus van Hoogstraten, from his family-archive. All following quotations have been taken from these letters. For details on the Van Hoogstraten family see M. ROSCAM ABBING, *Van Hoogstraten. Iconografie van een familie*, Amsterdam, 1987.



FIG. 2. — First page of David van Hoogstraten's *Aesop's Fables by Phaedrus* (National Library of the Netherlands, The Hague).

As soon as the “Arion” reached the Table Bay at the Cape of Good Hope and Mattheus was sent to the mainland instead of his captain, who had been suffering from scurvy, some of the importance of private mail becomes clear to us. Mattheus delivered various letters and packages to persons living in the Cape area, probably friends of his father. During his stay here, he nearly got married to a “sweet girl”, who turned out less sweet than he thought, visited the Company’s garden and attended a wedding ceremony. All this and lots of other facts about life at the Cape, were mentioned in a letter that he wrote to his father. After a stay of five weeks the “Arion” left the Cape in October 1712 and reached Batavia after a terrible storm.

In January 1713 — just before leaving to Banda and later to Japan — Mattheus wrote his father another letter, in which he described his meeting in the Castle of Batavia with governor-general Abraham van Riebeeck, to whom he had presented a copy of his father’s book on *Aesop’s Fables* and various letters. He also included his own poetry in the letters to his father. In a letter from 1714 he gave an extensive description of the funeral of the governor-general. At the same time he wrote to a friend in Amsterdam that the shortage of books was one of the most terrible things in the East Indies.

From April 1714 till March 1716 Mattheus was not able to send letters to the Netherlands. The “Arion”, returning to Batavia after a second journey to Japan, was shipwrecked in the South China Sea. A period of suffering began, as Mattheus and the other 86 survivors reached Cochin China (present-day Vietnam), where the local authorities had them imprisoned for fourteen months, before they were released. During this imprisonment Mattheus was robbed and beaten frequently. In March 1716 55 survivors — including Mattheus — finally reached Batavia.

In a subsequent letter Mattheus wrote extensively about the shipwreck and his imprisonment and told his father that by now he had lost all of his books. He begged his father to send him a copy of *Aesop’s Fables* again. After a trip to Sumatra he wrote to his brother François and sister Maria, and complained that he had heard nothing from his father since he had left the Netherlands. Only from his sister he had received two small letters.

After this dark period things began to clear up for Mattheus. In May 1717, he was appointed junior merchant and fiscal on the westcoast of Sumatra, where he later became chief administrator. During his stay in Sumatra Mattheus again wrote several letters to his father, requesting him to send books. After his marriage to Debora Quirina Coops, a Dutch widow, on Sumatra he again insisted on receiving a new copy of *Aesop’s Fables*. He wrote in 1719 that his new wife was longing to see the portrait of David van Hoogstraten, which was included in the 1704-edition of this book. Alas, despite his continuous requests, he never received his father’s book. In his last letter to David van Hoogstraten, dated January 20, 1721, he announced the return voyage of a

steward of the governor of Sumatra, who was to inform his father in Amsterdam personally about the well-being of his son. On April 27th, 1722 Mattheus died in Padang at the age of 31. Despite his continuous flow of letters to Amsterdam and his frequent requests for *Aesop's Fables*, he never got any reply from his father. In retrospect we *know* that David van Hoogstraten had received at least most of Mattheus' letters and it can be shown that he was aware that his son was alive and well until 1722. Was the deficiency of communication between the Netherlands and Asia the reason that Mattheus never heard from him again, or did David van Hoogstraten just want to erase his unfortunate son from his memory ? Perhaps further research can provide the answer.

#### A CONCLUDING REMARK

The study of letters as source-material for research on the Dutch East India Company is of the utmost importance. Not only do these letters provide details about daily life in the factories and strongholds of the VOC, they also reveal facts that were previously unknown to us. Details about people, far away from the comforting safety of the Netherlands, longing for news from home, waiting at the roads of Batavia, the Cape, and any other establishment of the VOC in Asia for the arrival of each new ship. The contents of these letters are important for the understanding of the so-called human factor in the history of the VOC. Therefore it is my humble opinion that the study of VOC history is not nearing its end ; it has only just begun.

# THE TRANSFER OF TECHNOLOGY FROM THE DUTCH REPUBLIC TO NEW NETHERLANDS : FORTS, FACTORIES AND CITIES AS A BEGINNING

BY

Elva Kathleen LYON

ABSTRACT. — The transfer of technology into New Netherland began with the establishment of factories at strategic locations. A fort or a factory became the technology by which other technologies were transported. After 1624 fort-factories were the physical structures used by the West India Company to achieve its economic goals. Merchants not employed by the West India Company succeeded in shifting the economic focus at Fort Amsterdam from the fort-factory as a technology to the city as a technology primarily because they were able to develop the principal elements of urbanization within their family networks. Through those networks they had access to trade goods and systems of transport linking them to the homeland and other colonies. Family members provided the capital and skills necessary to take advantage of the wood-based aspect of the New Netherland economy, promoting the urbanization that became New York City.

## INTRODUCTION

The early 17th century transfer of technology into the North American colonies began with forts and factories. These technologies were the mechanisms for the transfer of other technologies as small as hinges and as large as cities, and in North America, nearly every Dutch fort-factory became a substantial city.

Shortly after the American Revolution, roughly two-thirds of the urban population of the young American nation was in cities that had once been Dutch fort-factories <sup>1</sup>. The factory at Fort Goede Hoop became Hartford, the

<sup>1</sup> Data from the 1800 Federal Census as cited by Jedidiah MORSE in *Geography Made Easy : Being an Abridgement of the American Universal Geography*, 10th edition, printed by J. T. Buckingham for Thomas Andrews, Boston, 1806.

factory at Fort Beversreede became Philadelphia, and the factory at Fort Amsterdam became New York City. The transition from fort-factory to city took place in spite of a long decline in the rich trade in furs, and the urban growth was in stark contrast to the Plymouth and Jamestown settlements.

Part of the urban success of the Dutch fort-factory locations in New Netherland may have derived directly from the careful selection of gateway locations to facilitate inland trade. Theoretically, if the fort-factory design placed at a gateway location and peopled by colonists was the key to the rapid development of a new city in the 17th century, then every colonized fort-factory around the globe should have developed into a major urban center. That was not always the sequence of events, even in North America. For the discussion here, New Amsterdam in New Netherland serves as an example of the special case where urbanization followed the establishment of a fort-factory.

#### TECHNOLOGY AND ITS TRANSFER

Both the factory and the city are technologies, capable of coexisting in time and space. In addition to being technologies under the usual definitions, such as “the application of what has been learned in science”, or “the utilization of a practical skill”, they are also technologies in the context of gaining control over an environment<sup>2</sup>. “Environment” should be taken in its largest possible range of meanings: medical technology attempts to control disease or injury in the environment of the human body, pumps and canals control lowland flooding, while factories and cities exercise economic control over a geography and its people. Certainly the word “technology” applies when designing and first establishing the principal elements of either a factory or a city.

The words “science” and “technology” have taken on modern meanings detached from their original cultural context, and an elite status has been granted to the practitioners. The modern understanding of science and technology can obscure meanings if misapplied within the historical perspective of the early seventeenth century. The use of inappropriate terminology and the romanticization of the North American colonial experience have produced a perception of the colonies as a scientific and technological wilderness, perpetuating mythologies in general works such as the widely-read Braudel<sup>3</sup>.

The time period of technology transfer sets boundaries on the type of technology available for transfer and the speed of that transfer. The limitations

<sup>2</sup> A. R. HALL, *Science, technology, and Utopia in the seventeenth century*, in: Peter MATHIAS (ed.), *Science and Society, 1600-1900*, Cambridge (England), Cambridge University Press, 1972.

<sup>3</sup> Fernand BRAUDEL, *The Structures of Everyday Life: The Limits of the Possible*, New York, Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1981, p. 520. In his only reference to North American urbanization, Braudel claims that “they had to live by their own resources and emerge from their wilderness to find a place in the vast world; the real parallel for them is the medieval city”.

of the 17th century time period provide the basis for three discrete categories for the study of the transfer of technology into the North American setting, categories that may prove appropriate in other colonial settings.

The first category of technology transfer involves the evaluation of the pre-existing technologies of each of the separate cultures, colonizing and colonized, before contact. This requires an on-going conversation between historical specialists ; the historians of European technology and the archaeologists and historians of Native American technologies.

The second category must consider the technology transfer occurring contemporaneously intra-culturally. There are instances of intra-cultural competition between subgroups of both the colonizing and colonized peoples, such as that between the North American Delawares and Susquahannocks, or between the Dutch and the English <sup>4</sup>. Intra-cultural competition was of considerable significance in the Anglo-Dutch cooperations and antagonisms both in Europe and in the North American colonial setting, especially with respect to the transfer of weapon technology.

The third category addresses the actual transfer of technology, both as a physical relocation to a new geography and as a movement of ideas from one or more cultures into other cultures. The initial emphasis must be on the technology by which the technology was transferred, such as ships, factories, or cities. Those mechanisms of transfer included the social picture as well as the hardware, with important roles played by such issues as colonization policy, mercantile activity, education, and family networks.

An institutional social structure in the form of the West India Company lay behind the transfer of the fort-factory technology to the Manhattans in New Netherland, while independent merchant families were involved in the substantive transfers underlying an urbanization echoing social, economic, and technological patterns in the homelands. The West India Company was the encompassing structure that historians have seen as the dominant socio-economic force, while a more complete history is provided by examining the agency of subjects in the form of individuals as members of family networks <sup>5</sup>.

It would seem, logically, that ships should be the first mechanisms of technology transfer addressed in the North American colonial setting, but from the earliest 16th century contacts until colonization, Europeans and Native Americans interacted superficially. The ships hovered offshore exchanging goods with the result that contact was technologically limited and controlled

<sup>4</sup> For an example of the native competition, see Francis JENNINGS, *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire*, New York, W.W. Morton and Co., 1984, pp. 116-121.

<sup>5</sup> Herman DIEDERIKS and Paul M. HOHENBERG, *The visible hand and the fortune of cities : a historiographic introduction*, in : Herman DIEDERIKS, Paul HOHENBERG and Michael WAGENAAR (eds.), *Economic Policy in Europe since the Middle Ages : the Visible Hand and the Fortune of Cities*, Leicester, Leicester University Press, 1992, p. 1.

by the needs of the natives. The materials introduced into the native cultures, whether beads or blankets, did not include transferring the knowledge necessary to produce the items <sup>6</sup>.

It was not the ships but the factories that became the initial mechanisms for technology transfer. Before ships could roam freely on the North American waterways, putting into port at will and accomplishing repairs without risk, there had to be safe havens that could also serve specific trading purposes. More substantial contact between the Native Americans and the Europeans did not occur until forts, factories, or settlements established a year-round presence. By the 1620 arrival of the Pilgrims, the coastal waterways of North America were dotted with factories that were certainly no less substantial than those at Spitsbergen discussed by Louwrens Hacquebord <sup>7</sup>.

