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Benjamin Asmussen

NETWORKS AND FACES BETWEEN COPENHAGEN AND CANTON, 1730-1840

Doctoral School of Organisation and Management Studies

PhD Series 23.2018

CBS COPENHAGEN BUSINESS SCHOOL
HANDELSHØJSKOLEN

PhD Series 23-2018

Networks and Faces between Copenhagen and Canton, 1730-1840

By Benjamin Asmussen



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Preface

In 2013 the Maritime Museum of Denmark opened in a brand new underground building, encircling an old drydock in Elsinore. Inside, two of the eight new exhibitions narrated accounts about globalisation. The first one, *Tea Time – The First Globalisation*, told the story of the eighteenth-century global trading network seen from the capital of the Oldenburg conglomerate state, inspired by British historian A.G. Hopkins' interpretation of the 1700s as a time of proto-globalisation.¹ Immediately next to it and somewhat intertwined, the exhibition *The World in Your Shopping Basket* gave an account of present-day globalisation – of how maritime transport is at the same time as important as ever before and yet also as invisible as never before, due to ports now relocated from the city centres of the world to more remote destinations, off-limits to ordinary citizens.

During the years leading up to the opening in October 2013, I had the pleasure of curating the *Tea Time* exhibition and during its construction, an inherent distinction within the stories told there became obvious. Through both the exhibition and the objects preserved in the museum, actors of the historical context were divided into two separate categories, namely the actors that were present in the exhibition, the grand merchants, the king, and the ship captains, and at the same time a much larger set of actors who were *not* present. This group contained the sailors, the enslaved Africans, the traders, and the dockworkers who, while having played a vital role at the time, had left little or no legacy behind, making it difficult to tell their story in a Danish museum with its ideology of primarily telling stories through original artifacts. While all of these groups need more scholarly attention to achieve a greater understanding of the eighteenth-century business world, it was the traders directly responsible for the global interactions that especially aroused my interest. After the opening of the museum, when the focus turned towards research, this led to a deeper interest in the business environment of the Oldenburg Monarchy, especially in Copenhagen which was several orders of magnitude larger than all other towns in the realm. Recognising the untapped research potential of this rich and fascinating field, I decided to make it the topic of my thesis with a special focus on the traders travelling to China-- the most distant of trading destinations in the eighteenth century-- as well as their managers. The work, setting, and networks of the businessmen of the proto-globalised world, namely the merchants and traders within and around the Danish Asiatic Company in the eighteenth century and their connections to their Chinese counterparts in Canton piqued my interest. The underlying question became a sense of wonder of how the traders managed to cross this colossal cultural and geographical barrier, perhaps as large as has ever existed in the business history of the Oldenburg Monarchy and Denmark. Within this, however, a larger question emerged as to whether the familiar structures of ships and companies were enough to understand these traders, or if other, less studied structures and networks played a role in the trade.

Acknowledgements

Over the course of the more than three years of this project, several people have been very helpful. First of all, I would like to thank my supervisor Associate Professor Martin Jes Iversen of the Center for Business History, CBS for all of his hard work as the primary advisor, for sharing his knowledge of later Asiatic companies, for helping me place my research into perspective, for

¹ A.G. Hopkins, ed., *Globalization in World History* (London: Pimlico, 2002).

patiently reading the many versions of my thesis, and for the many great suggestions for improvement. Thank you to my other supervisor, Professor Paul van Dyke of the Sun Yat-sen University, who by virtue of our shared network agreed to the task even though we were 8,000 kilometres apart. Many thanks for sharing your vast knowledge of the China trade in the Pearl River Delta, for letting me use your immense databases, for being a great host during my visits to Guangzhou, and for introducing me to a large number of historians from all over the world who share our common interests.

Also thanks to Erik Gøbel from the National Archives of Denmark for inspiration before and during the project, for showing me the DAC archive behind the scenes, and especially for introducing me to Professor Paul van Dyke in Canton. A warm thank-you to my old friend and database wizard Jakob Smith who through his coding skills, saved me from days of repetitive typing by automatically importing all the DAC company traders into the wiki database from a spreadsheet. Thanks also goes to my former colleague at the Maritime Museum of Denmark, curator emeritus Kåre Lauring, for advice, for ideas, as well as for allowing me to use his transcripts of archival material concerning the DAC in China which enabled me to include a wider range of materials than would otherwise have been possible.

Many thanks to Peter Henningsen of the National Museum of Denmark for introducing me to his extensive research in the mentality and status symbols of the merchants of the period; to Jan Wulff of the Danish Agency for Culture and Palaces for help with locating the painting of Chinese merchant Quionqua/Geowqua; to Niels Petri for allowing me the use of letters from his ancestor P.F.F. Mourier in China; and to Klaus Struwe for the gift of an archive of research notes about Kurantbanken created by his mother, the historian Kamma Struwe for her unfinished dissertation in the 1940s. Thanks also to retired history teacher Peter Ditlevsen for providing me with his own revised and updated edition of the memoirs of his great-grandfather's brother, company trader Ludvigsen.

Many other words of gratitude extend to Senior Researcher Jørgen Mikkelsen from the National Archives of Denmark, to postdoc Chao Huang at the Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou for much help, and to Zhao Li of the China Maritime Museum for a good collaboration with publishing a special issue of the museum journal about Danish-Norwegian-Chinese trade over the last 300 years. The same to fellow PhD-student Vibe Martens for many discussions on the wiki and for showing the wonderful possibilities for historians sharing notes early in the research process and for trusting each other. A special word of thanks extends to the many historians, genealogists, artists, archivists, and others in my Facebook-network, who continuously contributed with ideas, searched for sources, and helped explain the many odd and wondrous phenomena that I have struggled with over the years.

Early on in the project, I received much inspiration first in Copenhagen from Henning Morgen and Chris Jephson of Maersk Line in Copenhagen, and later in China from Anders Bradt Schulze, Head of Trade & Marketing, East & Central China for Maersk Line, and Jakob Bergholdt, Group Vice President and CEO for Norden Singapore. All provided valuable insights into the modern-day practices of maritime trade in light of their eighteenth-century predecessors, the merchants and company traders. Also thanks to Dan Pøde Poulsen for providing access to them and to the Danish Ministry of Culture for funding the first trip to China, which also led to a continued scholarly

cooperation between the China Maritime Museum in Shanghai and the Maritime Museum of Denmark about our shared history.

I would also like to thank my colleagues of the Maritime Museum of Denmark for both remembering and supporting me during my absence from our underground centre of maritime knowledge, not least the three directors that were part of the project: first Jørgen Selmer for setting the direction of research after the opening of our new museum, then Camilla Mordhorst for many good words of warning and advice from the start of the process, and finally to the present director Ulla Tofte for support, interest, and perhaps most importantly the space and time necessary to dig deep into theories, tools, and sources for the last three years. I also express gratitude to the many interesting and helpful historians and other scholars that I have worked with here at the Center for Business History at the Copenhagen Business School.

Finally, a great thank you to the D/S Orient//D/S Norden Foundation, who through their generous support to the museum enabled me to bring the first Danish businessmen in China a step further away from the oblivion, that history also creates.

Abstract in English

The overall purpose of this thesis is to understand how and why networks played a significant role for the merchants and company traders of the Danish Asiatic Company (DAC) in their trade in China. To explore this, the following research questions will be answered:

- From the perspective of network analysis and prosopography, what characterised the merchants and traders as a group and how was experience transmitted among the company traders?
- From the perspective of microhistory, what role did networks play for selected individual company traders?

To examine these questions, an analysis on several levels is performed, starting from a broad perspective of the company, its function, and purpose from a network perspective. The rise and fall of the DAC serves as an important backdrop for the research questions. Then the focus narrows down to the societal group of merchants who were responsible for managing the company as directors and others that handled the trade with China. After examining the group as a whole using the prosopographical approach, the focus becomes narrower, turning to microhistory to get as close as possible to a small set of actors, distributed over the 100-year history of the DAC. The chapters reflect this division. In chapter II, the Danish Asiatic Company is analysed, sketching its history and examining the various purposes the company served for various actors of both individual and organisational nature. In chapter III, the focus narrows to the merchants of the company, seen as a group, approached with the help of prosopography. Here, first the merchants serving as directors will be analysed and then the company traders – both viewed as a group and with the assistance of network analysis. Finally, in chapter IV the focus becomes even narrower as four actors are provided with microhistorical narratives, followed by an analysis in view of the previous chapters.

Besides being an empirical contribution to the field, this thesis also provides a methodological contribution by showing the fruitful combination between on the one hand, prosopography and network analysis, and on the other hand microhistory. This thesis also provides a methodological contribution in the growing field of digital humanities, where classical history along with other disciplines from the humanities meets the possibilities of modern computing and visualisation. The thesis describes creating and working with the *Business Wiki of the Oldenburg Monarchy*, a new tool for storing, sharing, and accessing notes about business actors of the Oldenburg Monarchy.

This thesis concludes that the management of the DAC followed the economic situation of the company. When great profits were possible, grand merchants and top-level nobility participated, but as the company declined so too did the level of the directors. For both directors and company traders, family networks were essential and they show up everywhere and constantly. The extended family provided a gateway into the prestigious company; the connections ensured greater levels of trust; and they carried a responsibility towards the next generation. Other networks, like the Reformed Church in Copenhagen as a hub for the elite business network cannot be overestimated. At the same time, the actors of the DAC are interesting examples of the shift from nobility to the bourgeoisie in society. The close narratives of the four DAC company traders highlight a greater pattern in the Asian trade under Dannebrog. While in the early decades of the trade, China was the primary focus, the trade of the DAC and to larger degree individual business actors with links to the

company moved from a country-specific trade, dependent on a single commodity in a single place into a greater integration into the trading system of southeast Asia, requiring knowledge of the waters and perhaps even more essential networks and knowledge of the trade and the possibilities in the various locations.

While the DAC and the general conditions for business people in the Oldenburg Monarchy provided the framework for the actors, the narratives point towards how the actors were simultaneously constrained by their framework, but were also constantly recreating it through their actions.

Combining the answers to the research questions provides a narrative about a company that was both similar and different to a modern firm. While stocks and general assemblies point toward a modern firm, the actions of both directors and company traders illustrate how the DAC was as much a platform for individuals as a single organism controlled by a management. Many company traders and directors attempted to use the company for the maximum personal economic gain. At the same time, important networks outside the company seem to have played a crucial role in who was permitted inside and who would rise in the ranks. The company functioned as a platform, not only in regard to individuals, but also as a network hub, tying international networks together to such a degree that the word Danish in the name of the Danish Asiatic Company almost seems misplaced.

This dependency also showed the lack of power by the management, despite being as influential and well-connected as they were. For when outside conjunctures shifted, taxes were lifted, wars ended, and politics changed, the company lost its *raison d'être*. Thus, the actors described above can be seen less as free agents shaping the world, but rather as helmsmen trying to steer a ship through a storm.

Resumé på dansk

Formålet med denne afhandling er at forstå hvordan og hvorfor netværk spillede en rolle for direktørerne og handelsbetjentene i det Danske Asiatiske Compagnie (DAC) i deres handel på Kina. Det bliver udforsket gennem to forskningsspørgsmål:

- Set fra et perspektiv af social netværksanalyse og prosopografi, hvad kendetegnede direktørerne og handelsbetjentene som gruppe og hvordan blev erfaring overført mellem betjentene?
- Ud fra et mikrohistorisk perspektiv, hvilken rolle spillede netværk da for udvalgte handelsbetjente?

For at besvare disse spørgsmål analyseres DAC i et bredere perspektiv – herunder dets funktion og formål set fra et netværksanalysestandpunkt. Kompagniets fremvækst og fald er bagtæppet for besvarelsen af forskningsspørgsmålene, og herefter snævrer fokus ind til direktørerne og handelsbetjentene som stand. Efter at have undersøgt disse ud fra en prosopografisk synsvinkel snævrer fokus yderligere ind til fire udvalgte aktører, der behandles mikrohistorisk. Afhandlingens kapitler afspejler denne struktur.

Udover et empirisk bidrag til forskningen bidrager afhandlingen metodisk ved at vise det frugtbare i kombinationen af på den ene side prosopografi og netværksanalyse og på den anden side mikrohistorie. Derudover bidrager afhandlingen til det stadig mere populære område *Digital Humanities*, hvor den klassiske humanistiske forskning møder nye digitale metoder og visualiseringsformer. Det sker gennem skabelsen og brugen af en wiki, *Business Wiki of the Oldenburg Monarchy* et nyt online vidensværktøj der kan lagre, dele og gøre information tilgængelig om aktører i det Oldenborgske Monarkis erhvervsliv, herunder både personer og handelshuse.

Afhandlingen konkluderer, at DACs ledelse fulgte kompagniets økonomiske situation. I de hektiske tider hvor store profitter var mulige, bestod ledelsen af tidens største købmænd og mest indflydelsesrige adelsmænd. Men som kompagniet gik ned af bakke, skete det samme med dets direktører sociale niveau. For både direktører og handelsbetjente var familienetværk essentielle og dukker konstant op i arbejdet med aktørerne. Den udvidede familie var en almindelig vej ind i det prestigefyldte kompagni, og forbindelserne sørgede for højere tillidsniveauer og en ansvarlighed overfor den næste generation.

Andre netværk, især den Reformerte Kirke i København, kan ikke undervurdes i dens betydning som et fællesskab for eliteerhvervsnetværket i byen. Samtidig er DACs aktører et eksempel på overgangen fra adelens til borgerskabets magt.

I afhandlingen viser de fire tætte narrativer om udvalgte handelsbetjente et større mønster i kompagniets asienshandel. For mens Kina og te var det primære fokus i de tidlige årtier, bevægede både kompagniets og de enkelte aktørers handel sig i retning af en større integration i handelssystemet i Sydøstasien, hvilket både kræver viden om besejlingen og måske endnu vigtigere netværk og handelskundskab for at kunne drage nytte af andre steder.

Mens DAC og erhvervsvilkårene for forretningsfolk i det Oldenborgske Monarki var rammen om aktørers handlinger, peger de fire narrativer i retning af hvordan de på én gang var begrænset af disse rammer, men også konstant genskabte dem gennem deres ageren.

Når svarene på forskningsspørgsmålene kombineres skabes et narrativ om et kompagni, der både lignede og var forskellig fra et moderne firma. Mens aktier og generalforsamlinger peger i moderne retning, viser både direktører og handelsbetjente gennem deres ageren hvordan DAC i højere grad var en platform for individers erhvervsvirksomhed snarere end et enkelt, organisk firma. Både direktører og handelsbetjente gik langt for at bruge kompagniet for størst mulig personlig vinding.

Men samtidig er det tydeligt hvordan indflydelsesrige netværk uden for komapgniet spillede en vigtig rolle i hvem, der steg til vejrs i kompagniet og hvem der overhovedet kom indenfor. Kompagniet var en platform, ikke kun for individer men også for netværk at agere fra og bandt internationale forbindelser sammen i så høj grad, at ordet ”danske” i det Danske Asiatiske Compagnie nærmest virker malplaceret.

Denne afhængighed antyder også ledelsens manglende magt, på trods af deres indflydelse og gode forbindelser. For da konjunkturer udefra skiftede, skatter blev nedsat, krige sluttede og politikker ændrede sig, så mistede kompagniet både sit formål og sit eksistensgrundlag. Så aktørerne var, snarere end frie agenter, rorsmænd, der forsøgte at styre et stort og stadig mere klodset skib gennem en storm.

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I - Ouverture

I.1 - Introduction²

In a small stretch of land in the old harbour of Copenhagen, a substantial part of the maritime trade of the world is handled today, and several old and new shipping companies have chosen this place for their head of operations. In the eighteenth century, the harbour of Copenhagen was a centre for imports from China. The port was the largest in the Oldenburg Monarchy³ and one of the larger ports in Northern Europe. Throughout the 1700s the harbour was expanded, its waters deepened, and new warehouses built. Besides the many local and short-distance routes, goods poured into the city from destinations around the world. From the lands and colonies of the North Atlantic, whale products, furs, woollen stockings, and even falcons came in, while ships left for Africa with loads of guns, alcohol, and Indian textiles to be traded for enslaved Africans in the Danish forts on the Gold Coast. The ships and many others would later return after having delivered their human cargo in the Danish West Indies with the fruits of that slave labour, primarily sugar, coffee, and tobacco. From beyond the Cape of Good Hope, armed frigates would bring coloured textiles of India back, along with spices and dyes, while the ships from China carried precious tea along with silk and porcelain used for the consumption of the new drinks of the era. As the population of the Oldenburg monarchy was of an insufficient size for consuming this massive amount of imported goods, the capital of Copenhagen served as an important entrepôt, where goods would be reexported and smuggled to Northern Europe. The total mercantile fleet of the monarchy was one of the largest in the world, making up 10 percent of the total European fleet.⁴ For these ships, Asia was an important destination if not in terms of number of vessels, but in the value of cargoes brought home – in the second half of the eighteenth century, ships under Dannebrog carried cargoes worth 135 million rigsdaler home, an amount in the vicinity of the total income of the state of the Oldenburg Monarchy at that time. Although the private trade in Asia was growing over time, the Royal Privileged Danish Asiatic Company (DAC) was one of the key drivers in the trade: In the period from 1772 until 1807 the company brought cargoes from Asia with a value of 40 million rigsdaler from China and 35 million rigsdaler from India.⁵

² Minor elements of this introduction have also been published in the introduction to Asmussen, Benjamin; Duedahl, Poul & Xing, Hang (eds). *Business, Shipping and Culture: Danish-Norwegian Shipping in China for 300 Years*. Shanghai: National Maritime Research, China Maritime Museum, 2017. The special issue was created as a result of the work of this thesis, bringing forth the research of scholars from China, Norway and Denmark.

³ In the age of Absolutism, the king in Copenhagen ruled a conglomerate state consisting of the kingdoms of Denmark and Norway, the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein, until 1773 the county of Oldenburg-Delmenhorst, the countries of Iceland and the Faroe Islands as well as the colonies of Greenland, Finnmark, Danish West Indies, the Danish East Indies, primarily Tranquebar, Frederiksnagore and the Nicobar Islands as well as the slave forts of the Gold Coast or Danish Guinea. These areas were united by their loyalty to their sovereign rather than a feeling of belonging to the same nation and will in this thesis be referred to as the Oldenburg Monarchy.

⁴ Per Boje, *Vejen til velstand - marked, stat og utopi : om dansk kapitalismes mange former gennem 300 år. Tiden 1730-1850* (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2014).

⁵ Erik Gøbel, "Skibe på langfart: sejlader fra København til Asien, Afrika og Amerika i 1600- og 1700-tallet," in *Historiske meddelelser om København* (Copenhagen: 2014), 52-53.

But an even more important trading centre in the eighteenth century was the port of Canton on the Pearl River in Southern China. Here ships from the West gathered to trade in the only port in China they were allowed to enter. From the late seventeenth century to the port's forced closure in 1842, Canton was a meeting place of business and therefore of culture and was the only way Europeans could get a glimpse of the closed China. This central port, the Chinese restrictions, and the international trade all became named the Canton System.

Much has changed in the years between the balmy days of trade in the eighteenth century and the globalised world of the twenty-first century, but many things remain the same: Ships still transport the coveted goods of the East to the West, merchants, agents, and sailors from different cultures still meet and are changed by one another, and profits are still to be made for the visionary merchant, despite the many distances separating then and now. However, the actors themselves of this early trade to China have not yet been moved from the past and into a historical narrative. As the American-Chinese historian Paul van Dyke states:

“No records were kept or preserved about these matters [merchants etc.] because they were not important to the state. Some Chinese merchants became extremely wealthy and built large estates, but their fortunes did not last and the memories of many of their lives have vanished.”⁶ He refers to the status of the many Hong merchants, Canton junk traders, linguists, compradors, and countless others involved in the China trade in the eighteenth century who are absent in historical narratives. To a certain extent, this also holds true for the first Danish, Norwegian, and German traders who travelled to China in service of the Danish Asiatic Company. In the many historical works describing either the DAC or the economic development of the eighteenth century, the China trade has been seen as just a company or an impersonal structure without a focus directed towards the traders who made the prosperous traffic possible. The trade was undoubtedly important, with the DAC being the most profitable trading company of the Oldenburg Monarchy and perhaps even the most profitable in the history of Danish business. And its importance extended beyond profits since this period saw the rise of the bourgeoisie class which was essential in the creation of the modern world, or what the Danish historian Gunner Lind refers to as a civil world,⁷ where the citizen, merchant, and worker took the lead from the armed noblemen of previous ages.

I.2 - Research Questions

The understanding of the importance of networks in business is growing in the present day. New digital possibilities for creating and maintaining networks across the globe has given rise to a new interest in the networks of the past and what might be learned from them. The thriving business community of the central city of the Oldenburg Monarchy of the eighteenth century seems to be heavily dependent on relations organised in several networks, but they have never been examined in detail. There are many reasons for this, but perhaps most of all a shortage of sources from the individual businesses where hardly any company archives have been preserved, is a dominant factor.

⁶ Paul A. Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade: Life and Enterprise on the China Coast, 1700-1845* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), 177.

⁷ Gunner Lind, “Luksus, kultur og modernitet: om Mikkel Venborg Pedersens disputats,” *Historisk Tidsskrift* 113, no. 2 (2013), 522-538.

In this thesis, the main focus is on two categories of businessmen acting in the centre of the Oldenburg Monarchy, Copenhagen. The first, referred to as merchants, are the directors of the DAC, 53 in total. Most of them were also whole-sale merchants, *Grossererer*, with citizenship as such. They bought shares of the DAC, they helped supply their company with provisions and silver from their personal trading houses, they bought and reexported goods from the DAC auctions, and generally made a profit from every part of the trading process within the company. A few were not only merchants but came with military backgrounds or were civil servants.

The other category is the travelling trading personnel of the DAC ships going to China. Along with the crew, who from the captain to the ship's boys were charged with keeping the ship and its cargo safe, all DAC ships heading for Canton carried several employees classed as part of *Negotien*, which translates to "the trade," from the Latin word *negotium* – trade or being a merchant. At the top in this category were the supercargoes, who were responsible for the trade in China. Assistants, junior assistants, clerks, apprentices, servants, and boys are a part of this category as well. In the records of the DAC, they are referred to as *Handelsbetiente*, commercial officers, or as they will be called in this thesis, company traders.

The overall objective of this thesis is to understand how and why networks played a significant role for the merchants and company traders of the Danish Asiatic Company in their trade in China. To explore this, the following two interrelated research questions mirroring two analytical levels will be answered:

- From the perspective of network analysis and prosopography, what characterised the merchants and traders as a group and how was experience transmitted among the company traders?
- From the perspective of microhistory, what role did networks play for selected individual company traders?

This implies two fundamental assumptions: First, that networks did play an important role in the trade of the Oldenburg Monarchy and secondly that they were important for the development of the DAC.⁸

To examine these questions, an analysis on several levels will be necessary starting from a broad perspective of the company, its function, and its purpose from a network perspective. The rise and fall of the DAC serves as an important backdrop for the research questions, and will be explored to provide the reader with historical context for the later analysis.

⁸ These assumptions are generally supported in Leos Müller, "The merchant houses of Stockholm, c. 1640-1800: a comparative study of early-modern entrepreneurial behavior" (PhD dissert., Uppsala University, 1998). The importance of social ties is discussed in C. Lemercier, "Formal network methods in history: Why and how?," in *Social Networks, Political Institutions, and Rural Societies* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2015).

Then the focus narrows down into the *stand*⁹ or societal group of merchants who were responsible for managing the company as directors and others who that handled the trade with China. After examining the group as a whole, using the prosopographical approach, the focus narrows even more, turning to micro history to get as close as possible to a small set of actors distributed over the 100-year history of the DAC. The overall structure is represented in the model in Figure 1. The analysis takes the shape of an open-ended cone, where three

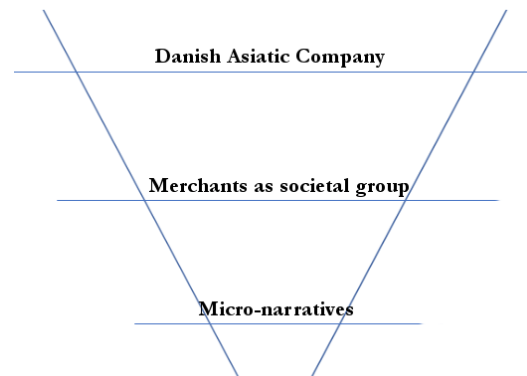


Figure 1 - A model of the structure of this thesis.

cuts across are examined – first the DAC as a background narrative, then the merchants as a group, and finally the narrow focus using micro-narratives to bring individual merchants and traders back into historical context.

The chapters of this thesis, after this overture, reflect this division. In chapter II, the Danish Asiatic Company is analysed through sketching its history and by examining the many purposes the company served for various actors of both individual and organisational nature. In chapter III, the focus narrows to the merchants of the company, seen as a group, methodologically approached with the help of prosopography. Here, the merchants serving as directors will first be analysed and then the company traders – both viewed as a group and with the assistance of network analysis. Finally, in chapter IV, the focus becomes even narrower as four actors are provided with microhistorical narratives, following the analysis of the previous chapters. These actors are divided chronologically: One in the establishment period of the DAC in the 1730s and 40s, two working primarily during the hectic economic peak of the 1770s and 1780s, while the last one takes us through the long decline following the Napoleonic Wars. Besides being an empirical contribution to existing scholarship, this thesis provides a methodological contribution by showing the fruitful combination between prosopography and network analysis on the one hand, and microhistory on the other.

This thesis also provides a methodological contribution in the growing field of digital humanities, where traditional history along with other disciplines from the humanities meets the possibilities of modern computing and visualisation. The area is not new, with pioneers starting out almost simultaneously with the advent of electronic computers after the Second World War, but owing to the greater accessibility of databases and tools of analysis and visualisation today, Digital Humanities has experienced a steady growth. In this thesis tools such as UCInet for network analysis, Netdraw and Gephi for visualisation, and Mediawiki for keeping track of a vast number of persons and their relations will contribute to the understanding of the merchants of the eighteenth century, while at the same time in the case of the *Business Wiki of the Oldenburg Monarchy*, a tool has been created that will be useful for both historians and genealogists for many years to come.

⁹ The Scandinavian word *stand* originally referred to the four main societal groups of the Middle Ages: clergy, nobility, burghers and peasants. It was later used to describe distinct societal groups such as merchants calling themselves a *kobmandsstand*, a merchant class but without the later meanings of class from Marxism.

One of several inspirations for this project comes from the works of Professor Paul van Dyke, presently of the Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou. In his groundbreaking books about the Chinese merchants and others in the Pearl River Delta from 1700 until the Opium Wars, he has managed to put faces on the many previously unknown actors of the Canton System. While the task must have seen hopeless at first, when even their names were hard to establish, his books and articles have shown how sources can be found all over the world, contributing to new narratives about these people once so involved in global trade. It is my hope that this thesis will produce clearer faces and narratives of the previously unknown actors of the China-trade of the Oldenburg Monarchy as well.

I.3 - State of the Art

But how much of this has already been examined by historians and others?

Already before the closing of the DAC in 1844, historians and economists were interested in this fascinating company, likely stimulated by the way the company was owned by perhaps the most powerful and influential group of investors in any Danish company as Ole Feldbæk, perhaps the most influential historian of the company, puts it.¹⁰ Over the decades the questions asked have varied, reflecting the contemporary ideas and developments of the time the historians were asking their questions. In the following, the state of the art regarding the DAC, the China trade of the Oldenburg Monarchy, merchants as a group, and finally individual commercial actors related to the company will be examined.

The Danish Asiatic Company

The published interest of historians and economists in the Royal Chartered Danish Asiatic Company began at least as early as 1824, when the company was still in existence - although a pale shadow of its former self. Here, the statistician Frederik Thaarup described trade in Asia from the first East Indian Company of the early seventeenth century up until 1792 with a focus on the cargoes.¹¹

A good overview of the literature on the history of the DAC can be found in Erik Gøbel's article from 1980,¹² including a review of the literature about the maritime history of the company which will not be repeated here. Gøbel reviewed the extensive literature about the structure and economy of the company as well as the less-investigated topic of the vessels used in the Asian expeditions and the conditions on board. A large area of interest has been the goods transported and the cultural influence of China in the Oldenburg state. On the other hand, very little interest has been focused on the actors of the company.

¹⁰ Ole Feldbæk and Ole Justesen, *Kolonieme i Asien og Afrika* (Copenhagen: Politiken, 1980), 116.

¹¹ Frederik Thaarup, *Historiske og statistiske Efterretninger om det Kongl. Octroirede Danske Asiatiske Compagnie, dets nuværende Stilling, dets Udsigter; forbundet med korte Efterretninger om de danske ostindiske Etablissementer, saavel som om China, og om fremmede Staters asiatiske Handel, etc* (Copenhagen: Udgiverens Forlag, 1824).

¹² Erik Gøbel, "Danske oversøiske handelskompagnier i 17. og 18. århundrede. En forskningsoversigt," *Fortid og nutid*, 28, no. 4, (1980): 535-569.

Overall, the primary focus of the early historians of the DAC was in the economic, financial, and structural history of the company. The Danish historian Kristof Glamann exemplified this view in 1960 by saying that compared to the previous East India companies in the Oldenburg State, the DAC was a different story: “*The main difference lay in its success.*”¹³ Since the DAC was the largest shipping company in the Oldenburg State and brought in tremendous revenues, especially to Copenhagen, as well as helping the contemporary government in its goal to make Copenhagen into a trading emporium, a desire to understand what had made this possible seems to have driven the historians. According to Gøbel, colonial history, which in this case could be extended to include the eighteenth-century China trade as well, was not an attractive subject for many years after the sale of most of the Danish colonies in the middle of the nineteenth century.¹⁴ While studies of the old colonies slowly began sometime after the sale of the last tropical colony, the Danish West Indies in 1917, the study of the China trade began somewhat earlier.

The central historian in the field of the DAC is the now late historian Ole Feldbæk, previously a professor at the University of Copenhagen. In his works he specialised in the overseas trade of the Oldenburg Monarchy,¹⁵ ranging from the legal framework of all privileged trading companies of the Oldenburg Monarchy,¹⁶ to the more shadowy activities of merchants using the power of the neutral Dannebrog to its fullest.¹⁷ Although he devoted much interest to the India trade of first the DAC and later private traders, his general overviews¹⁸ and numerous smaller studies remain a most useful in-depth framework for deeper investigations into the China-trade.

Another important historian in this field is Kristof Glamann, previously professor of economic history at the University of Copenhagen. His study of the first forty years of the DAC – the first period of concession – focusses on the economic realities behind the organisation of the company, including how the directors of the company used it for personal gain, as well as briefly discussing how some company traders, especially the supercargoes, would return rich from Canton.¹⁹ Glamanns extensive archival studies and identification of prominent actors and merchant houses provides a good, initial overview of the mercantile landscape of Copenhagen in that period.

¹³ Kristof Glamann, “The Danish Asiatic Company, 1732–1772,” *Scandinavian Economic History Review* 8, no. 2 (1960), 109.

¹⁴ Gøbel, “Danske oversøiske handelskompagnier i 17. og 18.,” 535.

¹⁵ For a complete overview of his work up till 1996, see the article by Erik Gøbel in the *Festschrift* to Feldbæk: (Jeppesen 1996)

¹⁶ Ole Feldbæk, *Danske handelskompagnier 1616-1843: oktrojer og interne ledelsesregler* (Copenhagen: Selskabet for Udgivelse af Kilder til Dansk Historie, 1986).

¹⁷ Ole Feldbæk, “Dutch Batavia trade via Copenhagen 1795–1807. A study of colonial trade and neutrality,” *Scandinavian Economic History Review* 21, no. 1 (1973): 43-75.

¹⁸ For instance, Ole Feldbæk, *Gyldendal og Politikens Danmarkshistorie. Den lange fred: 1700-1800*, vol. 9 (Copenhagen: Gyldendal & Politiken, 1986), *Danske søfarts historie. 1720-1814: storhandelens tid*, vol. 3 (Copenhagen: Gyldendal & Politiken, 1997), and *Danmark-Norge: 1380-1814. Nærhed og adskillelse: 1720-1814*, vol. 4 (Copenhagen and Oslo: Universitetsforlaget; Akademisk Forlag, 1998).

¹⁹ Kristof Glamann, “Studie i Asiatisk Kompagnis økonomiske historie 1732-1772,” *Historisk Tidsskrift* 11, no. 2 (1949).

While Glamann provided a vivid account of the first forty years of the company, the following next twenty years have been described by the historian and archivist Aage Rasch in cooperation with the economist Peter Sveistrup. The years of the second concession, as Rasch and Sveistrup argue, were the most important in the history of the company, and thus also essential for the merchants of the late eighteenth century and the advancement of Copenhagen as an entrepôt.

The time from 1792 and onward has been described by Johan Henrik Deuntzer, professor of law and later prime and foreign minister of Denmark. In two articles in *Nationaløkonomisk Tidsskrift* he discussed the circumstances leading to the new concession of 1792, originally given for twenty years but eventually extended until the end of the DAC in the 1840s, as well as discussing the general profitability of the old company. Deuntzer's articles are very close to the sources and thus include several details of great value. When considering the situation of Deuntzer at the time of his writing, the thoroughness of his articles seems to serve another purpose besides scholarly curiosity as in 1897 he co-founded the East Asiatic Company (EAC) to engage in trading and manufacturing in Asia, and served on the board as vice-chairman until 1910. His brother, Sophus Deuntzer, lived in Bangkok and assisted the key entrepreneur behind the new EAC, H.N. Andersen,²⁰ indicating a close connection to this new company that seems to have in some ways been inspired by the old DAC, not least in the choice of names. A desire to learn from the old DAC seems obvious in Deuntzer's investigation, highlighted by his desire to find heroes and culprits in his narrative of the DAC. In the second article, he even compares the available funds in the dying DAC with the funds available in the founding of the new EAC,²¹ ten years before writing the article.

Curiously, no larger comprehensive account of the history of the company has been written up until this point. Several articles sum up the major events in the formation, the life, and the eventual demise of the company, but so far no one has considered the DAC in its totality, including its influences on the countries it operated in, the people who were employed or were trading its products, as well as the impact of the imported and exported products on both consumption patterns, development of secondary industries, and the effect on national economies. The best attempt to achieve this is the book *Kina og Danmark 1600-1950* by museum curator Tove Clemmensen and the historian Mogens Mackeprang. The main purpose of their grand work from 1980 is the interest in Chinese style, architecture, and fashion in Denmark, but their extensive work includes much about the China trade, the DAC, selected company traders and directors, and Canton itself, all richly illustrating the trade through a large number of images.

Another good attempt at summarising the history of the company is the book *Asiatisk Plads* by Ole Feldbæk published in 1980 when the Danish Foreign Ministry took over the old DAC building for their new headquarters. Although with a strong focus on the building, Feldbæk's 25-page introduction about the company gives a good overview. Another recent account of the company as a whole is the chapter written by Jørgen Mikkelsen in the book *Mellem København og Tranquebar* from 2011, which provides an account of the economic structure of the company, the colony in India, as

²⁰ Martin J. Iversen, *Udsyn, ØK, Danmark og verden* (Copenhagen: Lindhardt og Ringhof, 2016).

²¹ Johan H. Deuntzer, "Af det asiatiske Kompagnis Historie. Andet Afsnit. Efter 1807," *Nationaløkonomisk Tidsskrift* 3, 16-1 (1908), 505.

well as the trade, the ships, and their crews. Mikkelsen enters an interesting discussion about the trade of individual crewmembers on the Asian expedition and uses the records of auctions of the belongings of deceased crewmembers to estimate the large degree of private trade that took place within the DAC. Mikkelsen also used about 20 years of data from the expedition roll books to describe the careers of the sailors of the company. Unfortunately, due to the focus on the Indian trade of the company, the many company traders who only sailed to China are not included in the chapter. An even more recent example of an overall history of the company and its China trade can be found in the special issue of *National Maritime Research* from 2017, where Erik Gøbel first describes the trade and the company, followed by Jørgen Mikkelsen discussing maritime aspects of the trade, and Paul van Dyke describing the Chinese Hong merchants doing business with the DAC from 1734 to 1833.²² Finally, the company is placed in a larger economic context in Per Boje's first volume in his series *Vejen til velstand – marked, stat og utopi* about the economic development of Denmark in the last 300 years. Here, the DAC is also discussed both in relation to the state but also as an institution with managerial challenges.

A related area is the history of the goods brought home by the DAC. Hanna Hodacs' *Silk and Tea in the North – Scandinavian Trade and the Market for Asian Goods in Eighteenth-Century Europe* covers the most recent research, among other things highlighting the similarities between the two largest Scandinavian monopoly companies – the Danish-Norwegian DAC and the Swedish East India Company.

China Trade of the Oldenburg Monarchy

The first descriptions of the trade with China came out immediately after the first voyage from Copenhagen to China in 1730-1732 which was written by the ship's chaplain.²³ This started a tradition of publishing small books about the journey and the experiences encountered in distant China. For the historian, these small books can be used not only as sources to the specific voyages, but also as a source of the narratives being told about China and the trade at that time.

One of the first later books to deal specifically with the history of trade between the Oldenburg State and China appeared in 1932 by Kay Larsen,²⁴ and while his work seems to be based upon the archives of the DAC, a focus seems to be, as Gøbel puts it, on the captivating, but non-typical parts of the trade.²⁵

In 1978, the then young historian Erik Gøbel began examining the Chinese expeditions of the DAC from the point of a maritime historian in his master's thesis, which was quickly published as an

²² The three articles and more along with an introduction by me can be found in Benjamin Asmussen, P. Duedahl and H. Xing (eds), *Business, Shipping and Culture: Danish-Norwegian Shipping in China for 300 Years* (Shanghai: National Maritime Research, China Maritime Museum, 2017). The special issue of the journal of China Maritime Museum was a result of the work of this dissertation.

²³ J. H. Huusmann, *En kort Beskrivelse over Skibets Cron-Printz Christians lykkelige giorde Reyse baade til og fra China, Hvilken Reyse begyndtes den 25. October 1730 og fuldendtes den 25de Junii 1732 ...* (Copenhagen: Bogtrykkerie, 1760). In 1745, ship chaplain Jens Boye published a similar book.

²⁴ Kay Larsen, *Den danske kinafart* (København: Gad, 1938).

²⁵ My paraphrasing from Gøbel, "Danske oversøiske handelskompagnier," 536.

article in *The Scandinavian Economic History Review*. As Gøbel mentions, the only interest by previous historians about the maritime activities of the DAC had been on the extraordinary voyages and events rather than on the average, the normal state of the trade and transport.²⁶ Gøbel's many articles provide a good overview of the officers, sailors, the conditions on board, navigation, mortality, and much more, lighting up a previously dark area of the company. Through Gøbels' work, the state of the art was significantly advanced with the knowledge of both the regularity but also the relative security of the long expeditions as well as many other insights.