#### SECURING NEW NETHERLAND TRADE

The New Netherland Company from 1614 to 1618 and then the West India Company in 1624 established factories in North America to drive the rich trade in furs. Throughout the years of both companies, the large areas of trade were called collectively New Netherland, but they were also referred to as the West Indies, America, and the Virginias. There were repeated conflicts in New Netherland and in the Dutch Republic between those who were part of a company and those who were independent merchants. This has been discussed at length, but not exhaustively, by Simon Hart, Van Cleef Bachman, Oliver Rink, and others <sup>8</sup>. Controversies persist about the relative roles played in both the homeland and New Netherland by governing bodies, companies, or independent merchants, and the extent of the entanglement of these groups. An avenue to sorting out these entanglements is to examine who imported which technologies and for what reasons, and to ask which technologies eventually dominated the picture and why. One of the first technological casualties of the competition between the West India Company and the independent merchants at Fort Amsterdam may have been the gradual replacement of the exclusionary fort-factory by the more inclusive technology of a city.

<sup>6</sup> Materials at levels indicating late 16th century contact have been found inland in archaeological sites in central New York State. See Charles F. WRAY, *The volume of Dutch trade goods received by the Seneca Iroquois, 1600-1687 AD*, in: "Nieuw-Nederlandse Studien: een Inventarisatie van Recent Onderzoek, Tijdschrift van de Koninklijke Nederlandse Oudheidkundige Bond", 84, Nos. 2/3, June 1985, pp. 100-103.

<sup>7</sup> See the Louwrens Hacquebord paper earlier in this volume.

<sup>8</sup> Simon HART, *The Prehistory of the New Netherland Company: Amsterdam Notarial Records of the First Voyages to the Hudson*, Amsterdam, City of Amsterdam Press, 1959; VAN CLEAF BACHMAN, *Peltries or Plantations: the Economic Policies of the Dutch West India Company in New Netherland, 1623-1639*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1969; Oliver RINK, *Holland on the Hudson: an Economic and Social History of Dutch New York*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1986.

The initial colonizing settlement of New Netherland by the West India Company took place within strict company guidelines that set high standards for equipment, ships, and personnel<sup>9</sup>. Those strict standards placed demands and constraints on the Dutch shipping, factories, and colonization system in North America for everyone involved, whether they were affiliated with the company or not.

The original West India Company plan for the fort-factory at the Manhat-tans was a mathematically based utopian model for the fortified company regulation of trade<sup>10</sup>. Recalling that technology can be defined as control of the environment, the West India Company fort-factory plan must be seen as an effort to control the trade and the people associated either directly or supportively with the trade. By drawing on the experiences of the New Netherland Company, the West India Company could avoid anything that might “spoil the trade”. Colonists were useful primarily as a presence to maintain a geographical wedge between the northern and southern English colonies, but they were also a source of support personnel: “They [the colonists] shall take up their permanent residence at the place to be assigned to them by the commander and his council and use all diligence to fortify the same by common effort, likewise erecting in common the necessary public buildings and establishing trade relations as far as possible”<sup>11</sup>.

Although the colonists were allowed freedoms, they were also constrained by prohibitions. One constraint was the implied denial of a guild presence by prohibiting the practice or teaching of any handicraft upon which trade depended, especially clothworking. In addition, the company specified a residence design intended to reduce smuggling by allowing regular searches<sup>12</sup>. These prohibitions helped to force the colonists towards the familiar design of a city while the West India Company itself struggled with such alternative colonization measures as patroonships and the granting of plantations.

For the West India Company, planning the location of the fort-factory was a critical consideration. Here, as in the freedoms and prohibitions, there were strengths and weaknesses in the design: “... [Verhulst should] write to us where it would be most suitable to build a fort for defense, keeping in mind that the fittest place is where the river is narrow, where it cannot be fired upon

<sup>9</sup> *Documents Relating to New Netherland, 1624-1626, in the Huntington Library*, trans. and ed. by A. J. F. VAN LAER, San Marino, The Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, 1924. Hereafter referred to as DRNN.

<sup>10</sup> DRNN, Document E, April 22, 1625; “Special Instructions for Cryn Fredericksz”, pp. 132-171.

<sup>11</sup> DRNN, Document A, March 28, 1624; “Provisional Regulations for the Colonists Adopted by the Assembly of the Nineteen of the West India Company”, pp. 2 and 6.

<sup>12</sup> DRNN, Document A, p. 13. The constraint on privacy reads: “from his own house the Commissary must be able to go into all the lofts on the right-hand side, along the entire street, doors to be made from one into the other”.

from higher ground, where large ships cannot come too close, where there is a distant view unobstructed by trees or hills, where it is possible to have water in the moat, and where there is no sand, but clay or other firm earth. ... Should the places where forts have been erected not be in fitting locations or in a proper state of defense, he shall consider well, before any more labor or money be expended upon them, whether it is not advisable to choose other and more suitable places”<sup>13</sup>.

The original location of a factory at the Manhattans in the present New York Bay area was on Nooten Island, well inside the shallow sand bars that disguise the deep water harbor of the Hudson River. The much larger Manhattan Island was where the fort-factory was constructed sometime after the island was purchased in 1626.

The West India Company fort-factory plan listed the requirements that had to be met by the company engineer, Cryn Frederickszen. One side of the fort was to lie parallel to the river shoreline close to the water and the fort was to be ringed by a water-filled channel. The fort itself was to have dimensions that just fit inside a circle with the outer sides of the bastians edged by a deep ditch. Streets were to be laid out from the perimeter of the fort and a marketplace located on one side of the fort. A distance of 200 Dutch feet from the fort circumference to the exteriorly-facing frontage of houses was to be maintained (see diagram)<sup>14</sup>. The occupancy of streets and lots was limited according to company affiliation and other markers of status. Such common Dutch amenities as a church, a hospital, a school, and a poorhouse were part of the original plan, inserting the institutional features of a city into the fort-factory design. The entire plan established a commitment that the company was ill-prepared to meet either financially or with competent personnel, laying the groundwork for popular dissatisfaction and an eventual alternative urbanization.

When the original plan of Fort Amsterdam and its outer streets is laid on the Castello map, it is apparent that several streets follow aspects of that plan<sup>15</sup>. It is also apparent that the original scale of the plan was reduced to roughly half the size of the intended dimensions and that there was an urban buildup on the eastern side of the island. Unfortunately, the fort-factory design did not call for identification of the best safe port or deep harbor, did not anticipate the initially severe skilled labor shortage, and did not consider the vagaries of a deep, wide, fast-moving river with daily tides of over two

<sup>13</sup> DRNN, Document C, January 1625, “Instructions for Willem Verhulst”, pp. 47 and 48.

<sup>14</sup> DRNN, Document E. For a different interpretation of this material, see F. C. WIEDER, *De stichting van New York in Juli 1625 : reconstructies en nieuwe gegevens ontleend aan de Van Rappard documenten*, 's-Gravenhage, Martinus Nijhoff, 1925 (Werken uitgegeven door de Linschoten-Vereeniging, XXVI).

<sup>15</sup> I. N. PHELPS STOKES, *Iconography of Manhattan, 1498-1909*, New York, R. H. Dodd, 1915-1928, vol. 2, plates 82-82e, and pp.174-176.

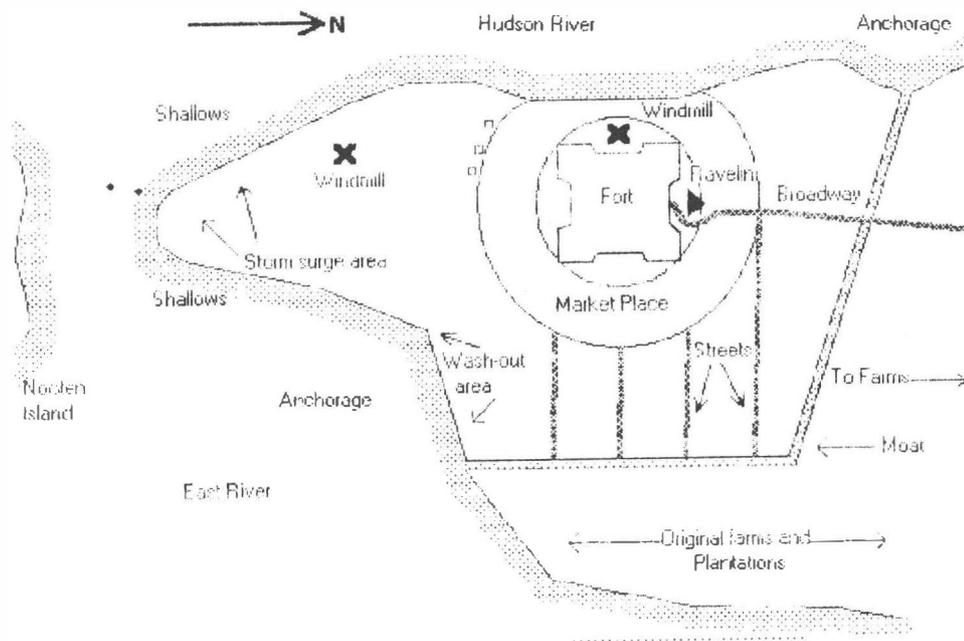


FIG. 1. — This schematic is based on the 1639 Manatus Map outline of the tip of Manhattan Island (Library of Congress). Distances are approximate using a scale on a later map. By the date of the Castello map, stone fill had altered the shoreline at the shallows, the storm surge area, the wash-out area, and along the western side of the fort.

and a half meters. The social institutions intended for the maintenance of the colonists were late, inadequate, or never developed, forcing the inhabitants to worship in a mill and otherwise fend for themselves. When a church was finally constructed, it was placed inside the fort, a location bitterly opposed by the community. Because the original construction of the fort had been makeshift and deteriorated rapidly, repairs were frequently required and it became increasingly difficult for administrative forces at home and in the colony to elicit enthusiasm or cooperation for maintenance of the fort. Repeated documentary references to the repair and rebuilding of the fort have a nagging quality to them and it is obvious that personnel were misused and even injured in the work <sup>16</sup>. The disenchanted but pragmatic colonial inhabitants began a spatial shift towards the safer East River harbor, participating in hauling stones and initiating the functional development of the elements of an urban infrastructure located away from the fort.

<sup>16</sup> See STOKES, *op. cit.*, vol. 4, p. 68 for a summary of selected documentary references to the fort. A specific incident resulting in injury can be found in Amsterdam Notarial Archives 915/213v., notary Barent Jansz. Verbeeck, September 29, 1633.

## THE VERBRUGGE NETWORK AND THE ELEMENTS OF URBANIZATION

Gillis Janszen, master carpenter from Haarlem, 40 years of age in 1631, testified in Amsterdam to being present in the Manhattans in 1627 when a dispute arose concerning sawmills<sup>17</sup>. This is Gillis Janszen Verbrugge, and it places him as a skilled, mature expert in wood construction on the site of what would become New Amsterdam long before the flourishing of the Verbrugge mercantile activities in the New World. Wood, after all, proved to be the most successfully utilized resource of the American colonies<sup>18</sup>.

Gillis had connections to London through a brother Jacob Janszen and a cousin Gillis Willemszen. His sister Tryn was married to the shipper Jan Tiepkens Schellinger, and his wife Jannetie Setten was the sister of Cors Setten, an Amsterdam lumber merchant and provisioner. Cors Setten had two sons; Dirck Corszen Stam, a skilled carpenter who worked first for the West India Company as assistant commissary and later for Van Rensselaer, and Arent Corszen Stam who also worked for the West India Company searching for minerals and negotiating for land. Both brothers later worked for Gillis Verbrugge and were active in the populating and supplying of English Virginia, acquiring land there beginning in 1636.