A larger overview of the history of the connections between China and the Oldenburg Monarchy was published in 2006 as an exhibition catalogue for an exhibition in the palace of Christiansborg in Copenhagen. This contained overviews of both the China trade, the encounter between East and West in literature, fashion, and art, as well as thoughts about this early globalisation.²⁷ But just like an earlier publication about Danish and Chinese relations since 1674,²⁸ little or no new light is shed upon the history of the trade in China. In contrast to this stands the great contribution by Paul van Dyke in the shape of three major books as well as a myriad of journal articles and other publications. In his groundbreaking book, *The Canton Trade: Life and Enterprise on the China Coast, 1700-1845* from 2005, he moved away from the mainly British-centred focus of the previous international literature to a broader story of the Canton System as an international, yet still very Chinese meeting place. His inclusion of especially Dutch, Danish-Norwegian, Portuguese, and Swedish archival material provides new insight into both the shared practices of trading in and around Canton, but also on the Chinese merchant families, of which few sources have been preserved in China. In 2011, the book *Merchants of Canton and Macao: Politics and Strategies in Eighteenth-Century Chinese Trade* along with *Merchants of Canton and Macao: Success and Failure in Eighteenth-Century Chinese Trade* from 2016 continued his investigation of the Chinese merchants as well as their networks and environment.

The Merchants of the Oldenburg Monarchy

In general, the research about the merchants and traders of the long-distance trade are scattered and fragmented. Few biographies have been published and only the wealthiest and most successful whole-sale merchants seem to have warranted descriptions of their own. The three editions of *Dansk Biografisk Leksikon* continue to be one of the best sources of secondary information concerning the merchants.

Although the first edition from 1887-1905 consisted of 19 volumes, the second from 1932-44 of 27 volumes, and the third from 1979-84 of 16 volumes, the number of individuals included is still limited. The first edition is useful, however, due to its proximity to the time period and it also includes Norway, an essential part of the Oldenburg Monarchy. The first edition is available online

²⁶ Erik Gøbel, "The Danish Asiatic Company's Voyages to China, 1732-1833," *The Scandinavian Economic History Review*, 27, no. 1 (1979), 24.

²⁷ Olle V. Krog, *Skatte fra kejserens Kina = Treasures from imperial China: The Forbidden City and the Royal Danish Court* (København: Det Kongelige Sølvkammer, 2006).

²⁸ Kjeld E. Brødsgaard and Mads Kirkebæk, *China and Denmark: relations since 1674* (Copenhagen: Nordisk Institut for Asienstudier, 2000).

at *Project Runeberg*²⁹ in both original and OCR-scanned versions, making it very easy to use. In addition, the *Norske Biografiske Leksikon*, which was published in 19 volumes from 1921-1983, was consulted along with the newer digital version.

A few studies have focused on the merchants in a prosopographical sense, although without using the term, such as Per Boje's article about citizenships for merchants in provincial towns in Denmark from the late eighteenth century, showing how a movement from foreign-born traders to a more local population took place.³⁰ A very interesting study about the merchants early in the period is Bente Halding's *Magister*-dissertation from 1969,³¹ which unfortunately does not seem to have been developed further in articles or books. A similar PhD-thesis of Norwegian merchants of the same era was completed by Ola Teige 50 years later, examining the merchant elite of Christiania and their networks from 1680-1750.³² An article by Phillip Kelsall studies the shareholders of the Danish monopoly trading companies,³³ providing interesting new insights into the small business elite of the Oldenburg Monarchy³⁴ where the DAC played an essential role. The historian and archivist Lars Henningsen focused in a book on the influential merchant family of Otte from Ekernførde in the duchy of Schleswig in the eighteenth century.³⁵ Although members of the family does not seem to have been directly involved in the management of the DAC, the grand merchant Ryberg married a daughter of the family, highlighting the close, mercantile networks around the monarchy. The very rare type of study in the context of the old Oldenburg Monarchy provides a valuable study into the inner workings of a merchant house over the decades – including how they found their way through the changing policies of the era and how their political networks were employed by its various actors – for the Otte-family hindered by their distance from Copenhagen.

A recent important contribution to the field is the Norwegian historian Bård Frydenlund's article "Political Practices among Merchants in Denmark and Norway in the Period of Absolutism"³⁶ from 2011. Here, Frydenlund discusses the political lives of Ryberg and de Coninck, both DAC-directors in Copenhagen, along with the two Anker-brothers in Christiania³⁷ whose cousin Carsten Anker also served as director of the DAC. Frydenlund's emphasis on de Coninck's political network highlights the value of connections as a means of providing numerous benefits, although this lasted only for a time as the political climate changed.

²⁹ See Project Runeberg, <http://runeberg.org/>

³⁰ Per Boje, "Provinskøbmænds rekruttering omkring 1760-1850 til belysning af købstædernes borgerskaber før 1850," *Erhvervshistorisk årbog* (1974): 35-40.

³¹ Halding, Bente, *Storkøbmænd i holbergtidens København* (MA thesis., University of Copenhagen, 1969).

³² Ola Teige, *Eliten i Christianias sosiale og politiske nettverk 1680-1750* (Oslo: Unipub, 2008).

³³ Phillip Kelsall, "The Danish Monopoly Trading Companies and their Shareholders, 1730–1774," *Scandinavian Economic History Review* 47, no. 3 (1999): 5-25.

³⁴ Please see the section on interlocking directorates in Chapter III for more about this topic.

³⁵ Henningsen, Lars N., *Provinsmatadorer fra 1700-årene*, (Flensborg, Rosenkilde og Bagger, 1985)

³⁶ Pasi Ihalainen, *Scandinavia in the age of revolution: Nordic political cultures, 1740-1820* (Farham: Ashgate, 2012), 240-253.

³⁷ Present-day Oslo.

Carl Bruun published his massive work *Kjøbenhavn* from 1887 to 1901, which included, as mentioned by Gøbel, a wealth of interesting details about nobility, merchants, and politicians but no overall synthesis of the commercial environment of Copenhagen at the time of the absolute monarchy. In 1899, Julius Schovelin published his large work *Fra den danske Handels Empire* about individuals and events connected to business of the last half of the eighteenth century. In his introduction, Schovelin expressed his desire to rise above the careful and thorough historians before him such as Thaarup, Nathanson, and Bruun, and instead of fixing the narrative on a myriad of detail he presents a grand story of the time and especially focusses on the people that in his words create the events, which a future calls history. Fortunately, Schovelin goes on to include a wealth of details about both actors and events in his two volumes, although without proper references, but still attempts to live up to the idea of the great man shaping history, written in what Gøbel calls an overly emotional approach with a strong focus on the individual.³⁸ Although primarily focused elsewhere, the doctoral thesis of Knud Klem, *Skibsbyggeriet i Danmark og hertugdømmerne i 1700-årene: Om skibsbygning og handelskompagnier i den florissante periode* from 1985 is one of the most detailed accounts of the merchants of Copenhagen. Although focussed primarily on ship building, Klem, who was for many years the director of the Maritime Museum of Denmark, contains a wealth of information based on primary sources, although care must be taken due to the several minor errors in the details. The Danish historian Kristof Glamann has conducted intensive research about the DAC and even briefly discusses the economic conditions for the supercargoes in an article from 1949.³⁹ The *Grosserer=Societetet*, the association of whole-sale merchants was first founded in 1742 and later reorganised into a tighter organisation in 1790. Their 200-year anniversary book contains a wealth of biographical information of the merchants and their environment.⁴⁰ Finally, the biography of Duntzfelt as described below includes an excellent section of the characteristics of the merchants as a group in Copenhagen around the year 1800, but unfortunately only for this limited time frame.

The Jewish merchants in Copenhagen, who seemed to have played a significant if secondary role in the business of DAC through participation in the silver trade, were described early on by Nathanson in 1860.⁴¹ In more recent years, the Jewish community in the Oldenburg state in general has been examined by Arnheim in 2015 and more specifically the first Jews to enter into the important network of the *Kongelige Københavnske Skydeselskab* have been described by Mejlhede and Bergman in 2016.⁴² The extremely central Reformed Church in Copenhagen has been examined in a volume of *Danmarks Kirker*,⁴³ but this mostly focussed on the physical aspects of the church rather

³⁸ Gøbel, "Danske oversøiske handelskompagnier i 17. og 18. århundrede," 571.

³⁹ Glamann, "Studie i Asiatisk Kompagnis økonomiske historie 1732-1772"

⁴⁰ Vilh Lorenzen, *Grosserer-Societetet 1742-1942* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1942).

⁴¹ Mendel L. Nathanson, *Historisk Fremstilling af Jødernes Forhold og Stilling i Danmark, navnlig Kjøbenhavn*. Copenhagen: Eide, 1860.

⁴² Inge B Mejlhede and Signe Bergman, *Det gode selskab: jødiske indvandrere i Det Kongelige Københavnske Skydeselskab og Danske Broderskab* (Odense: Kle-art, 2016).

⁴³ *Danmarks kirker*. Bind 1. København. 3. bind, 15. hefte. *Reformert Kirke* (København: Nationalmuseet, 1967).

than on its members. The church itself has published a pamphlet of prominent members, including several DAC directors.⁴⁴

Individual Merchants and DAC Directors

The wealthiest and most successful merchants have had their biographies written over time, with the most prominent and thorough example being the biography of Niels Ryberg, written by the Danish archivist Aage Rasch in 1964.⁴⁵ Another detailed description, bordering on the hagiographic, is the biography of Christian Wilhelm Duntzfeldt, written by the lawyer Johannes Werner in 1927.⁴⁶ Werner's intention with his biography was similar to this thesis as he cites in his preamble: "*It has been said, that descriptions like this have no claim on the interest of the public: "once a merchant dies, his tale is at an end, that is **his** fate as opposed to the scientist or artist.*"⁴⁷ but that he desires to show this as a misunderstanding, telling about an interesting time in history. Both biographies provide a wealth of information about the environment of the merchant elite in the eighteenth century.

In 1936 Lorentz Bie published a detailed account of the life of the DAC director Johan Leonhard Fix.⁴⁸ The biography is very close to the available sources, and provides valuable insight into Fix who was considered controversial in his time due to quarrels and fights with other merchants and being accused of cheating on various occasions.

But in general the sources to the business between the Oldenburg Monarchy and Asia are skewed by the fact that while the archive of the DAC is very well preserved at the Danish National Archive, no archives exists of the private Copenhagen merchants. As noted by Feldbæk, the private trading companies generally kept detailed records of their businesses but all have been lost, the last one from the Frédéric de Coninck even as late as the 1890s.⁴⁹

Although not directly employed by the DAC, the merchant and silk factory owner Niels Lunde Reiersen (1742-1795) was thoroughly biographed in 1896, financed by his own foundation.⁵⁰ The biography contains a wealth of detail about the business world of Reiersen's time, but is as many other works of its time hindered by a lack of references as well the complete omission of registers of persons, places, and companies.

⁴⁴ J.E. Janssen, *Reformerte københavnere: biografier over personligheder i Reformert Kirkes menighedsliv* (Copenhagen: Reformert Kirke, 2014).

⁴⁵ Aage N. Rasch, *Ryberg 1725-1804: Fra bondedreng til handelsfyrste* (Aarhus: Universitetsforlaget, 1964).

⁴⁶ Johannes Werner, *Christian Wilhelm Duntzfeldt: en dansk Storkøbmand fra den glimrende Handelsperiode: Skildringer* (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel, 1927).

⁴⁷ My translation of: "*Det er sagt, at Beskrivelser af denne Art næppe har krav paa Almeninteresse: "med en Købmands Død er hans Saga ude, det er nu een gang **hans** Lod i Modsætning til Videnskabsmandens eller Kunstnerens.*"⁴⁷ from Werner, *Christian Wilhelm Duntzfeldt*, 5.

⁴⁸ Lorentz Bie, "Johan Leonhard Fix. En Skikkelse i dansk-ostindisk Kolonihistorie," *Personallhistorisk Tidsskrift* 57, (1936): 1-34.

⁴⁹ Ole Feldbæk, "Den danske asienhandel 1616-1807: værdi og volumen," *Historisk Tidsskrift* 90, no. 2 (1990), 322.

⁵⁰ C. Nyrop, *Niels Lunde Reiersen: et Mindeskrift* (Copenhagen: Det Reiersenske Fond, 1860).

In her recent PhD dissertation from 2014, Josefine Baark deals with the visual culture of the China trade of the Oldenburg Monarchy, and her intensive search among the preserved relics of the time of the DAC provides fascinating insights into the tastes of several key actors of the company, especially the director and naval officer Olfert Fas Fischer.⁵¹ Another example is the PhD of Jakob Ingemann Parby⁵² from 2015 that among other topics go into detail with the merchant Johann Ludvig Zinn, director of the DAC 1784-90, and his career and international network. As with most other merchants, most sources have been lost, but Parby's dissertation provides a wealth of more general details of the merchant environment of the time.

But for the clear majority of the hundreds of merchants and company traders of the DAC, their history is shrouded in darkness with only scattered pieces of information, which makes it difficult to get an overview of the mercantile landscape in Copenhagen and the rest of the Oldenburg Monarchy. As Jens Holmgaard states in his review of Rasch's book, a sketch of the world of the Copenhagen traders would have been beneficial to the biography.⁵³ Since no such sketch exists, a *Business Encyclopedia of the Oldenburg Monarchy* has been created as part of this project in the shape of a wiki.⁵⁴ As will be discussed in more detail later, a page has been published for each merchant and other relevant individuals to gather information about their life and work from a number of diverse sources.

Related Merchants from other Countries

Although research into the merchants of Copenhagen is lacking, much can be learned from similar merchants from neighbouring countries. The most relevant is the Svenska Ostindiska Kompagniet formed in Gothenburg in 1731, just one year after the first direct expedition to China was sent out from Copenhagen by an interim company. The company was in many ways similar to the DAC, including the initial transfer of know-how from the *Oostendse Compagnie*, and was in operation until 1813. During its existence, this Swedish company sent 129 ships to Canton⁵⁵ and most of its imports from China were reexported, very similar to the DAC. In her recent PhD-dissertation, Lisa Hellmann examines four key concepts of the daily life of the Swedish merchants in Canton in the eighteenth century, namely groups, space, communication, and materiality, as well as the trust that emerges from the daily interactions between Europeans and Chinese.⁵⁶ Her ground-breaking work

⁵¹ Josefine Baark, *In the Company of Strangers: Danish Asiatic Trading Networks and Material Culture 1620-1780* (2015)

⁵² Jakob Ingemann Parby, *At blive... Migration og identitet i København, ca. 1770-1830* (2015)

⁵³ Jens Holmgaard, "Aa. Rasch: Niels Ryberg. 1725-1804. Fra bondedreng til handelsfyrste. Skrifter udgivet af Jysk Selskab for Historie, Sprog og Litteratur, 12. Universitetsforlaget i Aarhus, 1964. 432 sider. Illustreret," *Historisk Tidsskrift* 12, 3 (1968), 3.

⁵⁴ Maritime Museum of Denmark, "Business Wiki of the Oldenburg Monarchy." The wiki is available at <http://oldenburgbusiness.net>. The wiki is made with the open-source software *Mediawiki*, which also powers Wikipedia. To ensure the longevity of the wiki, it is now owned by the Maritime Museum of Denmark, which takes care of a number of other private websites as well as part of their collection.

⁵⁵ Leos Müller, "The Swedish East India Trade and International Markets: Re-exports of Teas, 1731–1813," *Scandinavian Economic History Review* 51, no. 3 (2011), 30.

⁵⁶ Lisa Hellman, *Navigating the Foreign Quarters: Everyday Life of the Swedish East India Company Employees in Canton and Macao 1730-1830*, (PhD dissert., Stockholm University, 2015).

uses a great variety of sources to bring to life the daily encounters in Canton – perhaps the most international space in the early modern world. Hellmann’s main supervisor was the Swedish historian Leos Müller who has worked for many years on the history of merchants of the eighteenth century – especially Swedish, but also Scottish and Irish. His doctoral dissertation from 1998, *The Merchant Houses of Stockholm c. 1640-1800*, links the influx of Dutch entrepreneurs into the Swedish merchant elite from the middle of the seventeenth century with the necessity of international networks and trust needed for running a successful business. His impressive work on the social networks of merchants especially in the eighteenth century, their entrepreneurial behaviour, and the value of social reproduction is a great source of inspiration for this dissertation. Of special inspiration is his article about the supercargo Jean Abraham Grill⁵⁷, which provides a wealth of detail about this particular position in the company, which seems to be applicable to their counterparts in the Oldenburg Monarchy. Another recent Swedish work in the field is the book *Bundna Former, Fria Flöden* by Christina Dalhede. Although her study is focussed on the period prior to the creation of the Swedish East India Company, which existed around the same time as the DAC, there are many similarities between the merchant houses of Gothenburg and the later merchant houses of Copenhagen.

As mentioned earlier, the works of Paul van Dyke provide deep insight into the Chinese merchants of the period. The number and networks of the merchants of both the Netherlands and the United Kingdom was on a completely different scale than that of the Oldenburg Monarchy. This is reflected in a vast amount of literature, of which only two examples most pertinent to this dissertation will be mentioned here.

American historian David Hancock’s detailed study of four London merchants and their nineteen associates in the middle of the eighteenth century provides great inspiration for the more source-challenged merchants of Copenhagen at the same time.⁵⁸ Hancock shows how the merchants were known not only for their successful trading ability, but that they also possessed a great number of skills and interests such as art collecting, politics, law, philanthropy, and even canal building. He also points to the lack of scholarly knowledge about the London merchant community of the period, which appears similar to Copenhagen, at least when seen from Hancock’s perspective in 1995. Another influential study is the book *The English Gentleman Merchant at Work* by the Danish museum curator and historian Søren Mentz in 2005. Although primarily focused on the India trade, many relevant points are found here particularly the relationship between the EIC and private British merchants and other European trading companies.

The topic of private trade in China had not been dealt with in great detail before the 2013 conference *Private Merchants of the China Trade 1700-1842*, of which the conference proceedings will most likely be forthcoming in a book describing the private actors of this trade from most countries, although not for the Oldenburg Monarchy.

⁵⁷ Leos Müller, “Mellan Kanton och Göteborg: Jean Abraham Grill, en superkargös karriär,” *Historiska Etyder* (1997).

⁵⁸ David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

Conclusion

As discussed above, the focus in Danish history about the DAC has been on the company history, on the economy, on the structure and on the developments related to the state. The merchants are occasionally mentioned, especially in older works, but the company trader has received very little attention from historians. A new direction came in the late 1970s when Erik Gøbel moved from an institutional focus to highlighting the maritime history of the DAC. It seems that it is now time to move the spotlight of history to the actors that carried out the trade in China as well as their managers thousands of nautical miles away.

In Sweden, a stronger focus on merchant history can be found. To a certain degree, this reflects the availability of sources. While the DAC archive is remarkably well-preserved, especially for the material relating to the administration in Copenhagen and the expeditions, the archive of the SOIC was scattered after the termination of the company, leading to a more fragmented source situation with less material available.⁵⁹ Likewise, much more material about the grand merchants and supercargoes are available in Sweden, making more detailed analysis possible, while the meager source situation in Denmark seems to be reflected in the small amount of literature available on these central actors in the business history of the eighteenth century.

I.4 - Theory and Methodology

Methodology

As mentioned at the beginning, the central actors of this dissertation are the approximately 50 directors and 400 company traders of the Danish Asiatic Company from 1730 to 1840. The understanding of the networks of these people responsible for successfully trading with China, one of the most distant places of the period in both a geographical and cultural sense, will be achieved through a multilevel approach. First, as noted earlier, the prosopographical method will be used to describe the two types of actors as homogenous groups using a great variety of sources to see the relevant variables such as geographical background, nationality, family, religion, and social rank and membership of other networks such as the Freemasons, merchant associations, and social societies. In this process, some actors will stand out in two ways – first by having substantially more information available than others, and secondly in standing out by virtue of specific characteristics. These actor characteristics might be simple such as number of voyages taken, or having a large ego network, a high degree of brokering, a great wealth, or other numerical attributes. They may also be more complex or cultural such as the actor having an unusual interest in China, being part of an especially diverse network, or appearing at central key epochs of the DAC history. Finally, the characteristics could even be as indirect as having better source material available than usual. Once these actors of special interest are identified, four are selected and investigated into as great a depth as possible, with the aim of constructing a narrative that creates a silhouette of the actor. The creation of narratives highlights a historical speciality of the eighteenth century, namely the scarcity of sources allowing and perhaps even necessitating the historian to include almost all existing sources to produce the silhouette. In more recent times, so many sources can be found that a

⁵⁹ Margareta Benner, "The Digital Archive of the Swedish East India Company, 1731-1813: A Joint Project of a University Library and a History Department," *Online Information Review* 27, no. 5 (2003), 29.

careful selection is needed while in earlier ages, so few sources were available that the number of possible questions was severely limited. In that respect, the business history of the eighteenth century is a fascinating place.

After the narrative is complete, the sources are then asked again to provide alternative narratives or even counternarratives to stress the all-encompassing role of the historian writing history and possibly revealing new insights in the process. The detailed narratives will be then included in an analysis of the networks and knowledge transfers, providing the basis for a comparative perspective and keeping the results of the prosopographical approach in mind. Throughout the analysis, the backdrop is the Danish Asiatic Company which will be introduced in chapter II in some detail, setting the organisational stage for the actors to appear on.

Epistemology

This thesis is based on an inductive relation to theory. It means that the point of departure is an observation – a curiosity – which has been translated into research questions. In order to answer these particular research questions the researcher chooses specific concepts and theories. Next follows the analysis and finally a conclusion, which then can inspire other researchers and perhaps even lead to new generalizations with a theory-like character. This approach is inspired by the American business historian Alfred Chandler, particularly his 1974 article “Business History as Institutional History” where he stated: *“A historian’s task is not merely to borrow other people’s theories or even to test their theories. It is to use existing concepts and models to explore the data he has collected in order to answer his own particular questions and concerns. If a concept does not seem to help, he should throw it away. If it seems to have value only if it is modified, then he should modify it. And always he should work at developing his own analysis.”*⁶⁰

Epistemologically, this thesis is founded in the idea of the historian as a story-teller or even poet – creating a coherent and readable narrative from the sources as described by Lawrence Stone in his now famous article from 1979,⁶¹ which went against the then-present trend of cliometry and large quantitative studies. In a way, the idea of the narrative has long been a part of the field of history, going back at least to the famous quote of the Danish historian Erik Arup: *The problem here [in writing history as poetry] is only to compose over the facts that truly can be extracted from the sources, including all of them, not write against them and not beyond them.*⁶² In this beautiful and inspirational quote, Arup indirectly acknowledges that history does not exist except through the work of the historian, in the broadest sense of the term, with the sources. To produce an analysis of the past, the historian must act as a poet or play-writer, substituting the many missing pieces from the sources with his own general knowledge of the period. The idea of extracting “facts” from sources has been criticised by

⁶⁰ Alfred Chandler, “Business History as Institutional History,” in *Approaches to American Economic History* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1971), 17-24.

⁶¹ Lawrence Stone, “The Revival of Narrative: Reflections on a New Old History,” *Past & Present* 85 (1979): 3-24.

⁶² My translation of “Problemet her [ved at skrive historie som digt] er kun det at digte over de Kendsgerninger, der virkelig kan udsondres af Kilderne som tilforladelige, over dem alle, ikke imod dem og ikke udover dem.” from Arup, Erik. “Vilhelm Grønbech: Religionsskiftet i Norden. Gyldendalske Boghandel Nordisk Forlag 1913.” *Historisk Tidsskrift* 8, række 5 (1914).

proponents of a more functional use of sources, where questions are asked and sources chosen by their ability to answer these questions. Later scholars⁶³ have rightfully criticised Arup for maintaining a positivist attitude towards sources and using the term “facts” about the ideas and knowledge that the sources inspire in the historian. Nonetheless, Arup’s idea of the historian as a poet, storyteller, or narrator can still today contribute to the historical process in recreating a past to live a new life in the writings of the historian, while marking his words of not writing against what the sources tell us about the past and not having illusions of recreating a truthful image of the past. For while truth might be an unobtainable goal, falsehood can easily be reached.

In order to work under difficult and source-poor conditions the historian needs a broad view of the traces of the past, in the Danish historical tradition often referred to as the *Functional View of Sources*. This important concept was introduced by the Danish historian Bernhard Eric Jensen in a book review in 1974,⁶⁴ but can be traced back to Kristian Erslev’s work in the late nineteenth century. According to Jensen, Erslev was aware of the status of the source changing, depending on the purpose by which it was used by the historian. In his foundational work from 1892, *Grundsætninger for Historisk Kildekritik*, Erslev made a clear division between relics of the past (levn) and narrative accounts (beretninger), putting forth the generally accepted view of the time, that sources in themselves was either relics or both relics and accounts. In his later work, *Historisk Teknik* from 1911, he claimed that the status of the source depends on the question asked by the historian, thus introducing the first step of the functional view of sources.⁶⁵ Jensen later expanded the functional principle in his later work⁶⁶ and despite criticism from other historians⁶⁷ it remains in my perspective a most useful tool in providing answers to the research questions of the historian. With a functional view of sources, it is obvious to include a great variety of sources to answer resources questions, instead of the historian only seeking sanctuary in the hallowed halls of an archive, hoping for some “official” stamp of approval or perhaps enjoying a vague notion of the contents of archives to be more “true” than material found elsewhere. But even with a functional view of sources, which contain the ability to gain insights from a much larger variety of source material, only faint traces of the past can be found, only shadows of the people acting in the past can be seen, and the ability of the historian to be a scientific poet or narrator is as important as ever and the personality and methodological creativity of the historian often plays a decisive role in the research process.⁶⁸

Prosopography

The company traders of the DAC, as most other people of the past, have almost faded into oblivion. The larger merchants, at least the more successful ones, fare better and archival material as

⁶³ Among others, Sebastian Olden-Jørgensen, *Til kilderne!: introduktion til historisk kildekritik*. Copenhagen: Gad, 2001), 13.

⁶⁴ Bernard E. Jensen, “Anmeldelse af Skyum-Nielsen og Nørgart: Film og kildekritik,” *Historisk Tidsskrift* 74 (1974).

⁶⁵ Jensen, “Anmeldelse af Skyum-Nielsen og Nørgart,” 371.

⁶⁶ Bernard E. Jensen, *Historie - livsverden og fag* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2003), 189.

⁶⁷ Bernard E. Jensen, “Debat. Et funktionelt kildebegreb - erkendelsesfremskridt eller faglig deroute?,” *Historie* 1 (2009): 89-96.

⁶⁸ Olden-Jørgensen, *Til kilderne!*, 77.

well as portrait paintings and other objects remain, enabling us to construct their biographies to various degrees. But the faces of the company traders are mostly gone, making the study of their business practices and their trading with their Chinese counterparts difficult.

To at least be able to construct silhouettes of these people, I have employed the method or research approach of prosopography. The word prosopography is of Greek origin, where the first part of the word, *prosopon*, means that which is beheld or seen, and *graphia* means description.⁶⁹ According to Verboven et al., the authors of the essential *A Short Manual to the Art of Prosopography*,⁷⁰ a relevant definition of the method could be:

*“The ultimate purpose of prosopography is to collect data on phenomena that transcend individual lives. It targets the common aspects of people’s lives, not their individual histories. The typical research objectives are such things as social stratification, social mobility, decision-making processes, the (mal) functioning of institutions and so forth. We are looking for general factors that help explain the lives of individuals, for what motivates their actions and makes them possible: for example, families, social networks, patrimonies.”*⁷¹

The method is closely related to several other fields. Prosopography shares much with biography, but usually focuses less on the extraordinary persons often favoured by biographers. The study of names, onomastics, is not only related but also a useful tool within prosopography, since it, especially in earlier epochs of history, can unveil fundamental details about the bearer of a name. In the eighteenth century, the names of the company traders going to China reveal much about the origins of their bearers. Another related field is genealogy, which is similar although only interested in persons connected by family. Genealogy can be a most useful source for the prosopographer, especially in a country such as Denmark, where hundreds, if not thousands of people have published their family histories in freely-available online databases. Care must be taken to ensure the validity of the sources, but many amateur genealogists seem to take great pride in presenting their sources, making the task easier.

Previously, prosopography was primarily used in the study of the Roman Empire to create databases of individuals and to gain new insights into social structures long forgotten. A very successful early project was the *Pauly-Wissow Realencyclopädie*, which was published from 1894 until 1978. The monumental scope of this work, which strived to include every known individual mentioned in sources of the antiquity, led to new understandings into the institutional framework of the Roman Empire as well as the political history.⁷² The *Pauly* was one of the major inspirations for the Oldenburg Business Wiki. Initially prosopography was also seen as a new approach to political history – instead of focussing only on the exceptional individual, subjects of history could now be seen as part of a larger group or of a network and common interests of the actors would appear clearer.

⁶⁹ K.S.B. Keats-Rohan, ed., *Prosopography approaches and applications: a handbook* (Occasional Publications UPR, 2007), 36-37.

⁷⁰ Originally published on the website of University of Ghent in Dutch and later translated into English and printed in Keats-Rohan, ed., *Prosopography approaches and applications*.

⁷¹ Keats-Rohan, ed., *Prosopography approaches and applications*, 42.

⁷² Keats-Rohan, ed., *Prosopography approaches and applications*, 43.

Prosopography is typically employed when sources are scarce, making it seem most relevant in the study of early and pre-modern topics, but in recent years the usage of prosopography have been picked up by scholars studying a variety of topics and ages. An interesting example is the work of Oldfield, where the author argues that prosopography can be used as a tool even in the modern history of sports along with the related fields of biography and collective biographies.⁷³ A very relevant use of the prosopographic approach is demonstrated by Juha Kansikas, whose study of Finnish family firms from the middle of the eighteenth century⁷⁴ shows the importance of continuity in family businesses to build up resources and elite status over the years. The prosopographic approach highlights both the elite businessmen themselves, but also their other involvements in society such as members of city councils and parliament, providing deeper understanding of the success of family businesses, which has several similarities to the elite merchants of the Oldenburg State. From a Danish point of view, the historian Gunnar Lind has been a key proponent for using the prosopographical approach in early modern history, arguing as one of the first for the role of computers and relation databases⁷⁵ in prosopographical work, but also putting his beliefs into practice in his study of the family connections of a high-level officer in the late eighteenth- century Oldenburg Monarchy.⁷⁶

A challenge in using the prosopographic method is defining the object of investigation strict enough for the group to be reasonable enough to work with but also loose enough so that new artificial boundaries are not introduced. In the study of merchants and company traders of the DAC, the source material lends itself well to the group categorisation. The first group is the large merchants that primarily profited from the trade with China. Here, the criteria are having citizenship as *Grosserer*, or whole-sale merchant, and at some point being either director or *Hovedparticipant* of the DAC. The second group, comprised of the company traders, is defined as individuals who have at least once sailed to China on board a DAC ship as a part of the *Negotie* section of the crew. A danger when working with this group, as always in prosopography, is the possibility of fission or fusion of actors; either several actors mistaken for a single person or a single person mistakenly seen as more than one. Fortunately, the relatively small number of traders combined with their often unusual names minimises this risk, although the suspicion of either fusion or fission has crept in numerous times when working with the material, leading to further inquiry.

Another issue in the method of prosopography concerns the amount of data available for each entity. As noted by Keats-Rohan, prosopography is most useful in cases where the number of entities is neither too small, hindering the group analysis, but neither too large where the amount of

⁷³ Samantha-Jayne Oldfield, "Narrative Methods in Sport History Research: Biography, Collective Biography, and Prosopography," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 32, no. 15 (2016): 1855-1882.

⁷⁴ Juha Kansikas, "The Business Elite in Finland: A Prosopographical Study of Family Firm Executives 1762–2010," *Business History* 57, no. 7 (2015), 1111-1121.

⁷⁵ H.J. Marker and K. Pagh, *Yesterday: proceedings from the 6th international conference, Association of History and Computing, 1991* (Odense: Odense University Press).

⁷⁶ Gunner Lind, "Svigersønner: køn og social reproduktion i den danske elite, ca. 1600-1800," *Den jyske historiker* 125 (2010).

work becomes too great for the researcher. Likewise, at least some sources should be available to permit any analysis, but at the same time not too much, which again would make it difficult to make broader assumptions.⁷⁷ Overall the prosopographical analysis is not without its pitfalls, especially when pooling data from a variety of sources in various formats. A good example is the work of Gidon Cohen, who discusses the concept of negative information which is most often missing from historical data although it can have a severe impact on an analysis if ignored.⁷⁸ An example of negative information is knowing when an actor did not participate in a historical event or if an actor were not active despite being a member of a political movement. The main problem of negative information comes in not confusing it with missing data, which may lead an analysis astray. In the present case of the DAC directors and company traders, care has been taken to only thoroughly analyse the actors when both positive and negative data is available, for instance being a director at a given time or not, or participating in an expedition to China or not, etc.

Historical Network Analysis

Studying the DAC, the merchants, and the company traders of the Oldenburg Monarchy or their Chinese counterparts in themselves provides a good foundation for research. But viewing the above actors as a social system or a network allows us to ask new questions, which leads to further questions that we were not able to pose before. Instead of looking at the individual person, company, ship, or any other type of actor, network theory allows us to focus on the relationships of

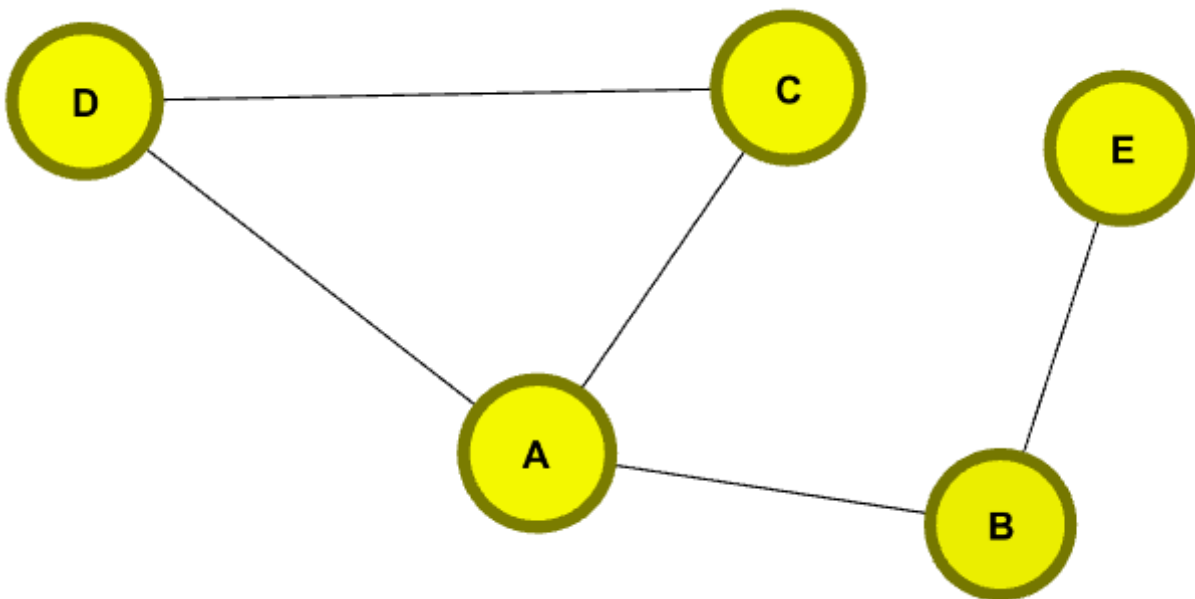


Figure 2 - An example of a visualisation of an undirected, one-mode network with five nodes named A-E and five ties between them. This type of visualisation is also referred to as a graph.

⁷⁷ Keats-Rohan, ed., *Prosopography approaches and applications*, 141., quoting Paul Magdalino.

⁷⁸ Gidon Cohen, "Missing, Biased, and Unrepresentative: The Quantitative Analysis of Multisource Biographical Data," *Historical Methods: A Journal of Quantitative and Interdisciplinary History* 35, no. 4 (2002): 166-176.

the actors, or nodes, as they are often called within the field. This approach is often referred to in sociology and related fields as Social Network Analysis or SNA. In this thesis, I am using the related term Historical Network Analysis, with inspiration from the thesis of the Norwegian historian Ola Teige, who used the concept in his study of Norwegian merchants from 1680-1750, which highlights the informal aspects of the networks of the business elite previously undetected by historians.⁷⁹ For although the methods of SNA provides new opportunities, the question of representing and understanding the temporal aspect remains a challenge for traditional SNA, and the use of the concept of Historical Network Analysis is an attempt to constantly keep this in mind.

As noted by Borgatti et al., much of both culture and nature seems to be structured as networks,⁸⁰ enabling the researcher to gain new insights in viewing structures and relationships from a network perspective. This becomes possible with the understanding of how information, ideas, influences, and norms travel in networks – the denser they are, the more efficiently the knowledge travels and the stricter the norms are enforced.⁸¹ In Figure 2, above, a simple network has been visualised. The yellow circles are nodes, which could be anything such as ports, goods, expeditions, for example, but often are human actors. The lines between the nodes represent a tie between two nodes, and have a defined meaning as well. The ties might represent friendship, a business relationship in the case of human actors, or if the nodes are businesses the ties might represent shared board members or employees. Having well-defined nodes and ties are essential in network analysis in order to analyse what flows through the network, whether it is influence, power, experience, or even sexually transmitted diseases if the nodes represented sexual partners. A tie is in itself neutral, neither good nor bad, and just represents a potential for a transfer of whatever is defined as moving in the network. But if we imagine the five nodes above to be merchants in eighteenth-century Copenhagen and define the ties as having a close family relation, for instance being brothers, married to another's sister, or children of the actors being married, we can speculate what this means. Does a close family tie indicate that information is being shared more freely? Is the competition fiercer due to brothers competing with each other? Or does the family connection mean that a greater trust is established between the parties, leading to lower transaction cost? These considerations are essential before attempting to explain historical phenomena. We might see that merchant A apparently has a central position, being closely related to B, C, and D, thus potentially being able to benefit from their various types of capital such as economic, knowledge, or contacts in other networks. We could also assume that A carried the greatest pressure on his shoulders of all in the network not to fail in his business, since it would not only bring trouble with other merchants, but also with a part of his family network.

⁷⁹ Teige, Ola. *Eliten i Christianias sosiale og politiske nettverk 1680-1750*. (2008).

⁸⁰ Stephen P. Borgatti, Martin G. Everett, and Jeffrey C. Johnson, *Analyzing Social Networks* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2013), 1.

⁸¹ Mark S. Granovetter, "The Impact of Social Structure on Economic Outcomes." *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 19, no. 1 (2005): 33-50.