In 1649 members of the Verbrugge family at Fort Amsterdam signed a request for more freedoms that included certain features of a city. The family connection was through the sister-in-law of Gillis Verbrugge, Lysbeth Setten, whose children were the links between the New Netherland settlers Jacob Van Couwenhoven, Govert Loockermans, Hendrick van de Water, and Olof Stevenszen Van Cortlandt<sup>19</sup>.

The Verbrugge family maintained strong ties to Haarlem, Amsterdam, London, New England, and Virginia, and through at least one relative, Jan Anthony, the family also had ties to Brazil. The network conducted business in furs, tobacco, and wood. They transported settlers and adventurers to the New World and imported European goods for sale. Associates skilled in the wood trades took up permanent residence in New Netherland, New England, and Virginia. One relative, Adolph Pieterszen van der Groeft, acted as a major

<sup>17</sup> For documentary evidence of the Verbrugge connections, see Amst. Not. Arch. 757/401, notary Nic. Gerritsz. Rooleeu, January 8, 1631; Amst. Not. Arch. 943, notary A.J. Engel, June 25, 1632; the baptismal and marriage records of Austin Friars Church in London; the baptismal and marriage records in the Haarlem and Amsterdam Archives; Virginia Act of Assembly, February 20, 1636. See also the Verbrugge article by John ROSS DELAFIELD in *The New York Genealogical and Biographical Record*, vol. 66, 1935, pp. 2-11.

<sup>18</sup> Brooke HINDLE (ed.), *America's Wooden Age: Aspects of its Early Technology*, New York, Sleepy Hollow, Tarrytown, 1975.

<sup>19</sup> John ROMEYN BRODHEAD, compiler; Edmund B. O'CALLAGHAN and Berthold FERNOW, eds. and trans., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, New York, Weed & Parsons, 1856-1887, vol. 1, pp. 249-261.

contractor in New Netherland and later New York, appearing on the scene as the emphasis shifted from fort-factory to city, becoming involved in the construction or oversight of sluices, walls, streets, docks, and a variety of buildings, eventually including a church and the town hall of another community, New Haarlem <sup>20</sup>.

#### ELEMENTS OF URBANIZATION : DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The original exclusionary fort-factory plan of the West India Company at the Mannhattans became more inclusionary with the granting of city status in 1653. The city seemed to be under West India Company control, but individuals acting in concert with family members accomplished some of the urban planning and implementation that was beyond the timely reach of a company entangled in squabbles and saddled with poor financial returns. Those families and their efforts were only slightly affected by the shift of government from Dutch to English. The urbanization of New Amsterdam continued on the same path on which it had started in spite of the increasing English presence and the change to New York City. The ease of transfer of political power both in 1664 and again in 1673-1674 may be explained by the economic stability of the family networks for whom such transfers of power had no more effect than the modern shifting of power from one political party to another.

According to Joel Mokyr, an economic historian with a firm grasp of 17th century European science and technology, urbanization and urban growth have four economic origins <sup>21</sup>. The origins of urbanization are : the gains from trade and specialization, capital accumulation, improved efficiency in the internal distribution of resources, and technological innovation.

For the original West India Company fort-factory to be replaced by an urban center of the eventual magnitude of early New York City, there had to be gains from trade and specialization as well as the accumulation of wealth. The independent merchants were best placed to foster trade, invite specialization through their wilful choice of family ties, and accumulate wealth. Ships and shipping contributed directly to efficiency in the internal distribution of resources for the evolving city in the unusual setting of the New World where footpaths and waterways were the only pre-existing infrastructure. The transporters were not faced with the cumbersome problems of the redesign of

<sup>20</sup> James RIKER, *Revised History of Harlem*, New York, New Harlem Publishing Co., 1904, pp. 371-372 ; proceedings of a Harlem town meeting, Feb. 14, 1682. See also references to Adolph in Berthold FERNOW (ed.), *The Records of New Amsterdam*, New York, Knickerbocker Press, 1897.

<sup>21</sup> Joel MOKYR, *Urbanization, technological progress and economic history*, as presented to the Egon Sohmen Foundation Conference on Urbanization and Agglomeration, Zurich, August 20-22, 1993.

European old cities to meet the new demands of the booming 17th century. New Amsterdam and then New York grew and developed in harmony with the progress of the century itself.

Increased urbanization required continuous innovation in the technology of the city as it matured from its infancy in the New World to a major metropolitan center in the young United States. The issue of which came first, urban growth or technology, is a tantalizing question in the New World setting where the movement of ideas had to precede urbanization. The absence of guild rule both in the planned factory and in New Amsterdam may have fostered urbanization and certainly kept the gates open to innovation. The case of the Fort Amsterdam factory that became New York City offers scholars the opportunity to study the role of other technologies in the guildless setting of a wholly-owned company fort-factory as it evolved into a city, providing an unusual view of the economic interplay between technology, urban growth, and the surround.

# PERAHU AND KAPAL THE INTERACTION OF TRADITIONAL AND MODERN SHIPPING IN COLONIAL INDONESIA

BY

J. N. F. M. À CAMPO

In the Indonesian archipelago proa shipping was superseded but not eliminated by steamshipping. This presentation explores the patterns of competition of steam and sail, with a special focus on the period 1870-1914. Finally it reviews KPM policy in its dealings with sailing ships.

## INTRODUCTION

The displacement of sailing vessels by steamships is a phenomenon that viewed superficially encompassed the entire world and viewed with hindsight appears to be an inevitable development. The famous Dutch poet Slauerhoff, medical doctor on the Dutch Java-China-Japan Line, in his *Praise of Steamshipping* described sailing vessels as “shades from an old, oft told and now bygone tale”<sup>1</sup>. But given the extent to which sailing ships are still used to this very day in the Indonesian archipelago<sup>2</sup>, this certainly was premature. Much less was it a foregone conclusion in the course of the 19th century that wind would be replaced by steam as a source of energy. As late as 1880 brochures were being published in which Dutch business interests were actually called upon to deploy special new (iron) sailing vessels in order to safeguard the shrinking Dutch share of world freight shipping<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> J. SLAUERHOFF, 1988, p. 593.

<sup>2</sup> H. W. DICK, 1975 ; H. W. DICK, 1987.

<sup>3</sup> S. B. ZEVEIJN, 1881, pp. 38-41 ; “OEDIPUS” (pseudonym), 1881, pp. 19-21. This should not be taken as just a symptom of the industrial retardation of Dutch shipbuilding. Even in Great Britain there were proponents of iron or steel hulled sailing ships. C. K. HARLEY, 1971, p. 226. In Great Britain, the ups and downs in the building of sail and steamship tonnage between 1835

The supersession of one technology by another is not a natural or mechanical phenomenon, but rather a social process. Substitution is seldom complete and from the contemporary's point of view it is not often easy to indicate exactly where a new equilibrium will arise between the old and new technologies. The relationship is not only determined by the nature of both technologies, but can also easily be influenced by economic developments (patterns of demand, cost structures) and by changes in the social esteem of both technologies.

The diffusion of a new technology basically presents four options for people working within the framework of established technologies. One of them is adoption; to try and acquire the means and skills needed for the operation of the new and apparently beneficial technology. Another is adaptation; one may cling to the traditional technology, but benefit from the rise in productivity and a spill-over of opportunities, which often follow in the wake of technological innovation. If these opportunities do not exist on the spot, one may be forced to relocate one's trade to some peripheral area. Finally, there may seem to be no opportunities for continuation at all; then retreat or 'exit' may be the only option. Broadly speaking, adoption, adaptation, relocation and withdrawal were also the options presented to owners of sailing ships in competition with steamers.

The fact that commercial sailing ships did manage to survive for so long testifies to resilient entrepreneurship and therefore is of considerable interest for both historians and developmental economists. However, the history of sail during the last two centuries has been covered rather unevenly. Some work has been done on the first half of the 19 century, for example by Wong Lin Ken, C. A. Gibson-Hill and F. J. A. Broeze<sup>4</sup>. Also available are studies focusing on the most recent decades, most notably by Howard W. Dick<sup>5</sup>. Very little attention has been paid, however, to the fate of proa shipping in the intermediate period, as if all attention has been monopolized by the ascendancy of the steamship between roughly 1850 and 1914. The dichotomy of large scale steamship companies and widely scattered small scale sailing sector has been replicated in the materials available for historians. Bulky archives with a plethora of detailed documents provide easy access to the history of the 'modern' maritime sector, but the scant and dispersed records of the 'traditional' sector present the historian with much more problems. Probably this situation reinforced the quite common tendency in historiography to neglect paracmatic phenomena.

till 1870 went parallel; after that year these movements were contrary. (See D. R. MACGREGOR, 1984, p. 17). So this discussion in the early eighties may have been prompted by the crisis in the shipbuilding industry.

<sup>4</sup> C. A. GIBSON-HILL, 1950; WONG LIN KEN, 1960; F. J. A. BROEZE, 1979.

<sup>5</sup> H. W. DICK, 1975; H. W. DICK, 1987.

This article focuses on the interaction of sail and steam in the second half of the 19th century. Basically, the problem is tackled from two sides. We first try to get grasp of the process of diffusion both before and after 1870 by analyzing some statistical sources in a section called "The pattern of diffusion". The next section "The pattern of interaction" deals with the locational distribution and temporal sequences of sail and steam in the period 1870-1910. Laborious though it may be, this quantitative analysis provides an indispensable framework for interpretation of reactions to technological change and business policy. In the final section we will review the policies of the "Koninklijke Paketvaart Maatschappij" (KPM)<sup>6</sup>. Around 1900 ethically inclined civil servants regretted the decline of the proa fleet as a indigenous industry and blamed the KPM for it. They considered the company's business policies to be partly responsible for the situation. In the 1920s and 1930s Indonesian nationalists pilloried KPM as a colonial enterprise responsible for the demise of an indigenous branch of business<sup>7</sup>.

For these reasons it is worthwhile to devote some attention to the attitude of the packet boat companies to sail power. An obstacle to such a study, however, is formed by the paucity of the sources compared with those available for steam shipping. In the reports, company records and correspondence of KPM shipping by sail is only discussed now and then and usually only obliquely. It is often impossible to tell from these sources exactly what sort of sailing is meant. The extensive shipping statistics are for obvious reasons the least complete and reliable when indigenous shipping is concerned<sup>8</sup>. A problem probably inherent in most statistics is presented by the fact that the records are the deposit of particular administrative routines. Colonial statistics on 'native' shipping are certainly particularly vicious, since data collection was concomitant with the expansion of administrative control.

<sup>6</sup> In the Netherlands East Indies, the colonial government since 1850 contracted with private steamship companies for the transport of officials, troops and produce on behalf of the government. This *pakketvaart* (or mail) contract gave such companies a competitive edge. From 1866-1890 the colonial government contracted the "Nederlandsch-Indische Stoomvaart Maatschappij"; this was a British company, affiliated with the British India Steamship Company. In 1891 this contract was taken over by a new Dutch company, the "Koninklijke Paketvaart Maatschappij". The KPM managed to establish a near-monopoly for commercial transport as well. On KPM, see J. A. CAMPO, 1992. Throughout this text *pakketvaart* is used as a generic term.