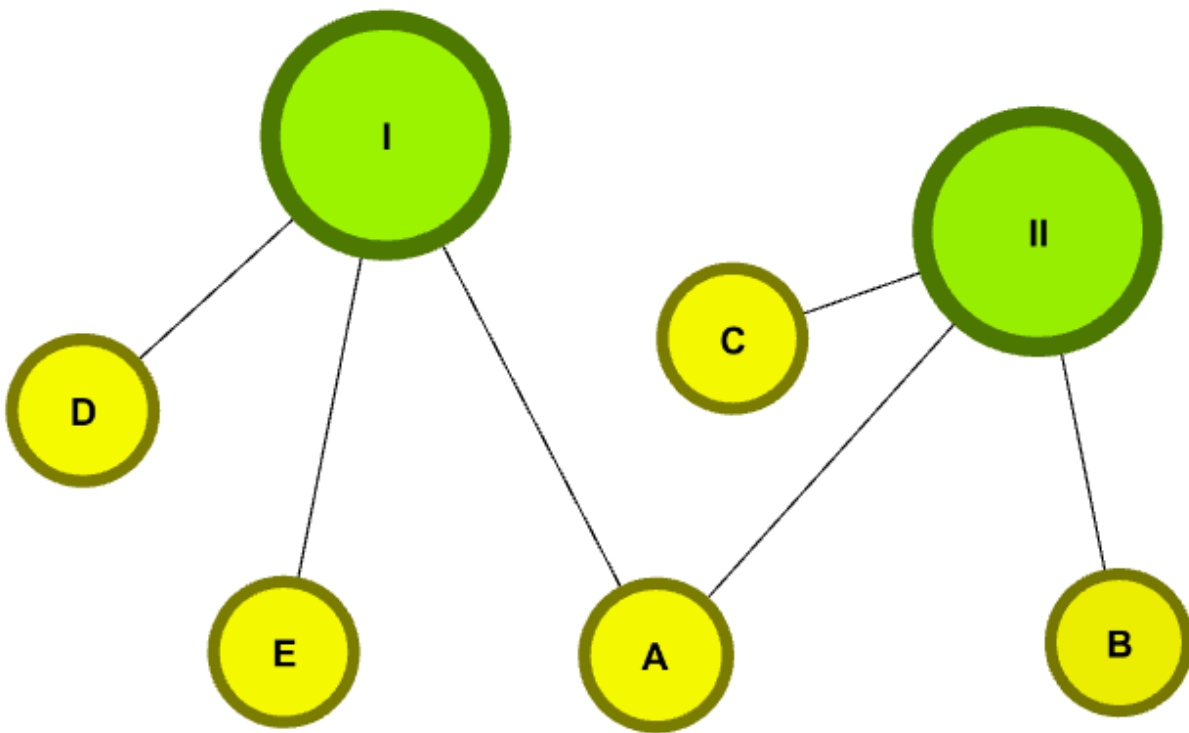


Figure 3 - An example of a visualisation of a two-mode undirected network with seven nodes and six ties.

From such a network, we can also construct an ego-network – a smaller portion of the network, focussed upon a single node.⁸² If we were to draw the ego network of D above with the range of one, we would end up with the connections to A and C. If we increased the range to two, then A, B, and C would be included in the ego-network. Especially in larger networks, narrowing the focus to an ego network can provide insights otherwise overlooked.

In a two-mode network as visualised in Figure 3, two kinds of nodes exist and ties only exist between two types of nodes, but not between the same type. An example of such a network would be where the green nodes are companies and the yellow nodes are board members. The ties would then represent membership of a board. In this simple network, attention is immediately drawn to node A. As a member of the boards of two companies, he can potentially transfer ideas, knowledge, etc. from one company to the other, thus at the same time representing an asset for each company, but also a potential danger in sharing secrets not meant to be shared. In both figures above, the networks are undirected, meaning that is D is in company I, and company I also has D as a member. In a directed network, the ties could go only one or both ways.

Examples of important concepts in network analysis include the measurement of *Centrality*, various ways of quantifying the influence of a node, as well as *Density* – the number of direct ties in the network compared to the maximum possible. Networks tend to form *Cliques*, distinct subgroups within the networks such as A-C-D in Figure 2 that can be identified both through either

⁸² Described for instance in Nick Crossley, Elisa Bellotti, Gemma Edwards, Martin G. Everett, Johan Koskinen, and Mark Tranner, eds., *Social network analysis for ego-nets* (London: SAGE Publications, 2015), 18.

visualisation or calculations. A fascinating aspect of network analysis is the concept of *Homophily* – the tendency for nodes to establish ties with nodes of similar characteristics.⁸³ Another relevant concept is that of *Connectedness* – the cohesion of the network, whether isolates exist, and identifying them. Finally, while the existence of ties is interesting in itself, the *Strength of ties* provides different insight – whether weak or strong as described in the oft-cited and inspirational work of Granovetter, who demonstrated that ties other than strong ties could carry substantial benefits.⁸⁴

For the more technical aspects of SNA, the book *Analysing Social Networks* from 2013 by Borgatti, Everett, and Johnson has been invaluable. To understand what effects networks have, how social capital is utilised through networks, as well as the dynamics between closure and brokerage – between closely-knit bonds and expanding into new fields – the works of Ronald S. Burt has been a great help. Especially the book *Brokerage and Closure – An Introduction to Social Capital* from 2005 was an eye-opener when coupled with the microhistorical narratives.

Once data accumulated from available sources is coded, it can be processed in network analysis software such as UCINET as well as visualised in programmes such as Netdraw or Gephi.⁸⁵ While the original data might seem unimpressive or even banal, the algorithms of networks analysis software can produce surprising new insights, although care must be taken in both the gathering of data as well as the interpretation of the results. In the field of history the issue of temporality can be a challenge as much of the possibilities of the tools assume focussing on a single point in time rather than on developments over time. In the case of the company traders, valuable material for my historical network analysis is available from the Roll Books of each trading expedition to China, detailing the composition of crew on each ship. The networks can then be used or visualised in several ways. The historian and digital humanities scholar Martin Grandjean divides the network visualisations into four main categories:⁸⁶

1. The metaphor network
2. The reconstituted network
3. The network from the sources
4. The metadata network

In the metaphor network, the terminology of network theory is simply used to describe a phenomenon, without an accompanying graph. The reconstituted network is not a result of a systematic collection of data, but an illustration of relations described in a text, while a network from the sources consist of a more typical network for analysis, where the historian selects a few relevant relations and maps them completely in order to be able to allow formal analysis. Finally, the metadata network can be used to map circulation of sources, where actors are linked by historical

⁸³ Miller McPherson, Lynn Smith-Lovin, and James M. Cook, “Birds of a Feather: Homophily in Social Networks,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 27, no. 1 (2001): 415-444.

⁸⁴ Mark S. Granovetter, “The Strength of Weak Ties,” *American Journal of Sociology* 78, no. 6 (1973): 1360-1380.

⁸⁵ Gephi was used to produce the graphs above and are by far the easiest program to use.

⁸⁶ Martin Grandjean, “Historical Network Analysis: Complex Structures and International Organizations,” in MartinGrandjean Digital Humanities, <http://www.martingrandjean.ch/complex-structures-and-international-organizations/> Accessed October 20, 2017.

documents themselves. In this thesis the first three types of networks and visualisations will be employed.

Historical or Social Network Analysis is a strong tool. It is not too complicated to learn and many articles, especially from the social sciences, have detailed various fascinating aspects of networks. But at the same time, SNA can be seen as a narrow pathway between deep gorges. One of the ways of straying from the narrow path of useful analysis is using too many of the vast number of variables that can be calculated from a source material. Connecting such variables to the actual actions and thoughts of actors to the past is a great challenge and the risk of falling in love with the numbers is great, leading into one of the gorges. The dangers of the other gorge include banality. After using a lot of time collecting data, sanitising it and treating it in SNA-software, the researcher might end up with a banal result, only stating the obvious and already-known. Therefore, the challenge is staying on the narrow path between meaninglessness and banality. In addition, another danger, as pointed out by Stone as early as in 1979,⁸⁷ is that for the historian using sophisticated network theory as well as programmes capable of calculating all sort of variables, getting results out of data might exceed the reliability and completeness of the sources.

In conclusion, the explanatory power of the historic network analysis lies in first the indicators such as centralities etc., that are essential instruments of measurements or microscopes, not neutral as stated by Lemercier, since they enable us to see the world from a new, and distinct perspective, but not confined within a single theory.⁸⁸ Once we have defined what a tie between nodes mean, the indicators can often be used to draw certain actors or cliques to the attention of the historian. Secondly, the use of visualisations can allow us to detect structures that the historian might have sensed in some way previously, but which were difficult to put into words. Network strategies, whether intentional or unintentional among the historical actor might also be clearer, informing us about underlying social mechanisms, as noted by Lemercier. At the same time, a focus on networks provides the historian with an opportunity to transcend traditional groupings when describing the connections between actors, phenomena, and places. Especially when dealing with traders and merchants, this ability is particularly important as these actors tended to move across borders and between different types of people to a higher degree than most others.⁸⁹

But the network analysis cannot stand alone, and needs to be interpreted qualitatively by the historian to make sense of the pointers showing up in indicators and graphs.

Microhistory

One might argue that microhistory is the opposite of the prosopographical approach. While prosopography tries to see what is shared among a selected population, microhistory looks at very

⁸⁷ Stone, "The Revival of Narrative."

⁸⁸ Lemercier, "Formal network methods in history: Why and how?," a great article for an introduction to the field of Social Network Analysis.

⁸⁹ Stefan Pajung and Bjørn Poulsen, "Et senmiddelalderligt handelsnetværk: Flensborgkøbmanden Namen Jansens købmandsbog 1528-49," *Temp - tidsskrift for historie* 5, no. 9 (2014): 23-42.

small units such as a single event, a village⁹⁰ or an individual. With this method, the historian examines in as extreme detail as possible the single instance rather than generalising. Microhistory generally is in opposition to larger historical narratives that focus on nation-states, decision-makers, and elites,⁹¹ for example, and thus raises the interesting question of whether a microhistory of a member of the elite is possible. In this thesis, the microhistoric approach will be applied to four merchants of the DAC who travelled to China, to reach as close as possible to the human experience and the life lived by these individuals, as well as seeing behind their actions to get an idea of the meanings they attributed to their world. Several of these merchants could be characterised as members of various elites, but I see no contradiction in applying this method to the individuals anyway, as the concepts of decision-makers and elites necessarily must be seen contextually. Even though for instance supercargo Vogelsang became one of the directors⁹² of the DAC, and thus belonging to the merchant elite of the Oldenburg State, he also seems to be the poorest and lowest ranking among the directors at the time, making him inferior and subject to the will of others. Harbsmeier also claims that microhistory shares the trait with the field of global history of the post-national, which seems to fit the rather pre-national theme of this thesis.

An inspiration for the microhistorical work is the ground-breaking book by Ginzburg: *The Cheese and the Worms*. After first being published in Italian in 1976 and then translated into a large number of languages, Ginzburg's work was one of the first examples of microhistory, and Menocchio the miller – the central actor in the narrative - has inspired countless historians and others. For Menocchio was extreme among extreme cases – among the small group of people accused of witchcraft, he stood out as imagining the world completely different from many others. Another special case of writing the history of the previously unknown miller was that almost all the sources were written by someone else, a trait his history shares with most of the company traders of the DAC, where very few have left their own words behind, at least in a form accessible for the contemporary historian. Just as Harbsmeier above, Ginzburg saw his study, that was only later termed microhistory, as part of the focus on the “*behaviour and attitudes of the subordinate classes of the past*”⁹³ But the approach provides ample opportunities for producing a narrative about an individual, that it in the opinion of this historian, would be a shame only to use on the less-privileged classes. The strong potential for narratives is also mentioned by Fritzboeger, who notes five elements often present in microhistory. The first is the small scale, then the close description, here referring to the concept of *thick description* as described by Geertz, recording as many details about a single event or in this case a single life in order to illuminate a social system and values present. Another element is a view from below, then a focus on the not immediately understandable and finally abduction. In this case, abduction is defined as hypotheses based on human experience,

⁹⁰ As famously described in Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou, village occitan de 1294 à 1324* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), a great inspiration for this dissertation.

⁹¹ As for instance described in Harbsmeier, Michael. “Mikrohistorie - et plaidoyer,” *Den jyske historiker* 85, (1999), 7.

⁹² As detailed in Chapter IV.

⁹³ Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), x.

or even an epistemology of circumstantial evidence.⁹⁴ Thus in microhistory, the historian attempts to write history from below, from the viewpoint of the actors, rather than being led by deduction from grander syntheses.

In conclusion, the combination of prosopography and SNA with microhistory seems to be a rare choice for the historian, but I believe that this thesis will prove it to be fruitful one. This is especially relevant since the long-distance trade of the Oldenburg Monarchy to a large degree has been studied with a focus on the privileged companies, their organisation, and their structure, rather than on the actors on the ground. Thus, microhistory has the potential to unveil how important the actions of individuals were compared to the large company.

I.5 - Sources and Research Tools

In general, the sources to the merchants and traders of the long-distance trade are scattered and fragmented, while internally coherent sources to the DAC are preserved in great number at the National Archive in Copenhagen, initially sorted by one of the actors in this thesis, company trader Ludvigsen as his final assignment for the dying company.⁹⁵

Secondary sources

For the wealthiest and most successful of the merchants, biographies has been written over time with the most prominent and thorough example being the biography of Niels Ryberg, written by the Danish archivist Aage Rasch in 1964.⁹⁶ But in general, the study of large and small merchants in Copenhagen and the rest of the Oldenburg Monarchy is hindered by the lack of archives from ordinary merchant houses and other businessmen, as well as a lack of personal correspondence, which means that silhouettes of the merchants have to be drawn from a variety of unconnected sources. Fortunately, a large number of articles mention some of these characters, providing bits of information to be assembled in the wiki (see below).

A vast source of secondary information is the *Biografisk Leksikon*, which were published in three editions from 1887-1905, from 1933-44, and from 1979-84. The first edition, which comprises 19 volumes, is especially useful due to its proximity to the events and since it also includes Norway, which was an essential part of the Oldenburg Monarchy. The first edition is available online at *Project Runeberg*⁹⁷ in both original and OCR-scanned versions, making it very easy to use. The similar *Norske Biografisk Leksikon* has also been used for this dissertation.

Primary Sources

The vast archive of the DAC contains the protocols recording the trade on each expedition to China, the *Negotieprotokoller*. Most of the information here are details about the trade, prices paid for goods, and other notes, but on occasion other interesting details show up. Through the vast

⁹⁴ Bo Fritzboeger, "Mikrohistorie og Aktør-Netværks-Teorier: kontekst, repræsentation og relevans," *Temp – Tidsskrift for historie* 5 (2012), 108., with inspiration from the works of Liv Egholm.

⁹⁵ See his narrative in Chapter IV for details and references.

⁹⁶ Rasch, *Ryberg 1725-1804*.

⁹⁷ See Project Runeberg, <http://runeberg.org/>

indexing work done by Paul van Dyke, I have been able to not only search in the DAC protocols via names, but also in the similar British, Dutch, Swedish, and Portuguese records which provided some information although their content is similar to the DAC material.

But for the backbone of this thesis, two major sources were used. First the DAC Roll Books: Every DAC ship travelling to China brought company traders to handle the trade in Canton. At the advent of each expedition, their names were entered into the roll books of the DAC. For each expedition, the roll books contain a long section of the *Navigation*, where the ship's officers, non-commissioned officers, and seamen are listed along with the surgeons, chaplains, and others. A shorter section at the end lists the staff of *Negotien*, the trading section of the crew. These roll books have been preserved for all 129 expeditions of the DAC to China, both successful as well as non-successful voyages. These were used to create a complete list of all traders on all expeditions.

For the other main group, the DAC directors, an initial challenge was that despite the amount of literature about the structure of the company, no list of directors existed. In order to assemble such a list, the Hof- & Statskalenderen was used, which was published from 1735, listing key state employees including the directors and staff of the DAC. For the first years, the preserved accounts from board meetings were also used to establish who the directors were in the initial years.

Another interesting DAC source are the letters sent from the factory in Canton to Copenhagen. Again, most are concerned with the technicalities of the trade, but useful information can still be extracted – at least indicating who was present in the factory and at what time.

An even closer understanding of the actors was possible by the donation of two transcribed letters from supercargo Mourier in Canton to a close friend in Copenhagen. The very honest and direct letters provide fascinating insights to what Mourier valued in China in the 1770s.

Related to these letters is the book *Til Østen under Sejl* from 1935. The author Johannes Lehmann was the great-grandchild of a DAC navigational officer and also related to company trader Bentley. The finding of about 50 letters from his forefather home to his foremother prompted Lehmann to publish the letters in a book along with extensive citations from the ships protocols and journals, along with the trading documents detailing the journeys of his forefather. The book thus provides easy access to a large amount of material and even though the primary interest of this thesis is on the traders, Lehmann's book contains valuable source material for this, especially the letters sent home as they sometimes reveal what was discussed on board among the crew, personal details, and much more information that does not appear in the official texts.

A comprehensive and detailed view of the encounter between Danish and Chinese merchants is found in the manuscript of memoirs of Theodor Emil Ludvigsen (1804-96). At the age of fourteen, Ludvigsen began his long employment at the DAC, first as a ship's boy, later as a mate, and finally as a company trader on his fourth and fifth voyage to Asia. He visited Canton a total of four times. Ludvigsen's memoirs were supposedly committed to paper in 1882, at the age of seventy-five, but the level of detail clearly reveals that they must be based on written material such as diaries or other notes. As will be demonstrated in the network analysis in chapter III, Ludvigsen's memoirs, however, contain a special problem.

Several accounts made by sailors and chaplains have also been preserved, but are unfortunately ill-suited for answering questions about the trade, which was only carried out by the company traders.

Sources of popular culture give an idea of the perception of the merchants and sailors at the time. An example is the musical *Chinafarerne* from 1792 by P.A. Heiberg.⁹⁸ The play provides valuable insight into the perception of the DAC, the sailors, and the merchants, as well as the importance of the profits of these long journeys.

In establishing the identity and heritage of especially the company traders, genealogical sources such as church registers, citizenship protocols, contemporary newspapers, obituaries, gravestones both in Denmark, Norway and China, and auction records have been consulted.

Finally, a number of paintings, primarily in the collection of the Maritime Museum of Denmark and the Royal Library in Copenhagen, were also used as sources - sometimes from the text they carried about the persons on a portrait, from museum registers about the origin of the object, as well as from the content of the painting itself.⁹⁹

Business Wiki of the Oldenburg Monarchy¹⁰⁰

As mentioned above, for most of the hundreds of merchants and trading officers of the DAC, their lives are shrouded in darkness with only scattered pieces of information, which makes it difficult to get an overview of the mercantile landscape in Copenhagen and the rest of the Oldenburg Monarchy. As noted by the biographer Holmgaard above, a sketch of the world of the Copenhagen traders would be beneficial in writing biographies of the merchants¹⁰¹ Since no such sketch exists, a *Business Wiki of the Oldenburg Monarchy* (BWOM) has been created as part of this project in the shape of a database, or rather a prosopographic wiki.¹⁰²

During the initial data-collection, various forms of storing the data of almost 500 actors as well as their relations and connections were considered. The initial choice was to build a relational database, which holds many advantages in historical research.¹⁰³ Different tables with different kinds of information related to each actor makes advanced queries possible, but at the same time requires careful structural planning from the beginning. After some experimentation, I settled on the format of a wiki – an open format, where information can easily be inputted in any style, although analysis directly from the wiki software is difficult. But the advantages of a wiki were strong: easy linking between actors, good search functions for various spellings of names, as well as freedom to input data without thought for the overall structure. An important question when designing historical

⁹⁸ P.A. Heiberg, *Chinafarerne: Syngestykke i to Acter med en Mellem-Act: Til Brug for den kongelige danske Skueplads* (Copenhagen: Hof & Statskalenderen, 1735-1840, 1760).

⁹⁹ See more in the narrative about Mourier in Chapter IV.

¹⁰⁰ Parts of this section has also been published on my research blog *Between Copenhagen & Canton 1730-1833*, A Business Encyclopedia – or Harnessing the Power of Selfishness for a Common Good, <https://copenhagencanton.wordpress.com/2015/09/18/a-business-encyclopedia/> Accessed March 23, 2018.

¹⁰¹ Holmgaard, “Aa. Rasch: Niels Ryberg. 1725-1804,” 3.

¹⁰² The wiki is available at Maritime Museum of Denmark, “*Business Wiki of the Oldenburg*,” <http://oldenburgbusiness.net>. In order to ensure the longevity of the wiki, it is now owned by the Maritime Museum of Denmark, which takes care of a number of other private websites as well as part of their collection.