<sup>7</sup> In Dutch parliament this point was stressed by the social-democrat H. H. van Kol, in: *Handelingen van de Staten-Generaal*, 1898-1899, Tweede Kamer, 28 February 1899, p. 792. More examples can be found in: L. VAN VUUREN, 1916; C. NOOTEBOOM, 1935; H. W. DICK, 1975, pp. 75-80.

<sup>8</sup> The "Regeeringsalmanak" (Directory of the Colonial Administration) did mention only those vessels, which took a share in the interregional trade, were registered by the colonial administration and carried a ship's passport (*zeebrief*) or an annual sailing permit (*jaarpas*). F. J. W. H. SANDBERGEN, 1971; W. F. M. MANSVELT, *Inrichting*; G. KNAAP, 1989, pp. 14-15.

## THE PATTERN OF DIFFUSION

In the colonial reports and the official Statistics on "Trade, shipping and import and export duties"<sup>9</sup> a distinction was made between steam shipping and shipping by sail, the latter being divided into "European-" and "Native-" rigged ships<sup>10</sup>. European-rigged ships included barks, brigs, schooners, clipper ships and so on. Indigenous ships that had been adapted for western rigging (especially square-riggers) or modernized to western style were counted in this category, such as *paduwangkangs*, *toops*, *pancalangs* and *perahu pelaris*<sup>11</sup>. According to W. F. M. Mansvelt<sup>12</sup>, before 1874 the dividing line between the two categories was not given in any instructions at all and assigning a vessel to one class or the other for purposes of the shipping statistics seems to have been left entirely to the discretion of the harbor masters. Given the fact that the East Indian commercial fleet included a rich array of often picturesque models and hybrids, the lack of a clear criterion for classification must have diminished the reliability of the government's statistics, all the more since from time to time "clarifying" circulars had to be sent out. In practice, the ship's hull rather than its rigging may have been a kind of criterion.

The transport abilities of the three types of shipping differed greatly. For steamships, square-rigged ships and native-rigged proas the average carrying capacity in 1875 was respectively : approximately 1150, 400 and 25 cubic meters and in 1910 respectively : 3200, 510 and 28 cubic meters. The indigenous proas could only sail with the monsoon winds. The European-rigged sailing ships could also sail against the wind, but remained very dependent on wind and weather. The speed, regularity and safety of the steamers were considerably greater than those of the best sailing vessels.

The business operations of each of the three types were also quite different. In the first place their relationship to commerce was different. The proa skippers were usually themselves merchants dealing in the products of a given region, which they transported elsewhere, for example to Singapore, to bring them to market. With the proceeds they purchased import articles to carry back to their ports of origin. In many regions they were subject to indigenous forms of law. The European-rigged sailing vessels at the end of the last century practiced tramp shipping. Agents of trading companies brought the goods they

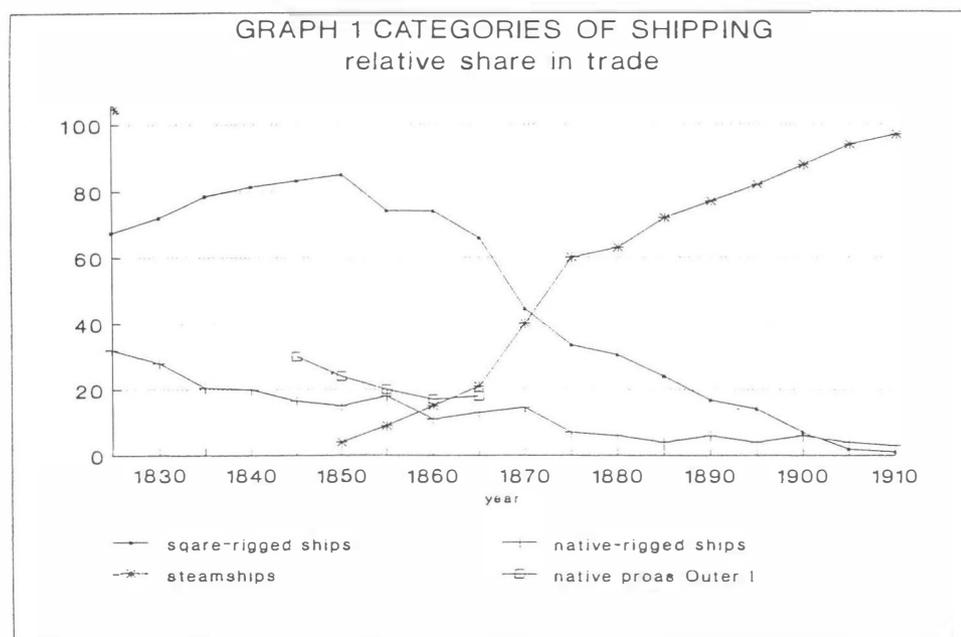
<sup>9</sup> The title is in Dutch : "Statistiek van den handel, scheepvaart en in- en uitgaande rechten". The complete series is available in print in the Library of the "Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek", Voorburg. Selections of this material are printed in G. J. KNAAP, 1989.

<sup>10</sup> These rather strange terms are a literal translation of the Dutch "Europeesch getuigd" and "Inheemsch getuigd".

<sup>11</sup> L. VAN VUUREN, 1916-1917, pp. 108-109 ; D. A. RINKES, N. VAN ZALINGE and J. W. DE ROEVER, 1925, chapter 2.

<sup>12</sup> W. F. M. MANSVELT, *Prauwvaart*, 1937, p. 2.

had purchased together in warehouses and chartered, perhaps collectively, a ship to carry the cargo to its destination. The number of vessels of this type had increased greatly after 1795 in the archipelago<sup>13</sup>. In 1825 they already accounted for 65% of the shipping to and from Java; a quarter of a century later their share had even increased to 85%. The following 25 years witnessed a drastic decline to one-third. The drop had therefore set in before the opening of the Suez canal. By 1891 their share in the tonnage had declined to under 20% and shortly after 1900 to under 5%, which was even less than the traffic carried by the native-rigged proas. Graph no. 1 shows that the substitution curve was S-shaped.



In the period 1850-1885 the relative decline of European-rigged ships coincided with a significant increase in absolute terms. This is an expression of the phenomenon that those with an interest in a technology facing a new competitor frequently introduce rapid improvements in the older technology. G. S. Graham has called this rather provocatively “the ascendancy of the sailing

<sup>13</sup> See W. F. M. MANSVELT, *Prauwvaart*, 1937, Table 2, Commentary. In the Dutch colonial statistics the trade with Penang, Malakka and Singapore was included in the entry “trade within the archipelago”. For a full account of the formats of the colonial trade and shipping statistics, see W. F. M. MANSVELT, *Inrichting*, and F. W. J. H. SANDBERGEN, 1971.

ship". But since over time resistance eventually proved largely futile, it could also be called a "swan song". Starting in the mid-1880s the relative decline coincided with an absolute one.

Steam navigation began around 1825 in the East Indies, but only started to grow around 1850. Unfortunately, transport by steamships appeared in the statistics as a separate entry only by 1874 <sup>14</sup>. By then, steam had already gained a share of nearly 60% of shipping. The ensuing years of crisis witnessed a more hesitant development, but in the period 1884-1910 steamers captured more than 95% of the traffic <sup>15</sup>.

As seen above, the registered "Native-rigged" vessels only carried part of the total freight in the beginning of the 19th century, a share that would continually grow smaller in the century's course. In 1825 they still held a third, in 1831 a quarter, ten years later a fifth, around 1860 a tenth and in 1875 one twentieth. This share remained fairly constant until after 1905 when a further decline began <sup>16</sup>. In contrast to the decline of the European sailing ship after 1880, the relative fall of indigenous shipping was accompanied by a positive development in absolute terms. To be sure, tonnage was cut in half from 1825 until 1850, but afterwards doubled again to 40,000 cubic meters in 1875 for Java. For the Netherlands East Indies as a whole there was a sharp increase from 60,000 cubic meters in 1885 to 80,000 in 1894 and 225,000 cubic meters in 1904, falling back to 180,000 in 1911 <sup>17</sup>.

The process of successive penetration of more developed means of transportation was not one of smooth and gradual modernization, but led rather to a polarized situation. In terms of tonnage, the modern steam vessels dominated nearly completely, with the traditional proa fleet maintaining itself in the margins after the disappearance of the middle group. Based on the suppositions of C. K. Harley<sup>18</sup> it might be expected that the penetration of modern types of ship would take place first on routes with the heaviest traffic, over shorter distances and with relatively large numbers of passengers and high-value

<sup>14</sup> The pre-1874-leg in Graph 1 is based on an estimate by the author.

<sup>15</sup> In the 1880's the introduction of the triple-expansion engine greatly reduced the considerably more expensive exploitation costs of steamships compared to sailing ships, but even then the difference was not eliminated. See. L. VAN VUUREN, 1916-1917, pp. 113-115.

<sup>16</sup> G. J. KNAAP (1989, p. 18) recently rather overstated the economic position of the indigenous sailing vessels: "The indigeneous-rigged sector [*sic*] fared very well in the 'modern imperialism' period; in 1907 it accounted for 83% of the merchants fleet and 32% of its tonnage". However, neither number of ships nor their registered tonnage are indicative of the market share. A more valid indicator is provided by the tonnage of carried goods or — if available — by *tonmijlen* (tonnage multiplied by distance).

<sup>17</sup> These figures are once more computed from W. F. M. MANSVELT, *Prauwvaart*, 1937, *passim*. This reduction can largely, if not completely, be attributed to a strategy instigated by the KPM since 1905: the introduction of very small steamships (200-300 tons) on local and short distance services.

<sup>18</sup> C. K. HARLEY, 1971, p. 221.

cargoes. For it was only on such routes that they could earn sufficient income to cover their higher costs, which longer voyages only disproportionately increased.

Transposed to the Indonesian situation this hypothesis implies that the initial penetration of modern technology would first have taken place on the route between Singapore and Batavia, subsequently in the major ports of Java and from there radiate out to the other islands in accordance with the volume of their exports. This pattern can indeed be discerned in the statistics for western and indigenous sailing ships in the traffic between Singapore and the most important islands of the Indonesian archipelago.

The share of western sailing ships in 1830 was on average 46%, but in the Java trade as high as 86%, for Riouw 10% and for Sumatra 9%. Fifteen years later the average was 73% and the percentages for Java, Riouw, Sumatra, Borneo, Celebes and Bali were respectively: 96, 22, 16, 83, 70 and 60%<sup>19</sup>. With the exception of the trade with Java and Celebes, however, the tonnage carried by the proas increased sharply too by an average of 80%<sup>20</sup>. The share of the indigenous proas in maritime traffic seems to have declined more slowly in the Outer Islands than on Java in the period 1845-1870. Steam shipping displayed an analogous pattern. The year 1885 formed a turning point for foreign trade: for western sailing ships for the worse, for the native-rigged proas and for steam shipping for the better. For interregional trade the turning point arrived seven years later<sup>21</sup>. The native-rigged proas held their own, surviving longer and better in the less important ports and more outlying areas. The native-rigged ships suffered less from the advancing steamers, in the first place because they had already had to abandon the most important routes to the modern sailing ships, and in the second place because they could expand again once the latter entered their period of decline. In this context two questions are capital: where did proa shipping continue to exist and who were the owners of these vessels?