¹⁰³ Gunner Lind, “Prosopografi med relationelle databaser,” in *Nätverk i historisk forskning: metafor, metod eller teori?*, (Växjö: Växjö Univ, 1999).

databases is whether it should be governed by sources, by actors, or by analysis.¹⁰⁴ For the wiki, the actor-oriented type was selected to provide a way of storing information about events, sources, and images. In the wiki, a page can be published for each merchant and other relevant individuals in order to collect information about their life and work from a number of diverse sources, using keywords to help with later analysis. Often, a single piece of information shows up in sources or in literature and while historians in previous times might have used index cards to keep track of the information, online open source tools today provides a much higher degree of flexibility, ease of use and, perhaps most importantly, a greater amount of shareability, allowing scholars to exchange their findings already in the research process, rather than just in the final stage as published works. In the *Business Wiki of the Oldenburg Monarchy* all information related to a person or a business can be assembled on a single page. To ensure the usability of the information for the future and for other scholars, all information is provided with a source for future reference in shape of the Harvard system, with the last name of the author and the year. A special page for references provides a full list of all literature and sources used.¹⁰⁵ From an early point on in the development of the encyclopedia, I decided not to attempt to validate each piece of information. For instance, different birth dates often appear in the sources, but instead of attempting to conclude which date might be the correct one, all pieces of information have been included with references to the sources. The historian Dion Smythes has labeled this approach as treating the information as *factoids* instead of the dangerous term *facts*. In his article “Issues and Possibilities in Prosopography,” he notes that this approach:

*“[...] moves the point of evaluation and judgement from before the incorporation into the prosopographical dataset to the point when real analysis should and does take place – the holistic analysis of the dataset.”*¹⁰⁶

In practice, this approach has been fruitful. Rather than spending time trying to sort out divergent pieces of information, gathering as much as possible has often in the end provided probable answers to the factoids from the context, saving a great amount of time.

The wiki uses the open source software Mediawiki for running the encyclopedia, which is also used by Wikipedia, but a number of important differences exist between the two as well as between the classical encyclopedias in print:

- In Wikipedia, anyone can create an account and write, edit, or delete articles. In BWOM, only scholars approved by me, perhaps later by a form of committee, can edit and create articles to ensure that the practice of always adding references to every bit of information is followed.
- In both Wikipedia and the classical encyclopedias, consistency, readability, and interpretation play an essential role to provide information to all types of readers. In BWEOM, the primary audience is the scholar adding the information, and secondary are other scholars. Eloquence, completeness, and clarity are thus not essential and both

¹⁰⁴ Lind, “Prosopografi med relationelle databaser,” 112.

¹⁰⁵ See Maritime Museum of Denmark, “Sources and Litterature”
http://oldenburgbusiness.net/index.php?title=Sources_%26_Litterature

¹⁰⁶ Keats-Rohan, ed., *Prosopography approaches and applications*, 133.

uncertainty and conflicting pieces of information are most welcome. Scholarly questions can even be added within square parenthesis.

Another advantage to using a wiki compared to old index cards is the ability to add keywords or categories to each page. An example is the large and influential Copenhagen-based merchant Joost van Hemert,¹⁰⁷ who has been placed in the following categories as well as several others:

- Male
- Merchant
- Involved in Danish Asiatic Company
- Involved in Kurantbanken
- Advisor to the Court
- Reformist Church
- Etatsraad

Each category allows the reader by a single click to see all individuals or businesses in that category, providing an easy opportunity, for example, to see who in the encyclopedia was involved in the project of Kurantbanken, or in the first bank in the Oldenburg Monarchy, or who was also part of the small Reformist congregation in Copenhagen, which was an important economic and financial network in the eighteenth century. The categories also contain a page each, making it possible to add information about what the category means or adding references to relevant literature. Thus, a taxonomy grows organically from the needs of each scholar working with the individuals and businesses, and organized by his or her questions to the sources, unlike the classical French *Encyclopédie* where a group of editors decided to group their subjects in the overall categories of *Memoire*, *Raison*, and *Imagination*. Instead, if a scholar is interested in redheaded businesswomen or shops in Copenhagen selling Chinese live fish,¹⁰⁸ relevant categories can freely be added, although care must be taken not to create duplicate categories. Related to the taxonomy is the feature to add links between persons and businesses. By simply adding two square parentheses at the beginning and end of a name, for example, the name becomes a link to a page of that name. If no such page exists, the offer to create it is given by clicking on the link. This provides easy opportunities to link families, business partners and employees together. With advanced visualisation tools it will be possible later to ask questions such as “Show all Jewish business contacts of Michael Fabritius in graphical form” or “Show people working in the DAC with a connection to the Reformed Church in Copenhagen.” In asking these questions, caution is advisable since the BWOM will never contain the complete data about all persons and businesses meaning that only positive or inclusive deductions are possible such as “these merchants worked for the DAC” rather than negative or excluding deductions such as “only these merchants worked for the DAC.” In time, depending on the interests of the participating scholars, the sample will grow large enough to allow many new and

¹⁰⁷ See Maritime Museum of Denmark, “Hemert Joost van,” http://oldenburgbusiness.net/index.php?title=Hemert,_Joost_van

¹⁰⁸ At least one existed around 1740! From Henningsen, Lars N., “Turist i København i 1737: kapellan i Havnbjerg Johannes Brandts dagbog.”

interesting questions. Whether the sample is of a sufficient size to be representative or even if the data are complete, such as the company traders who went to China, for example, becomes the sole responsibility of the historian asking the question. Thus, the open format of the individual wiki pages provides a loose structure that does not pose too many limits on the source materials. In a traditional relational database, as for instance discussed by Gunnar Lind,¹⁰⁹ fields and relations have to be decided beforehand, which includes the danger of having to make larger revisions late in the process, when new fields are needed. On the other hand, in a relational database, more specific searches are possible, but a combination of categories and use of a semantic wiki in the future with attributes to the links themselves, will hopefully present similar opportunities.

The criteria for adding persons and businesses to the BWOM are relatively open. Chronologically, the boundaries have been set matching the time of the absolute monarchy of the Oldenburg state, from 1660-1848, which in several matters form a clear epoch due to the transition of power from the nobility to the bourgeoisie as well as the change in attitude towards merchants, businesses, and especially trade, which is generally moving towards more respectability during the epoch. Generally, all persons working in the private sector in the broadest possible sense can be included, meaning both the blacksmith in a village can be included just as well as the grand merchant in Copenhagen and the chaplain sailing to China on a DAC ship.

In a few instances, several people with exactly the same name appear in the wiki. In that case, a number is added to the names for separation, while it is made clear in the documentation on the wiki that this number is only for separation purposes and does not give any information about chronology or other relations. For instance, both the father and the son of Joost van Hemert are named Peter, so in their case their pages are named *Peter van Hemert 1* and *Peter van Hemert 2*. Using terms such as junior or senior would most likely lead to confusion in the long term, since the wiki covers more than two hundred years.

Finally, the use of wiki software allows for insertion of images into the text, allowing greater depth in the information on each page and more fuel for the mind of the historian with images of the person, of buildings or of even relevant museum objects, for example. This will make the use of non-text sources such as portraits, buildings, sketches, luxury objects, graphs, and visualisations from Network Analysis easier. The Business Wiki is also an attempt to harness the power of selfishness for a common good. Experience has shown that selfishness is a potent force for getting things done, and therefore researchers using the wiki should do it primarily for the sake of their own research. In that way, the tool will continue to be relevant to them and will at the same time develop as a continually more useful resource for everyone interested in the businesses and businesspeople of the Oldenburg State. Instead of only letting the light of history shine on the great men of the time that are already remembered in biographies, this tool makes analysis possible on the common businessmen and – women, or with the words of Dion Smythes in his article “Issues and Possibilities in Prosopography:”

“The small men and women are dead. We ought not to consign them to a second death and oblivion by exclusion.”¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Marker and Pagh, *Yesterday: proceedings from the 6th international conference*, 77-82.

¹¹⁰ Keats-Rohan, ed., *Prosopography approaches and applications*, 134.

II –Setting the Stage - The Danish Asiatic Company¹¹¹

Copenhagen, August 1737: “[...] I went to Boldbusgade to the Chinese merchant Lintrup. There I saw several Chinese rarities, such as live Chinese fish. They were red, half a hand long and were swimming in an open glass. [...] In the afternoon, I went to another Chinese merchant, where I saw buttons and teaspoons made from mother-of-pearl [and] rare flowers painted as if they really were flowers [...]”¹¹²

A visitor to Copenhagen in the 1730s, in this case a chaplain from the Duchy of Slesvig, would see new sights and be able to purchase goods from half way around the world not previously available, either not at all or not in the quantities now offered. The chaplain’s experience, which he found important enough to note in his diary and preserve for posterity, was made possible by a network of merchants in the Oldenburg Monarchy and abroad, organised with the structure of a trading company, utilising support from civil servants, nobility, and royalty alike – not just for transporting live fish across the globe, but for enrichment on several levels.

Long-distance trade in the Oldenburg Monarchy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was mostly carried out by joint-stock companies, benefitting from royal monopolies. The longest-living and most profitable of these companies was the *Kongelige Octryerede Danske Asiatiske Compagnie*, or Royal Chartered Danish Asiatic Company (DAC), which built upon the experiences of the previous East Indian Companies of the Oldenburg State. These trading companies were formed throughout Europe to take advantage of the transport revolution that since the late fifteenth century had tied the world together as never before. Great ships, the largest machines of mankind at the time, made long-distance trade possible or rather the necessity for trade had brought the evolution of the large sailing ships as well as the navigational methods needed for traversing the oceans. Perhaps the highest-earning company ever to exist in Denmark, the DAC was a complex entity expressing both economic ideals of the future, as well as being an effective arena for individual enrichment.

In the following discussion, the prehistory and two epochs of the history of the DAC will be explored in a network perspective. In previous works on the history of the company,¹¹³ the periodisation depended on the concessions of 1732, 1772, and 1792 as well as the involvement of the Oldenburg State in the Napoleonic Wars from 1807, but in the following I will instead analyse the history of the company through its own growth, climax and decline, followed by some overall thoughts about the purpose of the company from a network perspective.

¹¹¹ Minor elements of this chapter have been published in (Asmussen, Duedal & Xing 2017)

¹¹² My translation of “[...] gik jeg i Boldbusgade til den kinesiske købmand Lintrup. Så der mange kinesiske sjaldenheder såsom levende kinesiske fisk. De var røde, et halvt spænd lange og svømmede rundt i et åbent glas. [...] Gik om eftermiddagen til en anden kinesiske købmand, hvor jeg så knapper og teskeer af perlemor, sjældne blomster malet som var det virkelig blomster [...]” from L.N. Henningsen, “Turist i København i 1737: kapellan i Havnbjerg Johannes Brandts dagbog,” *Historiske meddelelser om København* (1978), 148.

¹¹³ For instance, Glamman, “Studie i Asiatic Kompagnis,” Rasch and Sveistrup, *Asiatic Kompagni i den florisante Periode: 1772- 1792*, 1948, and Gøbel 1978. Going somewhat against this are the works of Ole Feldbæk, which attempts to see the entire Asian trade of the Oldenburg state as a whole from the beginning in 1616 till 1807, but still not including the last 37 years of the company. Ole Feldbæk, “Country Trade under Danish Colours: A Study of Economics and Politics around 1800,” in *Asian Trade Routes. Continental and Maritime Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies*, vol. 13 (London: Curzon Press, 1991).

II.1 - Prehistory and the Founding of the Danish Asiatic Company

The first trade in Asia by merchants of the Oldenburg Monarchy began with the award of royal privileges in 1616 to Ostindisk Compagnie (OC) or the Danish East India Company. The company was formed with inspiration from the Dutch Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC), founded in 1602. The VOC united a growing number of Dutch companies that had arisen only a few years earlier to take advantage of the rising prices of pepper and other Asian spices.¹¹⁴ The same hectic economic activity in the last years of the sixteenth century also led to the birth of the English East India Company in 1600 and later inspired King Christian IV of the Oldenburg Monarchy to allow his citizens to trade in East India and form the OC. The project was proposed to the king in late 1615 by a group of Copenhagen merchants led by two newly immigrated Dutch merchants Jan de Willem of Amsterdam and Herman Rosenkrantz of Rotterdam.¹¹⁵ It seems likely that the merchants brought copies of the concession of the VOC since the regulations of the concession of the OC was heavily inspired by this, in some cases even copied.¹¹⁶



Figure 4 - The first headquarters of the OC was located directly in front of the Copenhagen Castle, in the building located to the centre right, behind three ships. The building was owned by the king and was also used as a tavern. Copperplate by Jan van Wijck 1611, photo: National Museum of Denmark

¹¹⁴ F.S. Gaastra, *The Dutch East India Company: Expansion and Decline* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2003), 17.

¹¹⁵ (Feldbæk 1986), p. 25

¹¹⁶ Richard Willerslev, "Danmarks første aktieselskab," *Historisk Tidsskrift* 10, no. 6 (1944), 614.

Ostindisk Compagnie was the first joint stock company in the Oldenburg Monarchy with the king being the primary stockholder, but many noblemen, merchants, and citizens from Copenhagen, the Danish provincial towns, Norway, and the Duchies held shares in the company.¹¹⁷ But just as the concession was copied from the Dutch VOC, knowledge in navigation and trade imported via the networks of the crown and merchants was necessary before embarking on the first voyage to Asia. The choice of destination seems to have been inspired by the Dutch merchant Marcelis de Boshauwer, who arrived in Copenhagen in 1617 with previous experience in trade on the Coromandel Coast in India and apparently holding power of attorney from the emperor of Ceylon.¹¹⁸ Boshauwer negotiated a deal with King Christian IV and an expedition of two royal ships and three company ships set off from Copenhagen in November 1618. Besides the aid of Boshauwer, almost all captains and mates on board the fleet were Dutch.¹¹⁹ The first expedition suffered many setbacks, including the death of Boshauwer as well as claims from the ruler of Ceylon that he had not granted power of attorney. But eventually the new company founded the first Danish colony in Asia, Tranquebar in southern India, which played a key role in the later trade with China. The first governor, the Dutchman Roland Crappé, quickly established trading offices elsewhere in India and on the Sunda Islands, and was later succeeded by two other Dutchmen as governors of the first colony of the Oldenburg Monarchy. So, while the OC was given its privileges from the king in Copenhagen, it in many ways was run by a network of Dutch merchants in cooperation with merchants from Copenhagen.

The first OC lasted until 1650, when it was dissolved by King Frederik III. A new company of the same name was founded in 1670, after a successful trading voyage. The new privileges were more favourable than the old, but once again the interests of the king and the private merchants were intertwined.¹²⁰ The company owned the colony of Tranquebar, while the fortress Dansborg in the colony belonged to the king. Stocks were being sold again, but the king promised the company two ships to give it a good start. Four naval vessels were granted to the company in 1673. The company was also allowed its own court. The trade carried on steadily in the new company, and in 1674 the first attempt to reach China was prepared. Letters of introduction from the Oldenburg king to the rulers of Japan and China as well as Tonkin, in the northern part of Vietnam, were prepared, and the two ships FORTUNA and MAGELØS left Copenhagen near the end of 1674 for these destinations. It is uncertain whether these ships reached China, due to the very poor condition of the archives of Ostindisk Compagnie, but FORTUNA seems at least to have reached Batavia.¹²¹ Other sources imply that a Danish presence appeared in an unknown Chinese place named “Holjuur” or “Hulguur” and that a trading office was operating there, at least from 1674 to 1678.¹²²

¹¹⁷ Willerslev, “Danmarks første aktieselskab,” 623.

¹¹⁸ Today's Sri Lanka.

¹¹⁹ Tove Clemmensen, *Kina og Danmark 1600-1950: Kinafart og Kinamode* (Copenhagen: Nationalmuseet, 1980).

¹²⁰ Clemmensen, *Kina og Danmark 1600-1950*, 60.

¹²¹ Present day Jakarta, Indonesia - then the main Dutch colony and trading station in Asia.

¹²² Clemmensen, *Kina og Danmark 1600-1950*, 66.

More recent research seems to suggest that the Danish ship landed in Fuzhou, although this is only based on an unknown Chinese source. However, whether the ship actually reached China or not seems to be of lesser importance since the China-trade in the Oldenburg Monarchy only seems to have had a significant economic impact more than 50 years later.

Ostindisk Compagnie enjoyed success in the last years of the seventeenth century due to among other things the wars in Europe as well as the English and Dutch wars with the Mughal Emperors. At this time, the company moved its headquarters to Christianshavn, the new part of Copenhagen emerging to be a centre for trading companies, shipyards, and early industry. The Great Northern War, where the Oldenburg Monarchy was involved in from 1709-20, proved disastrous for the company, however, which was forced to offer loans to the state, while Swedish privateers made the last part of the journey from the East unsafe. After King Frederik IV refused to help the company after the war, it was finally terminated in 1729.¹²³

II.2 - 1730-1783 - Growth and Frenzy

Founding the DAC

The early eighteenth century, when the China trade began, was a period of economic depression. It originated in the economic hardships suffered by trade during involvement of the Oldenburg Monarchy in the Great Nordic War in 1700 and 1709-20. The crisis worsened locally with the outbreak of plague in Copenhagen in 1711, where about a third of the population perished. The price of grain had been halved compared to before the Great Nordic War, and the market for livestock suffered due to new taxes in the Netherlands,¹²⁴ one of the primary markets for agricultural products of the Oldenburg Monarchy. The great fire of Copenhagen in 1728, where about a third of the city buildings were destroyed was a contributing factor to the difficult economic climate, but was also a means of stimulating economic growth, boosting the businesses of the city craftsmen, and thus increasing trade for building materials, provisions, and other commodities.

Despite the economic hardships, a group of merchants, nobility, and civil servants were interested in commencing trade with China, inspired by similar moves in other European countries, and joined forces in a new *Kinesiske Societet* – the Chinese Society. At the same time, a Dutch businessman named Pieter Backer approached the court in Copenhagen, offering his skills in trade in China. After being put through a veritable exam by several Copenhagen merchants in the *Kinesiske Societet*, he was judged to be “*capable of, if his services was accepted, to lead the Society into the greatest confusion, labyrinth and misfortune.*”¹²⁵ Offers from other individuals in Paris and Amsterdam were also turned down on the account of lack of qualifications. Finally, after negotiations with officers and traders from the Oostende Company, the necessary know-how was secured (see the section on China trade below for more details). In February 1730, King Frederik IV of Denmark and Norway granted a concession to trade in China and elsewhere in Asia from Copenhagen. All

¹²³ Feldbæk, “Den danske asienhandel 1616-1807,” 108.

¹²⁴ Erik Rasmussen, “Kurantbankens oprettelse,” *Historisk Tidsskrift* 11, no. 3, (1950), 142.

¹²⁵ My translation of “*Capable til, om mand indloed sig med ham, at indføre Societetet udi den største Confussion, Labyrinth og Ulykke*”, from Clemmensen, *Kina og Danmark 1600-1950*, 110.

subjects of both kingdoms, as well as all duchies and countries, were allowed to invest and form a society to equip a ship in Copenhagen for an expedition to China in the same year.¹²⁶ All benefits that had been bestowed upon the now dissolved Ostindisk Kompagni at the last concession in 1698 would also apply to this new trading society, including freedom from taxes, tolls, and fees. The new concession included several limitations, allowing us to get an idea of the intentions of the monarch in allowing the new trade: The expeditions had to start from Copenhagen, the king's subjects should be preferred as crew unless special qualifications were needed, and the entire crew had to abide by the articles of sea law given to the old Ostindisk Compagnie.¹²⁷ Not long after, interim companies sent four ships for India and one for the first direct voyage from Copenhagen to China, pointing to a strong interest for the new business of trading with China. One of these ships was the frigate CRON PRINTZ CHRISTIAN, conquered from the Swedes during the Great Nordic War, which in 1732 returned to Copenhagen after the first direct voyage from Copenhagen to Canton. The voyage took almost two years and the great profits reaped from its cargo of especially tea, porcelain, and silk fueled the discussions in Copenhagen about creating a new trading company as a replacement of the old and bankrupt Ostindisk Compagnie. These negotiations ended with a royal stamp of approval, as the new *Det Kongelige Octroyerede Danske Asiatiske Kompagni* (DAC) on the 12th of April, 1732 was granted a concession and royal monopoly on all trade east of the Cape of Good Hope.

The new Asiatic Company began its existence placed somewhere between being a state-run business and a private enterprise. On one hand, the company received its concession from the king, providing the company with a monopoly within the Oldenburg State on all trade east of the Cape of Good Hope. The company and its major employees was also listed in the new *Königlich Dänischer Hof- und Staats-Calender* that appeared in print from 1734 and later renamed *Dansk Hof- og Stats-Calender*. The Calender gave an overview of the royal courts as well as all public institutions and employees such as the church, army, navy, universities, and much more. All trading companies with a royal concession would be listed here, which for the DAC was until just before the end in March 1844. On the other hand, the company was funded with the issue of 400 stocks of 250 rigsdaler each making it appear as a private company. However, by examining the shareholders, as studied by the historian Philip Kelsall, it becomes clear that the investors from the beginning in 1732 primarily consisted of the royal family, courtiers, nobility, and civil servants, both junior and senior.¹²⁸ Almost three-quarters of the shares were bought by this group, but another group of investors which increases in importance over time were the great merchants, primarily of Copenhagen but with strong international links. Chapter III looks at these merchants in detail.

Management & Organisation

The concession of 1732 differed from earlier company concessions in that the funds of the company were protected to a greater extent, allowing more security in investments and more

¹²⁶ Feldbæk, *Danske handelskompagnier*, 69-70.

¹²⁷ Feldbæk, *Danske handelskompagnier*, 71.

¹²⁸ Kelsall, "The Danish Monopoly Trading Companies," 7.

continuity of the running of the company. At the same time, the DAC was given a large amount of freedom in how to create and manage its organisation.¹²⁹

The first concession of April 12th, 1732 set the overall framework for the company and to regulate the details of the running of the company, a *Convention* was prepared and approved at the general assembly at the end of July that same year. The management of the company was to be elected by *Participanterne*, the stock holders. At the very top was the *Præsæs*, president, from the upper ties of the nobility with links to the government. The first *Præsæs* was Christian Ludvig von Plessen (1676-1752), born in Schwerin and at the time of the founding of the DAC was serving as minister of finance in the Oldenburg Monarchy. In 1743, a new *Præsæs* was appointed, namely count Johan Sigismund Schulin (1694-1750), originally from Franconia. Schulin was a rising star at the court of the Christian VI,¹³⁰ when the DAC was founded in 1732, and for a few years later he served as the equivalent of foreign minister of the Oldenburg Monarchy. The DAC was thus connected directly to the centre of power in the state. After Schulin's death in 1750, the top post of the company went to Adam Gottlob Moltke (1710-1792), who was born in Mecklenburg. Moltke was the Lord Chamberlain and close friend of the king, elevating the closeness of the company to the state to its highest level. But as useful as having a *Præsæs* of the highest nobility must have been for the company, the usefulness ran out as the new *Convention* to the concession of 1772 contained no mention of a *Præsæs*, leaving the management of the company primarily to the merchant directors. The abolishment of a state agent in charge of the company has traditionally been seen by historians¹³¹ as a reaction to the extreme expenses the company had to bear in relation to the statue of King Frederik V. Moltke had, as the company *Præsæs*, offered the statue as a gift from the DAC in thanks for their privileges, not knowing that the delayed and expensive artwork eventually would cost the vast sum of 500,000 rigsdaler. Under the new *Convention*, the DAC would to a much higher degree be run by merchants, illustrating the new wealth and self-confidence of this growing class, which can be seen as a step on the way towards independence from direct assistance from the state.

Below the *Præsæs* were a number of directors. From the beginning, one director was to have knowledge of the law and three directors were to be merchants.¹³² These merchant directors were in charge of correspondence, for equipping the expeditions, as well as overseeing all trade. Each should own at least four stocks, reside in Copenhagen, and enjoy 500 rigsdaler a year in every year at least one ship returned from Asia. The four directors had an equal vote in the matters of the company and were supposed to meet at the company building, whenever issues required them to do so. For all important decisions, a signed order from at least three directors was necessary. The network of the directors was also important because if, for example, there were difficulties in

¹²⁹ Glamann, "Studie i Asiatisk Kompagnis," 352.

¹³⁰ *Biografisk Leksikon I*

¹³¹ Originating from Edvard Holm for instance in *Biografisk Lexicon* and since then often repeated by later historians.

¹³² Feldbæk, *Danske handelskompagnier 1616-1843* (1986), 113

raising funds among the shareholders for an expedition, the directors could seek funds from outside the company.¹³³

In the new Convention of 1772, the number of directors was increased to seven – one with knowledge of the law, four merchants, one with knowledge of either East India or China, and finally a maritime director with knowledge of seamanship.¹³⁴ They should still reside in Copenhagen and the pay was the same as before, but now nine stocks were required to be elected, in effect limiting the stockholders who could be eligible as directors and moving the board further towards a merchant elite. This vast number of directors only lasted for a short while, as the new contested Convention of 1778 limited the number to five, one in law, three merchants, and one maritime expert, eliminating one merchant director and one with knowledge about Asia.¹³⁵ At the same time, a new paragraph detailed that no director would be allowed to conduct private Asian trade. This seemingly small change had far-reaching implications. It originated from the liberation of the India trade in the 1772 concession which provided new opportunities for the grand merchants, of whom several were also DAC-directors, such as de Coninck, Ryberg, and Brown who were responsible for the first private expedition to Asia in 1775.¹³⁶ This led to intense discussions among the shareholders, ending with the ban above but that also meant that the company would from now on experience increasing difficulty in attracting the most entrepreneurial and well-connected merchants as its directors.¹³⁷

Finally, five *Hovedparticipanter* or principal stock owners were appointed from 1732, two with knowledge about law and seamanship and three merchants. The *Hovedparticipanter* were to keep an eye on the company books, warehouses, ships, and anywhere else company goods would be located.¹³⁸ They could also request meetings with the directors whenever necessary, they had to check the books, and were required to stay in Copenhagen and own at least two stocks in the company. For their “*trouble and waste of time*”¹³⁹ they would receive 100 rigsdaler a year. In the new Convention of 1772, the office of the *Hovedparticipanter* disappeared and instead three elected *Revisores* would revise the books of the company, but apparently not have responsibility for the ships and warehouses as before.¹⁴⁰

For the daily running of the company, a bookkeeper, a junior bookkeeper, and an accountant were hired, along with an *Overekvipagemester* who was responsible for materials and supplies for the ships,

¹³³ Glamann, “The Danish Asiatic Company.”

¹³⁴ Feldbæk, *Danske handelskompagnier 1616-1843* (1986), 151.

¹³⁵ Feldbæk, *Danske handelskompagnier 1616-1843* (1986), 176.

¹³⁶ Nyrop, *Niels Lunde Reiersen*, 236, via Feldbæk’s master thesis (1963), 30

¹³⁷ Ole Feldbæk, *De københavnske købmænd og handelskompagnerne 1772-1792* (København, 1963), 31.

¹³⁸ Feldbæk, *Danske handelskompagnier 1616-1843* (1986), 129.

¹³⁹ My translation of “*u-mage og Tüds Spilde*” from Feldbæk, *Danske handelskompagnier 1616-1843* (1986), 114

¹⁴⁰ Feldbæk, *Danske handelskompagnier 1616-1843* (1986), 152

and was assisted by a scribe. Four clerks took care of practical matters, while two messengers delivered letters and kept watch of the ships.¹⁴¹

A notable change in the business of the DAC occurred in 1772, after the first 40 years of the royal monopoly was completed. The company was granted a new monopoly, but this time only on trade with China, and only for 20 years. Five years later, in 1777, the state took over the administration of the colony of Tranquebar, the trading mission in Serampore in Bengal, as well as the Nicobar Islands in the Indian Ocean. The new monopoly allowed private traders the right to trade in India, but charged them with heavy taxes to be paid both to the state as well as to the DAC.¹⁴² The company was obliged to carry 3000 rigsdalers worth of Danish goods, all ships had to be built within the realms of the king, and the state would pay a premium of 15 rigsdaler per *commercelæst*¹⁴³ for each ship built.

Stocks

The funds of the new DAC were divided into two parts, the first being the Continuous Fund which consisted of the share capital, set in 1732 to 400 shares worth 250 rigsdaler each. Every year a percentage of the value of the exported goods as well as the imported goods was added to the fund along with any remaining profit after a 5percent dividend had been paid to the shareholders.¹⁴⁴ The second part was the so-called Circulating Fund, which was the capital needed to purchase ships, cargo, as well as covering all expenses during the journeys. This capital was being raised independently for each voyage and repaid along with dividend after the successful completion of each trip. The contributors were almost always the regular shareholders.¹⁴⁵ By this division of funds the DAC hoped to be better prepared to face the fluctuating economy by always having the Continuous Fund as a reserve. Most of the funds for the expeditions would come from the Circulating Fund, which reached 640,000 rigsdaler in the years from 1732 till 1735, a considerable sum compared to the Continuous Fund of initially only 100,000 rigsdaler.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴¹ Knud Klem, *Skibsbyggeriet i Danmark og hertugdømmerne i 1700-årene: Om skibsbygning og handelskompagnier i den florissante periode*, vol I (Copenhagen, 1985), 47.

¹⁴² Rasch and Sveistrup, *Asiatisk Kompagni i den florissante Periode*, 21.

¹⁴³ *Commercelæst* or *cmcl*: Measurement unit for the volume of a ship. The unit changed over time and had several meanings at the same time, often referring to a normal cargo of 4000 pounds, 12-18 barrels of salt or 28 barrels of rye. As a rule of thumb a single two *commercelæster* equals 1 BRT. See Anders Monrad Møller, "Skibsmålingen i Danmark 1632-1867," *Handels- og Søfartsmuseet - Årbog* (1974) and "Skibsmåling – nok engang," *Handels- og Søfartsmuseet – Årbog* (2006).

¹⁴⁴ Glamann, "Studie i Asiatisk Kompagnis," 353.

¹⁴⁵ Glamann, "Studie i Asiatisk Kompagnis," 357.

¹⁴⁶ Kelsall, "The Danish Monopoly Trading Companies," 7.

Generally, stocks in the DAC were a very good investment with great returns in this period. The expenses were, however, quite large including the salaries to the many employees in both Europe and Asia, as well as a small amount paid to the priests of churches in both Copenhagen and Elsinore in return for prayers for safe returns of the ships. The Danish historian Ole Feldbæk once claimed

that the DAC was the company with the most distinguished stockholders ever. In 1773, 24 stocks were owned by the king, while 1,251 stocks belonged to nobility, clergymen, and officials. Danish citizens accounted for 1,933 stocks, while 1,135 stocks were owned by persons from the Netherlands, 153 from France, 6 from England, and 138 from other countries. Seventy-five stocks were owned anonymously, registered only by the mark of their owner, such as "In spe et silentio," "Fortuna," or "Die Gute Hoffnung." While the shareholders from the Oldenburg Monarchy came from a wide circle of investors, the foreign investors often had a direct link to the company. The Dutch house of C. van Orsay, for example, was the primary banking connection of the DAC in the Netherlands.¹⁴⁷

The stocks split several times as the value increased, in 1743 reaching 400,000 rigsdaler and in 1755 reaching 600,000 rigsdaler. In 1773, the total of now 4,800 stocks had a total value of 2,400,000 rigsdaler.¹⁴⁸ The high point of the stock was reached in the summer of 1782, where a single stock was traded for 1,900 rigsdaler, providing a total value of the DAC of more than 9 million rigsdaler.¹⁴⁹

Each shareholder had between one and three votes depending on the number of stocks owned. But in the patron-client system which was still present in the eighteenth century, it was quite possible for a large merchant to get the majority of votes by influencing the minor shareholders.¹⁵⁰

In the last years of the boom, the DAC paid a stock dividend of 30percent and the stocks were sold at four times their original value.¹⁵¹ In 1783 and 1784 a dividend of 20percent was paid, but from 1785-87 the dividend decreased to 10-12 percent until finally in 1791, no dividend was issued.



Figure 5 - The main administration building of the DAC in Christianshavn, built in the late 1730s. Photo: *Den danske Vitruvius, 1746-49*

¹⁴⁷ Kelsall, "The Danish Monopoly Trading Companies," 24.

¹⁴⁸ Rasch and Sveistrup, *Asiatisk Kompagni i den florissante Periode*, 37.

¹⁴⁹ Julius V. Schovelin, *Fra den danske handels empire: forhold og personer i det 18. aarhundredes sidste halvdel* (Copenhagen: Nordiske Forlag & Grosserer-Societetet, 1899). 17.

¹⁵⁰ Rasch and Sveistrup, *Asiatisk Kompagni i den florissante Periode*, 41.

¹⁵¹ Deuntzer, "Af det asiatiske Kompagnis Historie. Første Afsnit. 1792-1807." (1908), 5

Residence

One of the goals imposed by the king on the new company was to further the role of Copenhagen as an entrepôt. Thus, the placement of the company headquarters in the capital and by far largest city in the Oldenburg Monarchy was self-evident, although the relatively new town of Glückstadt in Holstein had been discussed earlier. Placing the company in Copenhagen meant that the DAC out of all the European East India companies had the furthest and most dangerous route to sail to reach Asia, even further than the similar Swedish company, which established its base in Gothenburg, about 130 nautical miles north of Copenhagen.

In August 1732, the new company moved into the old offices of Ostindisk Kompagni in Christianshavn in Copenhagen on the corner of Strandgade and Skt. Annæsgade. The following year in March, the old harbour and timber storage of the old company was purchased at an auction for 15,000 rigsdaler.¹⁵² A large area nearby, owned by the mayor of Copenhagen and director of the DAC, Frederik Holmsted, was purchased by the company for 1,500 rigsdaler, and another area for a smithy and offices for the *Ekvipagemester* was bought from the company bookkeeper, Frantz Feddersen. Expenditures included 4,500 rigsdaler on the shipyard, 900 rigsdaler for the smithy, and in 1734 5,000 rigsdaler was spent on the construction of a new warehouse. Thus, the key actors in the company also provided the basis for the new company headquarters.

The rented facilities soon proved inadequate and an offer from the Dutch mason and architect Phillip de Lange to build a new company house for 11,200 rigsdaler was accepted by the General Assembly in July 1738.¹⁵³

Figure 6, a detail of a copperplate with a motif of the new dock in the harbour of Copenhagen in



Figure 6 - In this detail of an eighteenth- century copperplate showing the inauguration of the first dock in Copenhagen in May 1739, the buildings on the site of the old Ostindisk Compagnie (left) and new DAC (centre) can be seen in the background. Photo: Maritime Museum of Denmark

¹⁵² Klem, *Skibsbyggeriet i Danmark og hertugdømmerne i 1700-årene*, vol I, 48.

¹⁵³ Klem, *Skibsbyggeriet i Danmark og hertugdømmerne i 1700-årene*, vol I, 50.

1739 gives us an idea of the location and state of the buildings. To the right of the dock, an old half-timbered warehouse is visible, which was later replaced by the large brick warehouse still present today. Behind the down-rigged masts of a frigate, perhaps a Chinaman¹⁵⁴ in the company harbour, the brand-new company house can be seen, most likely still under construction. Further to the right another down-rigged frigate can be seen and to the extreme right the company timber storage is visible. The small building to the right of the office building is most likely the new smithy and office for the *Ekvipagemester*.

The old warehouses on the site from the old Ostindisk Compagnie were repaired and maintained, but more space for cargo was needed. In the 1740s, space was rented from warehouses of the merchant and *Hovedparticipant* in DAC Johann Friederich Wever and the merchant and ship builder Andreas Bjørn. But as business was growing even more space was necessary and after deciding at the General Assembly to construct a new warehouse, plans were examined in 1748 ending with the selection of the royal builder Nicolaj Eigtved to build a grand new warehouse along the company harbour for about 26,000 rigsdaler. The new warehouse was finished in 1751.¹⁵⁵

The late baroque company house was accompanied by a building of similar design next to it in 1781. Seen from Strandgade, the new building looked exactly like the old, but when seen from the harbour the purpose of the building was obvious, namely another warehouse. With this last



Figure 7 - The neighbourhood of the DAC in 1761. The company is located centre-right, facing the harbour and Strandgade, a central business street of Copenhagen. Photo: Copenhagen City Archive

¹⁵⁴ Chinaman is in the following used in the meaning of a ship used in the China trade.

¹⁵⁵ Klem, *Skibsbyggeriet i Danmark og bertugdommerne i 1700-årene*, vol I, 51.

addition, the headquarters of the DAC was more or less complete in the state it would remain until the end of the company.

The DAC headquarters was located in what would become a central business hub of the city. The main building was facing Strandgade, which contained the homes of several very well-connected merchants. Just next to the company warehouse was the dock from 1739 – the first dock for ships in the Oldenburg Monarchy which was essential for the maintenance of the large ships of the navy and the DAC. The West Indian Company would also call this street home, along with large shipyards and other businesses. Finally, in the late 1750s, the church *Frederiks Tyske Kirke* was erected in the southwestern end of the street with support from several merchants, whose remains can still be found in the lavish crypt of the church,¹⁵⁶ and which also contains several family chapels. Just as in the case of equipping the DAC ships for Asia, the merchants helped provide the materials for the church.¹⁵⁷ Along with the Reformed Church in Gothersgade, *Frederiks Tyske Kirke* would be a gathering place in life as well as in death for several of the actors in this thesis, positioned as it were among trading companies, breweries, powder mills, rope works, and sugar refineries.

Just across the bridge from Christianshavn to the island of Slotsholmen lay Børsen, the stock exchange and most important marketplace in the Oldenburg Monarchy, and further onto the small island the royal residence of Christiansborg marked the center of the city and the realm from 1740 onwards. Across the water from the DAC harbour lay Bremerholm, the old navy shipyard, and further north the new navy shipyard of Nyholm, where several of the ships of the company would be built.

The headquarters of the new company was thus located in both the economic and industrial centre of the Oldenburg Monarchy as well as very close to the sovereign power of the absolutist state, the king

Ships

Another challenge facing the young company was securing enough ships of a sufficient size. For the trade in India, normal large merchant ships could be used, but for the China trade, the largest ships possible were needed for the long expeditions and sustenance of the crew.

The first five ships of the company came from the previous Ostindisk Kompagni. Acquiring new ships of the necessary large size was a constant challenge, so in January 1733 the General Assembly agreed to construct a shipyard in Christianshavn in Copenhagen.¹⁵⁸ The first ship, KONGEN AF DANMARK, was launched in January 1735 and since it proved after its first voyage to China to be both of the right size and quite seaworthy, it was decided to build another ship identical to the first.

¹⁵⁶ Several DAC-employees found their final resting place here, for instance the directors Brown, Cramer, Fabritius de Tegnagel, Hooglant, Iselin, Krog, Schäffer, Wever and Zinn, officers and company traders of the With-family, bookkeeper Hielte, archivist Schütt and likely others. From *Danmarks Kirker. Christians Kirke: Den tyske Frederiks Kirke* (København: Nationalmuseet, 1975)

¹⁵⁷ *Danmarks kirker. Christians Kirke: Den tyske Frederiks Kirke* (København: Nationalmuseet, 1975), 128.