The nationality of the owners of the different sorts of sailing ships is not easy to identify. The distinction between "European" and "Native" made in the East Indian maritime statistics concerned the type of ship and not the nationality of the shipowners. The *Regeeringsalmanak voor Nederlandsch-Indië* (Government Almanac of the Netherlands East Indies) contained annual nominative lists of the ships that had been granted sea letters. Using these lists Mansvelt grouped the owners by national background<sup>22</sup>. From his work it emerges that a clear though not complete ethnic differentiation took place in the period 1820-1869.

<sup>19</sup> W. F. M. MANSVELT, *Prauwvaart*, 1937, *passim*.

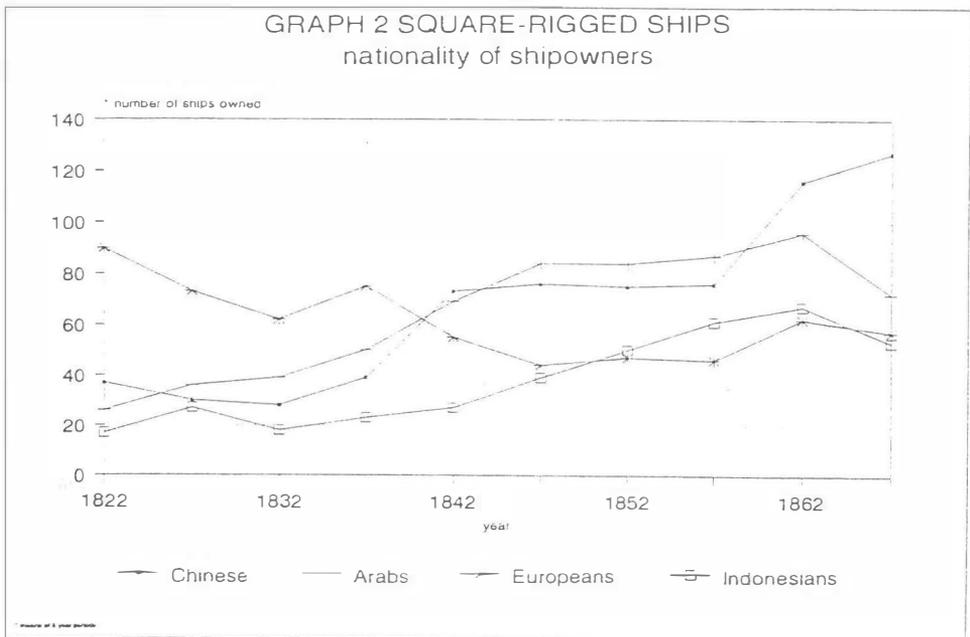
<sup>20</sup> WONG LIN KEN, 1960, pp. 280 ff.

<sup>21</sup> W. F. M. MANSVELT, *Scheepvaartstatistiek*, 1938, tables 5 and 8.

<sup>22</sup> W. F. M. MANSVELT, *Prauwvaart*, 1937, tables VIII and IX.

With regard to the category “Native sailing ships” the tendency was as follows : the indigenous Indonesian share rose from one-third to two-thirds ; the Chinese, on the other hand, declined from half to one-third, while the European share shrank from one-sixth to practically nothing. Apart from that the number of ships in this class was relatively small and fluctuated sharply.

The development in ownership of the western-rigged vessels is reproduced in Graph 2. Around 1820 about half of these ships were in Dutch or British hands <sup>23</sup> ; in 1840-1844 the percentage had dropped to less than one-fourth. The slight increase in 1850 must be attributed to the fact that as yet few steamships had been included in this category. For Indonesians the percentages in 1820-1824 and 1865-1869 were 9.6% and 16% respectively ; for Chinese owners 21.5% and 38.5% respectively ; and for Arabs 15.2% and 21.6% respectively. This declining tendency for the Europeans and the concomitant rising curve for the Asians are valid both relatively and absolutely and hold for both international and interregional shipping.



Around 1820 shipping and trade were still very closely connected with each other in every enterprise. The big East Indian trading houses, for example, had one to ten ships in operation to carry their own merchandise. The ethnic

<sup>23</sup> The major trading companies on Java in the early 19th century were British ; for example Maclaine Watson & Co. and Fraser Eaton & Co. See W. M. F. MANSVELT, *Handelshuizen*, 1938.

differentiation can then be partly attributed to a similar “division of labor” in commerce. The inequality that existed there was fixed by a number of regulations designed to limit the role of the Chinese to that of middlemen. In this way import and export trade long remained largely concentrated in the hands of the big European trading companies. In addition to these, however, Arab and also Armenian trading companies with their extensive experience in international trade and shipping played a not inconsiderable role. The commerce of the Javanese by contrast remained limited to the local or regional level.

Around 1840 the activities of trade and transportation began to diverge. This process started at the top of the commercial pyramid in Java, but also had repercussions at the lower levels. At that time, according to F. J. A. Broeze, the largest shipowners began to reduce or sell off their fleets<sup>24</sup>. Apparently long before the advent of steam shipping, sailing vessels had become less attractive for the European companies located on Java and they gladly turned over this still expanding activity to others. Of course, someone had to be waiting in the wings to meet this new demand for transport by third parties and initially it seems that the Arabs were the best positioned. Among this ethnic group there were already independent shipowner-captains<sup>25</sup>. As early as 1820 they had begun to expand their fleets of square-rigger ships steadily and after 1835 even quite rapidly. At that point the Chinese also began their vigorous expansion, but their on average smaller ships were almost exclusively employed for coastal shipping in the service of their own activities as distributors.

Unfortunately we do not have such a detailed overview for the years after 1870, but it is in any case clear that the decline of the European element among shipowners continued, especially after 1873, when gradually more ports were opened for import and export trade. Thanks to the growth of Singapore the Chinese in particular were able to take eager advantage of the situation. For them it represented a brief period of transition since they had early on started to make use of steamships. The share of the Indonesians increased greatly, but the fact that they, in the end, became the most important element in western-rigged sailing was really only due to the withdrawal of the others.

In contrast to “foreign” Asians<sup>26</sup> the Indonesians were unable to take part in the expansion of steam shipping. No doubt the technological and financial gaps formed an almost insurmountable barrier to entry. There simply was no commercial class among them with a more than regional range of operations, a network of contacts and access to capital, which would have formed the basis for a more developed shipping industry. The very few initiatives that

<sup>24</sup> F. J. A. BROEZE, 1979, pp. 260 ff.

<sup>25</sup> F. J. A. BROEZE, 1979, pp. 266 ff.

<sup>26</sup> According to colonial law Chinese, Arabs and other Asian inhabitants had a separate legal identity, designated as *Vreemde Oosterlingen* or Eastern Foreigners, respectively.

have been recorded were quickly crushed by opposition from the colonial government, as in the case of Alimuddin, Sultan of Koetei, in 1908<sup>27</sup>. For the Indonesians, adoption of steamshipping was no real option ; the only expansion that proved viable was in adapting or relocating the traditional proa fleet.

#### THE LOCATIONAL PATTERN OF INTERACTION

Now we turn to a quantitative analysis of the locational interrelation of steam and sail in the period between the opening of the Suez Canal and World War I. More particularly, our aim is to find out to what extent there has been adaptation, relocation or retreat by sailing ships. First, we will describe the locational contingency of various types of shipping at port level in order to fathom the impact of the introduction of packetboats and other steamships on the sheer presence of sailing ships of both types. Then we proceed to probe the impact of the competition of steamships on the volume of trade carried by sailing ships.

For this goal a dataset has been created, mainly based on the official "Statistics of trade, shipping and customs". Fortunately the format which had been introduced in 1874 essentially remained the same until 1911. The yearly statistics in this period are quite detailed. There were separate entries for inward and outward cargo as well as for interregional and international trade (since 1879) ; both numbers of ships and volume of carried tons were registered. The distinction between 'European'-rigged and 'Native'-rigged sailing vessels and steamships was continued. The number of ports with registration of cargo by any type of ship increased from 66 in 1876 to 127 in 1910. Unfortunately, there was no separate entry for the *pakketvaart* boats. Moreover, in many smaller ports commodity transport by KPM was registered not in every single port, but at major ports, called by the ship. For that reason, data from company records of the KPM were added to the dataset. Finally, for reasons not directly relevant to the present argument, all other coastal settlements with colonial administration were included, even if this place never was mentioned in the customs statistics. The total number of places in the dataset amounts to 335.

In the present analysis there is no need to go in too much detail. Our use of the dataset is limited in several ways. First, we compare only six years : 1876, 1886, 1892, 1898, 1904 and 1910. Secondly, figures for international and domestic trade, and for inward as well as outward cargo have been lumped together into a single figure for trade volume of each port.

Table 1 summarizes the distribution of (both 'European'- and 'Native'-rigged) sailing ships over the ports of the archipelago. The number of ports where sailing ships carried at least part of the commodities increased from

<sup>27</sup> J. À CAMPO, 1992, p. 343.

TABLE 1  
Native-rigged and European-rigged sailing ships ; number of ports

Type of ships	1876	1886	1892	1898	1904	1910
No sailing ships	271	204	176	146	123	75
Native rigged ships	17	36	33	58	73	67
European rigged ships	13	15	9	9	8	10
Both Nat. and Eur. rigged ships	34	45	50	43	36	33
Total number of ports	335	335	335	335	335	335

64 in 1876 and 110 in 1910 (total of row 2, 3 and 4). The number of ports with native-rigged proas doubled from 51 to 100 (total of row 2 and 4). It should be noticed that there has been a sharp decrease in number of ports from 109 in 1904 to 100 in 1910 ; this decline coincided with the aforementioned reduction of tonnage. The number of ports with square-riggers, however, steadily declined ever since 1886. Of the 127 ports mentioned in the 1910-statistic, only 43 ports did still include this category (total of row 3 and 4). The number of ports visited by both categories of ships remained roughly the same. In only about ten of these ports there was no native-rigged shipping. It is not unlikely that part of the 'expansion' of Native-rigged craft is an artefact of the widening range of the custom area.

Table 2 presents the numbers for both types of steamships. The number of ports, as calculated from the time-tables of the successive *pakketvaart* companies, increased from 51 to 223. The number of ports with non-packet steamers quadrupled from 27 to 112. So by this standard the range of the packet boats was twice as large as of all other steamers combined. However, it is interesting to note that even by 1910 there were more than 20 ports with shipment by steam, but not called by the *pakketvaart*.

TABLE 2  
*Pakketvaart* and *Non-pakketvaart* steamshipping ; number of ports

Type of ships	1876	1886	1892	1898	1904	1910
No steamships	277	226	196	180	150	89
Packet steamers	31	55	78	90	90	134
Non-packet steamers	7	15	24	23	34	23
Both packet and non-packet steamers	20	39	37	42	61	89
Total number of ports	335	335	335	335	335	335

TABLE 3  
Joint distribution of sailships and steamship

Type of ships	1876	1886	1892	1898	1904	1910
Sail nor steamship	254	204	176	146	123	75
Sailing ships	23	22	20	34	27	14
Steamships	17	35	67	79	95	150
Both sail and steamships	41	74	72	76	90	96
Total number of ports	335	335	335	335	335	335

Table 3 shows how the location of steamshipping and of sailing ships were interrelated. The number of ports with shipment by sail but no shipment by steam fluctuated around 25 during most of the period, but was cut by half after 1904. The number of ports with both steam and sail, however, more than doubled (from 41 to 96). It would be rash to conclude that sailing generally prospered where steamshipping was introduced and withered away where it was not. The increase in the number of ports with both main types of shipping might be attributed to two different reasons. Steamshipping may preferably have been extended to ports with sailing, or sailing ships were attracted to ports where steamships brought cargo in hitherto unknown quantities. Moreover, square-riggers must be separated from Native craft, and *pakketvaart* steamers from non-packet steamships.

In order to get a more detailed view of the interaction of sail and steam, table 3 has been disaggregated by the four subcategories of steamshipping: ports without steamshipping (table 4); ports with packet steamships only (table 5); ports with non-packetboats only (table 6); and ports with both packetboats and other steamships (table 7). Then, for each of these subcategories the joint distribution of both types of sailing ships has been calculated for each of the six years.

We can summarize the evidence from these tables as follows. Table 4 clearly shows that in ports without any steamshipping the locational distribution of both types of sailing vessels slightly increased before 1904, but afterwards

TABLE 4  
Native-rigged and European-rigged sailing ships; in ports without steamshipping

Type of ships	1876	1886	1892	1898	1904	1910
No sailing ships	254	204	176	146	123	75
Native rigged ships	12	11	12	23	24	10
European rigged ships	1	4	2	3	0	2
Both Nat. and Eur. rigged ships	10	7	6	8	3	2
Total number of ports	277	226	196	180	150	89

TABLE 5

Native-rigged and European-rigged sailing ships ; in ports with packet steamshipping only

Type of ships	1876	1886	1892	1898	1904	1910
No sailing ships	15	32	63	69	82	133
Native rigged ships	3	12	10	18	6	1
European rigged ships	8	3	1	0	2	0
Both Nat. and Eur. rigged ships	5	8	4	3	0	0
Total number of ports	31	55	78	90	90	134

TABLE 6

Native-rigged and European-rigged sailing ships ; in ports with non-packet steamshipping only

Type of ships	1876	1886	1892	1898	1904	1910
No sailing ships	2	0	3	5	4	5
Native rigged ships	0	7	7	5	13	12
European rigged ships	1	1	1	3	4	2
Both Nat. and Eur. rigged ships	4	7	13	10	13	4
Total number of ports	7	15	24	23	34	23

TABLE 7

Native-rigged and European-rigged sailing ships ; in ports with both types of steamshipping

Type of ships	1876	1886	1892	1898	1904	1910
No sailing ships	0	3	1	5	9	12
Native rigged ships	2	6	4	12	30	44
European rigged ships	3	7	5	3	2	6
Both Nat. and Eur. rigged ships	15	23	27	22	20	27
Total number of ports	20	39	37	42	61	89

declined sharply. For European-rigged vessels there was a decline from 11 to 4 ports ; the number of ports with Native-rigged ships was reduced from 22 to 12. A similar pattern arises from table 5 ; in the ports where the *pakketvaart* met no competition from other steamships both categories of sailing ships virtually disappeared. In ports with non-*pakketvaart* steamers only, sailing ships fared much better, as is apparent from table 6. European-rigged ships enlarged their range until 1904 from 5 to 17 ports. For Native-rigged ships the increase was from 4 to 26. For both types the number of ports dropped in 1910 (to 6 and 16 respectively). This, however, was due not only to withdrawal of sailing ships, but also because some of these ports were added to the *pakketvaart* network.

Table 7 finally deals with the distribution of sail in ports where both *pakketvaart* and other steamers met. Within this category the number of European-rigged ships did not diminish in absolute numbers but, relatively speaking, this type of sailing ships lagged far behind. Native-rigged ships clearly extended their range from 17 to 71 ports.

What do these numbers exactly tell us about the response of the 'traditional' sector to the expansion of 'modern' sea transport? Well into the 20th century European-rigged sailing ships continued to touch at ports where both *pakketvaart* and other steamships did call; elsewhere they withdrew. Certainly there were no signs of adaptation or relocation.

Native-rigged sail was effected in a more complex way. Generally speaking it expanded its range within the domain of the steamship, so there is little doubt that there has been adaptation to a significant extent. The important exception is its contraction from ports where KPM enjoyed a monopoly. One should resist the temptation to conclude that sailing vessels, expelled by the *pakketvaart* now were attracted by competing steamers. It simply may have been a shift from lesser ports to major ports, because ports called by both packet boats and other steamers usually were the more important ones. In other words, there may have been centripetal relocation.

What about centrifugal relocation? Table 4 seems to suggest that native craft eventually withdrew from ports not called by steamships (*pakketvaart* or otherwise). This category is rather difficult to interpret. Unlike the other ones, its size steadily shrunk because of the expansion of steamshipping. There also must have been considerable turnover in its composition. As its ports with transshipment by sail were more likely to attract steamships, these losses must have been made up with an extension of sailing ships to new ports. Therefore, there may also have been some centrifugal relocation.

In order to test this hypothesis the impact on sailing ships will be gauged by comparing their distribution before and after the introduction of steamshipping. To that purpose the ports have been classified according to the period in which steamshipping was introduced; i.e. they have been assigned to cohorts. These cohorts are 1850-1856 (11), 1857-1866 (10); 1867-1876 (37), 1877-1886 (53), 1887-1892 (43), 1893-1898 (28), 1899-1904 (31) and 1905-1910 (72); the numbers between brackets refer to the number of ports in that cohort<sup>28</sup>. Fifty ports where, up to 1910, had been no steamshipping at all, were assigned to a separate 'cohort', called C-none.

The number of ports with European-rigged ships is reproduced in table 8 for each cohort and for all selected years. The first column corroborates that steamshipping was introduced in ports where transport by sail was concentrated. (see also table 9, first column). Before the introduction of steam, there was

<sup>28</sup> In the graphs, these cohorts are indicated by their closing year as C-1856, C-1866, etc.

little or no extension of the range of European-rigged sailing ships. In some intervals at least the introduction of steamshipping coincided with an increase of European-rigged vessels (see for each the cohort the corresponding year). More conspicuous is, however, the sharp contraction after the introduction of steamshipping, especially for the older cohorts. As a result, there was a sharp contraction of European-rigged shipping in the older cohorts. This was not compensated with growth in the later cohorts, so there has been neither adaptation nor relocation.

The distribution of Native-rigged ships over ports of different cohorts is given in table 9. First, the range of native-rigged vessels before the introduction of steamshipping clearly increased, most conspicuously in those 'peripheral' ports where no steamshipping was introduced throughout the period under

TABLE 8

The distribution of "European-rigged" sailing ships over ports of successive cohorts  
(N = total number of ports in the cohort)

Year cohort	1876	1886	1892	1898	1904	1910	N
C-1856	9	10	10	7	6	8	11
C-1866	7	7	9	8	4	5	10
C-1876	20	21	17	15	10	7	37
C-1886	6	12	12	7	11	5	53
C-1892	4	6	6	9	5	7	43
C-1898	0	0	1	3	3	3	28
C-1904	1	2	2	1	5	3	31
C-1910	0	0	1	1	0	3	72
C-none	0	2	1	1	0	2	50
Total	47	60	59	52	44	43	335

TABLE 9

The distribution of 'Native-rigged' sailing ships over ports of successive cohorts  
(N = total number of ports in the cohort).

Year cohort	1876	1886	1892	1898	1904	1910	N
C-1856	6	9	10	9	7	9	11
C-1866	6	7	7	8	7	8	10
C-1876	17	21	18	20	19	23	37
C-1886	11	27	22	25	23	23	53
C-1892	5	8	14	16	15	13	43
C-1898	1	2	3	6	8	5	28
C-1904	1	2	3	4	11	7	31
C-1910	0	1	1	2	2	6	72
C-none	4	4	5	11	17	6	50
Total	51	81	83	101	109	100	335

consideration. There was also a clear extension of the range of native craft concomitant with the diffusion of steamshipping. Finally, after the introduction of steamshipping, native-rigged vessels extended their range where steamshipping had been introduced early (C-1856 through C-1876). For the later cohorts (from 1886 onwards), there was some contraction of its range. Table 8, in sum, makes clear that there must have been adaptation to a considerable extent. Moreover it suggests that after 1892 there may have been both centripetal and centrifugal relocation of Native-rigged vessels ; however this is far from conclusive.

In a similar way for each cohort of ports a mean tonnage will be computed for each of the selected years. As has been indicated before, the diffusion of steamship closely followed the rank of ports ; that is, steamships were first introduced in ports with substantial trade and only later in lesser ports. We may assume that cohort and the volume of cargo were inversely related.

Now we hypothesize that adoption, adaptation and relocation have a different effect on this 'rank-decay' curve. Adoption means the substitution of sail by steam, so for sailing ships there will be a downward shift. The same holds for the exit option, when the range or volume of the trade, or both, are contracting. Adaptation means that sailing ships will benefit from the greater volume of trade induced by steamships ; for sailing ships the curve will shift upward. Relocation means that transport with sailing ships shifts from ports where steamshipping has been introduced to ports where it has not. So the curve will shift downward in the older cohorts and upward in the later ones.

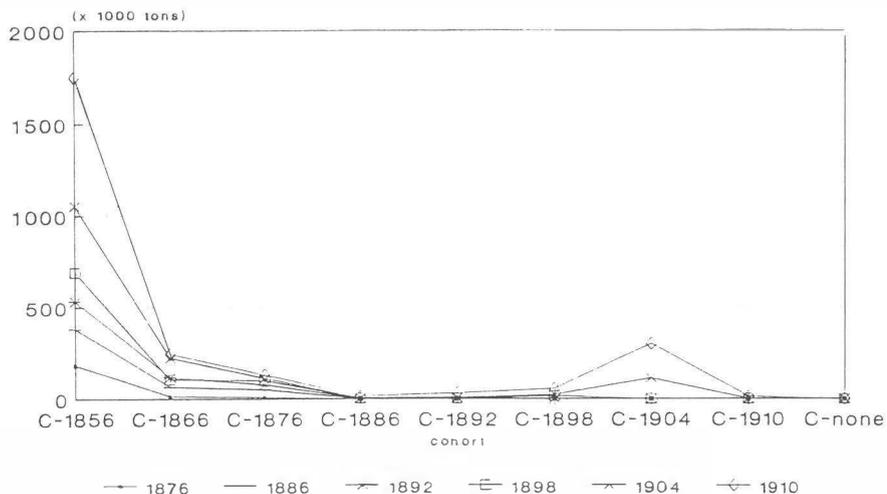
These hypotheses can help to interpret the actual changes in the mean tonnage per cohort per year (from 1876 to 1910) for steamships, European sailing ships and for Native-rigged ships respectively ; see Graphs 3, 4 and 5.

For steamships, the curve of mean tonnage shifted upward quite evenly. The greatest shift was displayed for the oldest cohort. This finding is of course consistent with the ascendancy of the steamer. The assumption of the inverse relationship between volume of cargo and cohort clearly is violated for the cohort-1904. This points to important structural changes, most notably the establishment of Sabang as a duty free port and the rise of new economic regions like Balikpapan (oil industry) or Sinabang (timber industry).

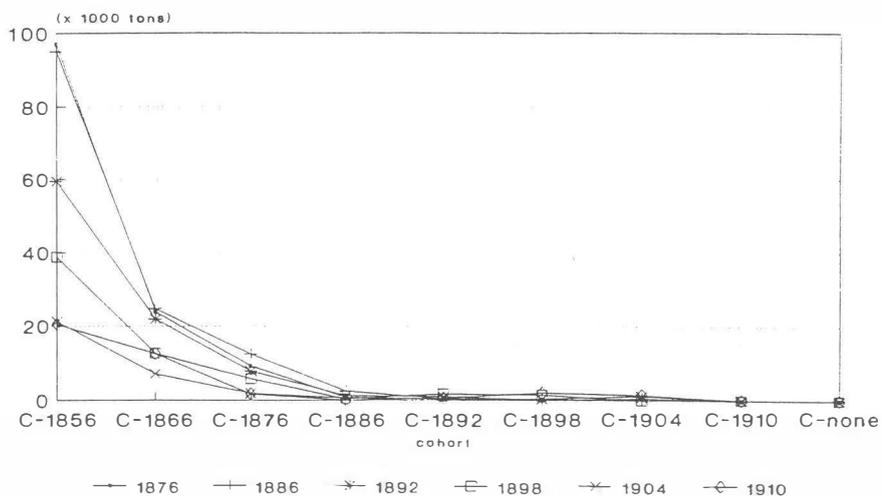
The curve of mean tonnage per cohort for European-rigged vessels regularly shifted downward. The upward shift in the later cohorts was very slight, so there was just contraction and little or no relocation.

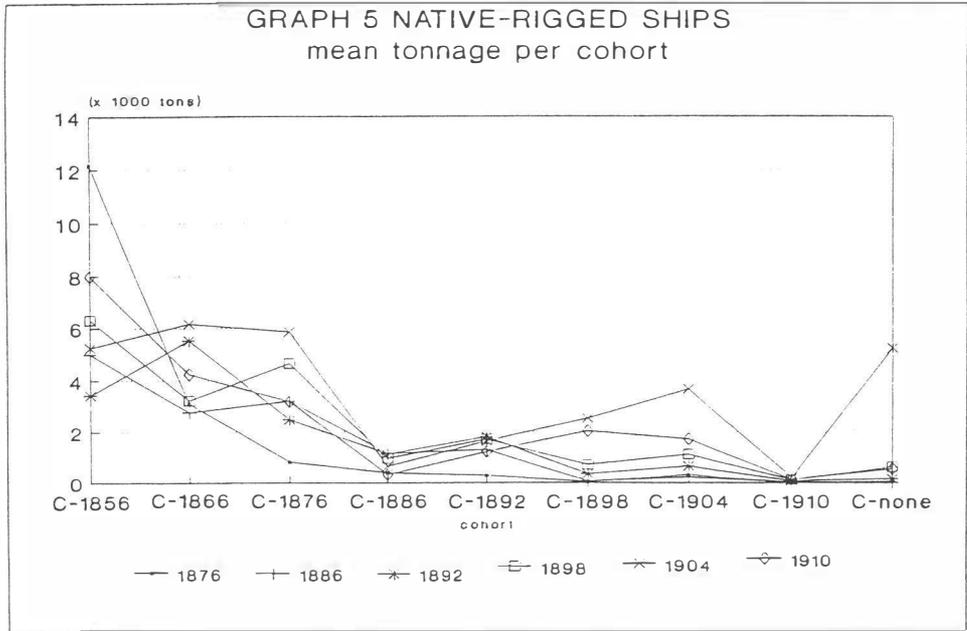
The distribution of the tonnage carried by Native-rigged proas over the ports of successive cohorts appears to have changed in a more complex way. In the years up to 1892 there was a sharp reduction of cargo in the ports of the older cohorts (C-1856 and C-1866). In the later cohorts there was a marked increase of tonnage carried. After 1892 the volume of cargo increased in ports of both the older and the later cohorts, especially so in the cohort

GRAPH 3 STEAMSHIPS  
mean tonnage per cohort



GRAPH 4 SQUARE-RIGGED SHIPS  
mean tonnage per cohort





C-none<sup>29</sup>. So the decades before 1892 may have been characterised by relocation and the decades after 1892 by both adaptation and relocation<sup>30</sup>.

Now we may conclude that, in the latter period, the proa shipping sector underwent a structural change. The process of adaptation meant that the owners of native-rigged proas were able to take advantage of the huge increase of trade volume, and probably did profit from the demise of square-rigged shipping as well. The fact that the increase in cargo was much greater in the older cohorts than in C-none, suggests that adaptation was more important than relocation. This difference, however, might as well be an artefact of the statistical under-registration of trade in remote regions. Anyway, traditional proa shipping no doubt found a niche in the transport between the major ports of the archipelago. It also seized opportunities in transport to ports where, for one reason or another, the *pakketvaart* did not call. On the other hand, in the years 1892-1910 proa shipping seems to have been expelled by KPM from some ports of the later cohorts. In order to test the plausibility of this tentative interpretation we briefly review KPM policy on competition with sailing ships.

<sup>29</sup> This suggest that there also may have been relocation to peripheral ports or islands not included in the dataset.

<sup>30</sup> These generalisations remain valid for separation of international from internal trade, as well as for separation of inward and outward cargo.

## THE PATTERN OF POLICY

When KPM entered the arena in Indonesian shipping, the European-rigged and indigenous fleets were largely in Indonesian hands ; their share of traffic being 15% and 5% respectively. On his first business trip through the archipelago KPM official Op ten Noort noted that in many places quite a bit of export shipping was still taking place by sail<sup>31</sup>.

To what extent should the further decline of both forms of shipping be attributed to a voluntary cessation of this traditional form of operation or to the active competition of the packet boats ? It seems that the "Nederlandsch-Indische Stoomvaart Maatschappij" (NISM) did not take special pains to counter the sailing fleet, but the attitude of KPM on the other hand was not one of passively waiting for business to come along : "From the start the general prevailing opinion, formed during the operation of NISM, that a steamship could not compete with sail, had to be combatted and overcome. It has only been quite gradually that KPM with the help of its lower freight rates and scheduled services, in contrast to the tramp shipping of the sailing vessels, has managed to convince people of the opposite"<sup>32</sup>.

Various methods were employed in the competitive struggle with varying success. Already in the first two years of operation, Op ten Noort as head agent had managed to set up the network of routes in such a way that the cargo of the western-rigged ships and the traditionally rigged proas would, so he thought, have to fall into KPM's hands. When Op ten Noort in his Yearly Report over 1893 boasted that the KPM under his management had succeeded in enlarging its share of non-governmental cargo, he made explicit reference to his policy of competing with sailing ships<sup>33</sup>. On the Timor route, for example, the return trip was made as direct as possible in order to capture the extensive trade in horses from the sailing fleet<sup>34</sup>. On one particular route Pulu Tello in the Batu islands was included "in order to seize a share of the important proa shipping with those islands"<sup>35</sup>. On an exploratory trip in the Lampungs the head agent was able to observe that in Menggala and Tulungbawang there was a lively commerce with Palembang in particular in which all the transport still went by sailing ship and native proa<sup>36</sup>. Together with the

<sup>31</sup> L. P. D. OP TEN NOORT, *Reisverslag 1890* (Inspector's report). Op ten Noort, by training a naval officer, was the first KPM manager overseas ; he returned to *patria* in 1893, where he had a distinguished career as a director of many Dutch shipping and industrial companies. On his 1890 round trip he was accompanied by employee L. J. Lambach, who was to become his successor as overseas manager ("head agent") of the KPM in 1907.

<sup>32</sup> M. G. DE BOER and J. C. WESTERMANN, 1941, p. 279.

<sup>33</sup> A.R.A., KPM, *Algemeen Verslag 1893* (Yearly Report by the Overseas Management).

<sup>34</sup> A.R.A., KPM, *Algemeen Verslag 1892*.

<sup>35</sup> A.R.A., KPM, *Maandverslag 9 December 1892* (Monthly Report).

<sup>36</sup> A.R.A., KPM, *Maandverslag 17 January 1895*.

“Residents” (Dutch colonial officials) of both districts KPM sent the SS “Van Riebeeck” on a journey to scout out the feasibility of a monthly connection<sup>37</sup>.

Sailing ships had managed to maintain a solid basis of support since their lower costs enabled them to win many transport contracts offered in public tenders, for example, by the colonial government. Thanks to these profitable contracts they were in a strong competitive position to obtain freight for the return voyage. Partly for that reason KPM made it a policy as early as 1892 to get control of contracts as they fell free in order to strike a blow at the sailing fleet. A solution was found for the difference in costs. In 1894 KPM obtained the salt contracts and let them out in turn to sailing ships run by the firm P. Landberg and Sons<sup>38</sup>. Competition with sailing ships was still an important factor in the takeover by KPM of the very profitable Banka tin transport in 1910, but that contract was fulfilled by steamships.

In some cases KPM exercised gentle pressure to eliminate sailing ships. The Standard Petroleum Company continued to use sailing vessels for a long time and KPM protested against this by pointing out the special reduced rate the oil company enjoyed for the shipping of petroleum (in drums)<sup>39</sup>. The Chinese shipowner Kho Lim Yang of Banjarmasin was threatened with loss of his discount if he did not do away with his three sailing ships, or at any rate not use them to carry cargo for others, in which case “they will then disappear in due course by themselves”<sup>40</sup>.

Special reduced freight rates were introduced for shipping between Banjarmasin, then as now an important center for proas, and the north coast of Java, in particular Panarukan, “because that is the only way we can prevent the sailing fleet from expanding again from Banjarmasin”. As late as 1912 shipping by sail was still “astonishingly widespread”<sup>41</sup>. Whenever KPM increased its prices for low-value products, cargo was lost to sailing vessels. The Trading Association of Gorontalo returned entirely to shipping by sail after such an increase<sup>42</sup>. Price cutting was not always effective against proas. In many ports packet boats were dependent on lighters for loading and unloading. The local owners of these craft kept their prices high. In its struggle against the sailing fleet, KPM strove for reduction of the costs of such lighters. In Panarukan, for example, the head agent was able to get the better of the proa fleet by exerting pressure on the local lighters<sup>43</sup>.

<sup>37</sup> A.R.A., KPM, Maandverslag 7 January 1898.

<sup>38</sup> A.R.A., KPM, Algemeen Verslag 1892.

<sup>39</sup> L. J. LAMBACH, *Reisverslag* 1912b, p. 140.

<sup>40</sup> L. J. LAMBACH, *Reisverslag* 1912b, p. 108.

<sup>41</sup> L. J. LAMBACH, *Reisverslag* 1912b, p. 135.

<sup>42</sup> A.R.A., KPM, Algemeen Verslag 1909.

<sup>43</sup> A.R.A., KPM, Raad van Bestuur 29 May 1893 (Minutes of the Board of Directors in Amsterdam) ; A.R.A., KPM, Maandelijks Verslag, 7 June 1894.

The fact that the indigenous sailing fleet was dependent on the monsoon meant that KPM experienced bothersome seasonal fluctuations, especially in shipping to the Lesser Sunda islands and the Timor archipelago. "The competition from sailing vessels that started with the easterly monsoon has, however, recently cut into the revenue of the trips" wrote the head agent, leading him to reduce the scheduled sailings of the SS Ophir from weekly to biweekly<sup>44</sup>. In the easterly monsoon season the prices were also cut to take the wind out of the proas' sails, while during the westerly monsoon they were raised again in order to recover the losses. All these measures were aimed at smoothing out the seasonal fluctuations in capacity utilization.

In the outlying areas of the archipelago especially, such as the Eastern Archipelago, sailing ships still played the leading role around 1900. In that region the proas were operated mostly by Buginese shipowners who also practiced an irregular itinerate commerce as merchants. They could be indirectly though very effectively contested by striking at their business. In particular KPM expended a great deal of energy to promote the fixed, regular commerce of the Chinese<sup>45</sup>.

The growing intervention of the colonial government, which was encouraged by KPM, also hindered the development of proa shipping. The constant expansion of the area subject to customs, for example, meant more duties and controls and made the shipping of contraband a riskier business. Another example is furnished by the disproportionately strict requirements for sea letters and yearly permits that served to increase costs.

Despite such hindrances, specific local economic or geographical circumstances prevented KPM from becalming the sailing vessels. To put it more forcefully, steam shipping could also lead to increased demand for small vessels in some places where they carried out distribution and feeder activities in ports that KPM called on<sup>46</sup>. As opposed to the decline of traditional-rigged proa shipping on Saleijer, in the Lampungs, on Madura and Sapeken, it expanded in Bengkalis, on Sumbawa and along the south coast of Borneo<sup>47</sup>. For that reason KPM's overseas manager Lambach made a clear distinction between feeder and competitor proas<sup>48</sup>. In the course of various trips he observed that the proas had assumed the role of feeder, for example, in East Celebes and

<sup>44</sup> A.R.A., KPM, Maandverslag 5 May 1893.

<sup>45</sup> M. G. DE BOER and J. C. WESTERMANN, 1941, p. 279.

<sup>46</sup> See also R. BROERSMA, 1934, pp. 325, 341 and 343.

<sup>47</sup> *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indië*, part IV, p. 678 ; M. G. DE BOER and J. C. WESTERMANN, 1941, p. 284 ; A.R.A., KPM, Algemeen Verslag 1903 ; L. J. LAMBACH, *Reisverslag* 1912c, p. 56.

<sup>48</sup> L. J. LAMBACH, *Reisverslag* 1915, p. 238.

in the Tioro Strait<sup>49</sup>. The proa remained very important for the local distribution of rice and other goods in many places<sup>50</sup>.

After 1900, as we saw, there was a renewed interest in and appreciation for indigenous proa shipping on the part of some civil servants. KPM was sensitive to their criticism and took a more reserved position. When, for example, agents of KPM pressed for the opening of steam service in the Spermonde archipelago, where many proas were active, Lambach raised two objections. In the first place it would either not or hardly be profitable and in the second place KPM was already being reproached for eliminating proa shipping on the Makassar routes<sup>51</sup>.

The colonial government and the company became convinced of the lasting importance of the proa fleet, which came out clearly in the plans for new harbors that took shape after 1910: "The proas play a big role around Makassar, especially as feeders of goods from all the islands of the archipelago and from the various bays of Celebes that are not called on regularly by KPM. For that reason a substantial part of the harbor will be reserved for them"<sup>52</sup>. This same reasoning could also be found in the plans for harbors on Java.

KPM's struggle against sailing ships was no more than a rearguard action, but one which nevertheless had to be undertaken. With regard to proa shipping it can be observed that at first it was contested; later it was forced to adapt itself to the narrow margins that KPM allowed it on the local level or on less important routes. Expansion of the sailing fleet was possible where it supplemented steam shipping. In certain areas sailing ships remained indispensable for indigenous trade, either because there were no other means of transportation or because the low-value products could not be shipped at steamship prices. Finally KPM policies towards proa shipping were inherently ambivalent. Proa shipping was seen both as a competitor and as a useful complement. Its implementations in a large measure depended on temporal changes and local variations, and therefore vacillated between strong opposition and lukewarm tolerance.

<sup>49</sup> L. J. LAMBACH, *Reisverslag* 1915, p. 233.

<sup>50</sup> L. J. LAMBACH, *Reisverslag* 1912a, p. 17.

<sup>51</sup> It can hardly be denied that KPM seriously limited the economic viability even of strictly local proas. In some cases this was explicitly justified on the grounds that the proas were an obstacle for export growth, or that cargo like rice often was damaged by water. Proponents of the KPM point of view held the opinion that KPM vessels were better designed to prevent deterioration of cargo and thus were more beneficial to the indigenous producer. See for example R. BROERSMA, 1925, p. 148; L. J. LAMBACH, *Reisverslag* 1915, pp. 163-170.

<sup>52</sup> G. J. DE JONGH, 1913, p. 113.

## CONCLUSION

This foregoing description of the impact of packet boats on sailing ships, it should be repeated, is based on inadequate statistics and cursory references here and there in the sources. These shortcomings can be balanced by a strategy of combining a quantitative and a qualitative approach. The results seem to reinforce each other. On the other hand, our analysis at the aggregate level remains rather abstract. More insight into the interaction of steam, sail and proa shipping can be obtained by a detailed comparative study at the regional, local and possibly even individual levels. That is a major challenge for future research.

This article certainly does not bridge the '1850-1920' gap in the historiography on proa shipping. At best, its outlines have been charted. Our analysis is an extension of H. W. Dick's pioneering studies on prahu shipping in Eastern Indonesia since World War I. By and large it sustains his conclusions, but it also makes clear that the processes of contraction, adaptation and relocation originated much earlier. The redefinition of prahu shipping therefore should be analysed from an even longer term perspective. Finally, similar problems and challenges faced Indonesian producers in many sectors of the economy. Therefore, future research has much to gain from a comparative strategy and a broader interpretative framework.

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## CONCLUSIONS



# THE CHAMELEON

BY

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When we started to read all the papers of this eminent group of historians, specialized in the impact of the Europeans overseas from the late 15th century until the 19th century, we sincerely hoped to be able to formulate afterwards some conclusions. The impressive spectrum of topics related to the conference-theme presented here on the other hand made this task almost impossible. Otherwise we are certain that some items would not be placed in the right perspective and by such underestimations a contribution could lose some of its merits. Therefore we chose to present a kaleidoscope of impressions encompassing the central theme of this symposium : the factory.

We presumed that after this international conference on “Shipping, Factories and Colonization” it would be a piece of cake to produce a general definition of what a factory signified during the era of the European expansion. Certainly we expected a more refined and profound description than “*a merchant company’s foreign trading station*” we found back in the Oxford dictionary. But the result of this symposium was a plethora of fine papers, picturing a large spectrum of aspects, which could only be realised thanks to the factories. It gave us the idea that the variety of activities developed through the existence of the factories went far beyond the initial commerce and strenghten the belief that besides bridge-heads for the trade these European settlements formed the backbone of further colonization on three continents. Perhaps this last statement seems somewhat exaggerated, nevertheless if we browse through the individual contributions we can discern several different functions of this phenomenon in which it acted as a pioneer or played a key-role.

In the new world economy that emerged as a result of the great discoveries during the 16th and 17th century factories were linking three continents. The “bullion for goods” pattern of trade became dominant in the Euro-Asian commercial relations. The Europeans exchanged via the Cape route mainly precious metals from America in the ports scattered around the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. Essential in this traffic was, besides great ships fit

to sail on the high seas and a superior military know how, a string of trading posts in the regions they operated in. In Asia the Portuguese and the European trading companies installed the majority of their initial settlements near places where the most interesting commodities like spices and textiles could be bought at first hand. Quite often they corresponded to already existing networks of intra-Asian trade, which gave the Europeans the advantage to participate in a on-going structure. The overall effect of the arrival of these “foreign” merchants in Asian waters was to bolster up the oceanic networks, strenghten its capacity and add a sharp competition. So we may say that the European presence in Asia caused a few modifications within the indigenous structure, but they still were everywhere one more strand in the weave of the ocean’s trade during the 16th and 17th century. It was often a mutually advantageous relationship between trading companies and the Asian merchants and producers on the other. Only occasionally short-lived incidents like the Portuguese attempts to control the sea-trade of the Maldivians in coconutpalm-products, cowries and ambergris, by taking over the political power on these atolls between 1554 and 1573, changed temporarily the traditional network of trade. Although exceptions in this pattern were the interventions of the Dutch East India Company in some parts of the Malay Archipelago and Ceylon. In these regions already in the 17th century territorial control or colonization took place rather quickly when the opportunities occurred to monopolize certain branches of the spice trade (mace, nutmeg, cinnamon).

The most important change which marked the 18th century in relation to the Indian Ocean was the growing importance of the European factor and the eventual sundering of the organic unity of trade and shipping towards the close of the period. The character of the European trading posts altered as they were involved in the colonization process of the companies. Sometimes the influence of the companies was reduced drastically, so these factories could be considered as more independent private settlements of European merchants.

Always the organization of the different trading stations were true reflections of the relations with the indigenous authorities. As Om Prakash stated there was a whole spectrum of alternative scenarios “... *ranged at one end from the establishment of near-colonial relationship ... to a company being obliged to operate in a distinctly hostile environment at the other*”. On this subject the contribution of Jur van Goor is very clarifying. He explained the remarkable Dutch inclination to accomodate to local circumstances in the areas they came to trade with. This attitude facilitated the European integration in the Asian society. However it would be wrong to assume that all attempts to build up enduring relations which created opportunities for cultural exchanges passed off smoothly. For instance the spread of European religions with the trading stations as intermediaries encounrered a lot of drawbacks because the dependence of the interplay between local and European power

stayed often a very vulnerable factor. The remark of the Dutch governor of Ceylon Gustaaf Willem van Imhoff that "*the chimney should smoke for both sides*" characterized this fragile balance which had to be kept at any price.

We have sketched here the role of the factories in the Asian world but also in West-Africa, on a few islands in the Caribbean, in Latin and North America, and even in the Arctic regions we can allotted more functions to the first European settlements than merely setting up commercial relations. Along the coast of Guinea the elaborate string of European fort-factories changed the traditional pattern of labour. On the Gold Coast the continuous demand of the Europeans for gold created a large new contingent of indigenous miners. Like Diane Frost explained the European presence there caused also a migration of one particular Liberian ethnic group : the Kru. In West-Africa the Dutch, English and Danish lodges made the gradual transformation from simple trading posts to "*extended fort communities*", with a lot of African characteristics, as illustrated by Per Hernæs. If we turn to North America we can notice in the case-study of the fort-factory Amsterdam in New Netherland several similarities with the developments in West-Africa, but the indigenous element was lacking in the urbanization process of early New York City.

Finally if we have to come up with a conclusion we would like to compare the factory with a chameleon ; starting frequently as a settlement focussed on trade, it had to incorporate a military function. After the first contacts with the indigenous rulers in Asia, Africa and America most factories adapted themselves constantly to these relationships. It made exchanges on the socio-cultural level possible and it emerged not seldom as a window where transfers of technology were stimulated. With this variety of functions we dare to claim that European factories had the capacity of showing every colour whenever necessary.

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