¹⁵⁸ Klem, *Skibsbyggeriet i Danmark og hertugdømmerne i 1700-årene*, vol I, 50.

The DRONNINGEN AF DANMARK was launched in September 1738, followed by the ship CRONPRINSEN AF DANNEMARK in November 1740.



Figure 8 – Box of snuff-tobacco, made in Canton around 1741, with an image of the CRONPRINSEN AF DANNEMARK along with a text detailing the journey from Copenhagen.

Photo: Maritime Museum of Denmark

No paintings exist of the early Chinamen of the DAC, but a few other depictions survive. On the snuff-tobacco box seen in Figure 8, made in Canton around 1741 and now in the collection of the Maritime Museum of Denmark, an image of the CRONPRINSEN AF DANNEMARK can be seen, the third ship built at the company shipyard in Christianshavn after the same drawings as the first two. Notice the similarities with the frigate on the copperplate in Figure 3, especially the raised aft deck and the prominent figure head.

The almost constant construction at the company shipyard in Christianshavn was necessary since no other shipyards initially existed in the Oldenburg Monarchy capable of building ships of this size and the only alternative would be to purchase older, second-hand ships from other European companies.¹⁵⁹ But in the same period, the neighbour of the DAC, the previously mentioned Andreas Bjørn began building ships of a sufficient size at his shipyard in Christianhavn. At the end of 1744, the company purchased two new ships from his yard, namely the TRANKEBAR and the KØBENHAVN for 25,000 and 30,000 rigsdaler respectively.

¹⁵⁹ Klem, *Skibsbyggeriet i Danmark og bertugdommerne i 1700-årene*, vol I, 54.

The constant construction at the DAC shipyard required steady supplies of timber. Some were purchased from companies in Stralsund and Danzig, but otherwise timber was bought from the merchants, the DAC *Hovedparticipanter*, and later directors Johann Wever and Joost van Hemert.¹⁶⁰ Another supplier with very close ties to the company was the *Præses* of DAC Count Adam Gottlob Moltke, who in the late 1750s and 1760s sold large amounts of timber to the company. Another place of purchase was from the navy, which is a testament to the close relationship between the company and the state.

In the following years, ships were bought from private traders, from the navy and at least in a solitary case, awarded as a gift from the king, namely the navy ship SYDERMANLAND, which had proven unfit for service in the navy. After a single voyage to Asia for the DAC, the ship was sold for 3,850 rigsdaler. When equipping ships for Asian voyages, public auctions were often used, but in other cases the members of the management of the DAC or their business connections were asked to provide the goods.¹⁶¹

Late in the period the first regular ship portraits of the DAC China-ships appeared, providing us with a greater knowledge of their physical appearance. The oldest existing ship portrait seems to be

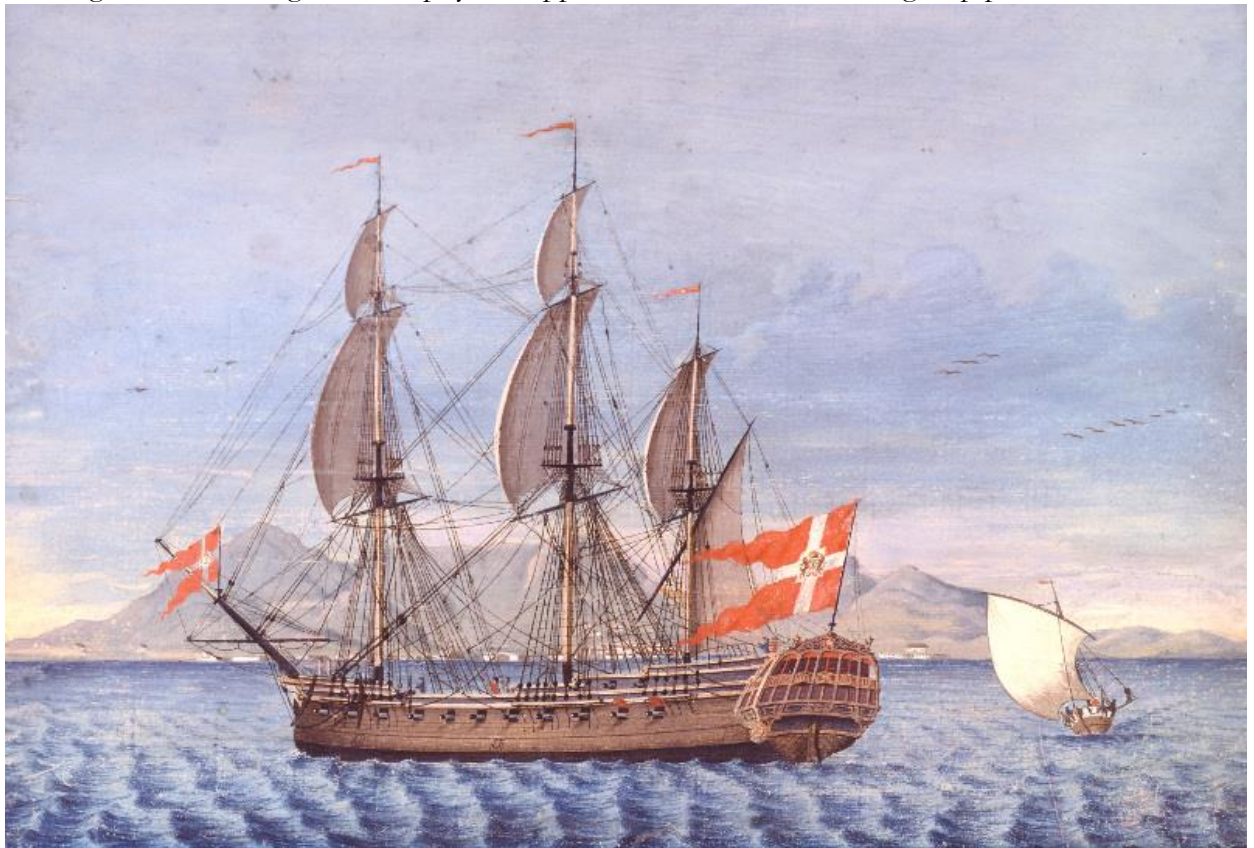


Figure 9 - The DAC frigate DRONNING SOPHIA MAGDALENE, painted with the Cape of Good Hope in the background, most likely in the late 1760s or early 1770s. Photo: Maritime Museum of Denmark.

¹⁶⁰ Klem, *Skibsbyggeriet i Danmark og hertugdømmerne i 1700-årene*, vol I, 59.

¹⁶¹ Glamman, "Studie i Asiatisk Kompagnis," 358.

the gouache of DRONNING SOPHIA MAGDALENA, launched from the DAC shipyard in 1761. Until 1774, it completed six voyages to China.

China Trade

One of the great challenges facing both the interim company that sent out the first direct expedition to China and the DAC in their early voyages was how to acquire the necessary know-how of both a navigational and commercial nature. Much of the experience and know-how needed to reach China and successfully manage the trade with the Chinese merchants was therefore imported from the *Oostendse Compagnie* or in French the *Compagnie générale établie dans les Pays-Bas Autrichiens pour le Commerce et la Navigation aux Indes*, which was founded in 1722 in the Austrian Netherlands.¹⁶² The new company quickly became a strong competitor to the English, French, and Dutch East Indian companies, and after pressure from these countries, it was suspended in 1727 and finally terminated in the early 1730s. Thus, experienced ship officers, company traders, and free capital were available for hire elsewhere to the benefit of both the Oldenburg State as well as Sweden. This solved the problem of providing the first direct ship to China with a sufficiently experienced crew, and after some negotiations between Copenhagen and Amsterdam, the previous Oostendse Compagnie-supercargo-and-surgeon Pieter van Hurk was hired as the very first supercargo of DAC.¹⁶³ The transfer of expertise also extended to the navigation of the ships. Although the primary captain was the experienced Norwegian war hero Michael Tønder, another veteran from the Oostendse Compagnie would serve as secondary captain, namely Guilielmo de Brouwer, who had previously sailed to China as both first and second captain.¹⁶⁴ Both de Brouwer and especially van Hurk seem to have been well aware of the necessity of their skills and charged the new company a very high salary for their services. The historian Parmentier estimates that van Hurk made about 46,000 rigsdaler in profit from the voyage of CRONPRINTZ CHRISTIAN, which he among other things invested in stocks of the new DAC where he later became one of the directors as well as becoming one of the leading merchants of the Oldenburg State in the following years.¹⁶⁵ De Brouwer was offered the position as captain in DAC after his de facto command of the first expedition, and after two more successful voyages, he left the Oldenburg State again for Oostende with a full purse. Here, he started a successful trading house, drawing upon his Scandinavian business contacts. The three large Copenhagen-based trading houses of Fabritius & Wever, Reinhard Iselin, and Joost van Hemert worked with de Brouwer to export tea and porcelain from the DAC warehouse to the Austrian Netherlands with great success.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶² Kristof Glamann and Erik Oxenbøll, *Studier i dansk merkantilisme: Omkring tekster af Otto Thott* (København Akademisk Forlag, 1983), 69.

¹⁶³ Clemmensen, *Kina og Danmark 1600-1950*, 110.

¹⁶⁴ Jan Parmentier, "Søfolk og supercargoer fra Oostende i Dansk Asiatisk Kompagnis tjeneste 1730-1747," *Handels- og Søfartsmuseet på Kronborg – Årbog* (1989), 145.

¹⁶⁵ Parmentier, "Søfolk og supercargoer fra Oostende i Dansk Asiatisk Kompagnis tjeneste 1730-1747," 147. See his narrative in Chapter IV.

¹⁶⁶ Jan Parmentier, "Guilielmo de Brouwer (1693-1767): en skitse af en kaptajn, handelsmand og reder i det 18. århundrede," *Maritim Kontakt XIV* (1990), 76.

Van Hurk and de Brouwer were the most spectacular and well-paid of the experts from the Austrian Netherlands, but a total of eight sailors and three supercargoes were previously employed at the Oostendse Compagnie and served in the early DAC and seem to have been a major factor in the success of the trade itself, and also in ensuring a market for the large quantities of goods brought back to the Oldenburg State. A similar or even larger number of Oostendse professionals appear to have served in *Svenska Ostindiska Companiet*,¹⁶⁷ which from its beginning in 1731 was established with manpower, capital, and expertise to a large extent from outside Sweden.¹⁶⁸ An interesting detail is that the now-closed Oostendse Compagnie had been in a similar situation when it was new, leading to an importation of experienced English, Irish, and French sailors and traders, thus indirectly benefitting the DAC decades later.¹⁶⁹ The historian Weng Eang Cheong has even gone as far as describing the Danish-Norwegian and Swedish companies as direct successor companies to the Oostendse Company.¹⁷⁰ This transfer of knowledge was successful and from 1740 onwards, the DAC generally equipped two expeditions to China every year.

From the first expedition in 1730, company traders accompanied the ships to Canton, handled the trade with the Chinese merchants, and returned with the same ship. By the 1750s the need for a continued presence in Canton was realized and a building was rented from a Chinese Hong merchant for the company traders. However, the traders were not allowed by the Chinese to spend the entire year in Canton and instead spent the winter in the Portuguese colony of Macau further south in the Pearl River delta. From 1772 the DAC formalised the practice by establishing a permanent presence of company traders of the Oldenburg Monarchy at the factory in Canton and parts of the year in Macau.¹⁷¹

For the 40 years following the founding in 1732, the company would enjoy a royal complete monopoly on all trade east of the Cape of Good Hope. While the concession clearly stated that the purpose of the company was to boost the trade and shipping in the king's realms, Feldbæk notes¹⁷² that the underlying premise of the concession was to provide stability and continuity in the Asian trade, thus enabling Copenhagen to enhance its position as a Northern European entrepôt by including the increasingly popular Asian goods. The trade took off very quickly, and in the period of the first concession, from 1732-72, the cargoes of the ships of the DAC were sold at auctions in the company warehouse in Copenhagen for a total of more than 41 million rigsdaler, of which no less than 31 million came from the China trade.

¹⁶⁷ Parmentier, "Søfolk og supercargøer fra Oostende i Dansk Asiatisk Kompagnis tjeneste 1730-1747," 142.

¹⁶⁸ Meike von Brescius, "Worlds Apart? Merchants, Mariners, and the Organization of the Private Trade in Chinese Export Wares in Eighteenth-Century Europe," in *Goods from the East, 1600-1800: Trading Eurasia* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 171.

¹⁶⁹ Parmentier, "Søfolk og supercargøer fra Oostende i Dansk Asiatisk Kompagnis tjeneste 1730-1747," 164.

¹⁷⁰ W.E. Cheong, "The age of Suqua, 1720-1759; the early Hong merchants," in *Asian Trade Routes. Continental and Maritime Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies*, 13 (Curzon Press, 1991), 225.

¹⁷¹ F. Svane, *Asiatisk Kompagni 1792-1807: Handel og økonomi*, (MA thesis, University of Copenhagen, 1982), 20.

¹⁷² Feldbæk, "Den danske asienhandel 1616-1807," 109.

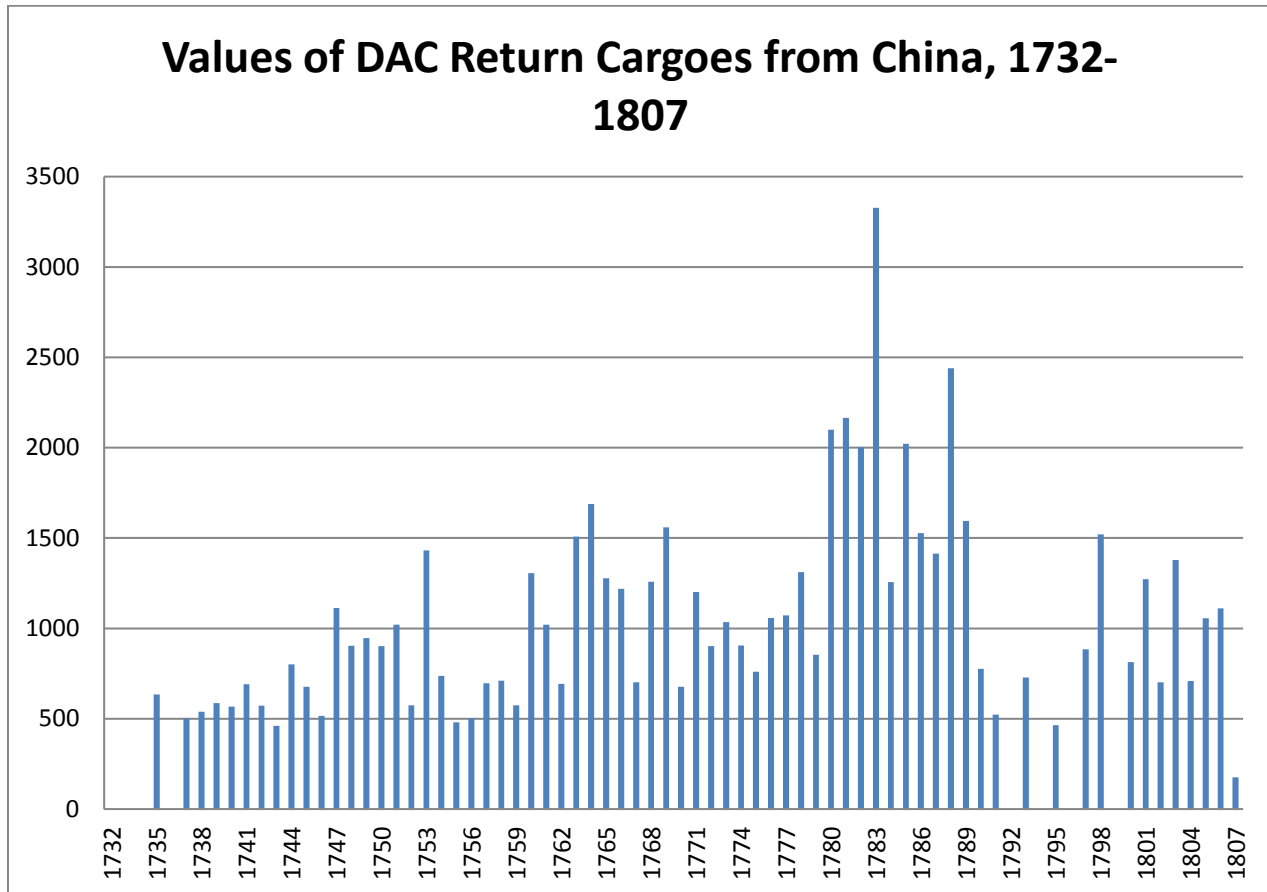


Figure 10 - The Y-axis is thousands of rigsdaler. Source: Feldbæk 1990, p. 110 & 116

In Figure 10, the values of the return cargoes of the DAC ships coming from China are shown. The values describe the amount the goods were sold for, but do not include the expenses of the cargo going to China, the fitting of the ship, provisions, payment to the crew, and other expenses of the company. Thus, the values do not describe the profitability of a voyage or year, but instead it rather illustrates one of the impacts of the DAC China trade on Copenhagen. One of the intentions of the king in granting the monopoly on Asian trade to the DAC was to enable Copenhagen to become an entrepôt for Asian goods, and in order to achieve that continuity in the trade was essential.¹⁷³ The graph clearly shows that from 1737 onwards, continuity was achieved. Every single year until 1792 one or two ships, in extreme years up to five, arrived in Copenhagen from China with tea for the market. Even though the majority was reexported, especially to Britain, the auctions were of great economic importance to the relatively small economy of the Oldenburg state.

The graph also offers a periodisation, different from the one following the concessions of the DAC as favoured by Rasch, Svestrup, Glamann, and Feldbæk. Using the economic impact of the China trade instead, a first period from the beginning of the company in 1732 until just before the great boom of the 1780s emerges. A short middle period goes from 1780 until 1789 – the decade when the China trade reached its peak, and finally the long decline from 1790 until the final closing of the company in 1844. The last five expeditions to China by the DAC after the Napoleonic Wars are not

¹⁷³ Feldbæk, “Den danske asienhandel 1616-1807,” 109.

included in the graph due to lack of data, but the values of the return cargoes are expected to be quite low.

The 1780s marked the high point of the DAC. No less than 26 company ships arrived in Copenhagen from China in that decade, carrying goods for a total of 19.8 million rigsdaler, or almost two million rigsdaler per year. In comparison, the ships of the company's India trade totalled only 19 ships and carried cargo worth 9.5 million rigsdaler in the same decade.¹⁷⁴ The high point for the company's stocks came in 1782, where a single stock was traded for up to 1,700 rigsdaler.¹⁷⁵ The American War of Independence, which included France from 1778, Spain from 1779, and the Netherlands from 1780, as well as the British and American colonists, provided ample opportunity for the DAC to exploit the neutrality of the Dannebrog. But when the war ended in 1783, a perfect storm set in.

II.3 - 1784-1844 - A Fall from Grace

The Perfect Storm

In the early summer of 1783, earthquakes in Iceland were felt by the local subjects of the king of the Oldenburg Monarchy. A few weeks later, the two volcanoes Laki and Grímsvötn started to erupt, spewing massive amounts of lava, dust, and gasses into the atmosphere. On Iceland, the consequences were devastating, killing around a quarter of the population as well as more than half of the livestock on the North Atlantic Island.¹⁷⁶ Poisonous gasses from the eruption moved over Europe, killing as many as 20,000 people in Britain in that summer¹⁷⁷ and a month later even being noticed in China.¹⁷⁸ The following winter would be one of the coldest in Europe, further worsened by the failed harvests all over Europe. The hunger that followed is even believed by some scholars to set events in motion leading to the French Revolution in 1789.¹⁷⁹ The heavy fogs and changed weather all over the globe must have been noticed by the directors, traders, and sailors of the DAC, but many of them would have been distracted by similar disasters now striking the company at the height of its economic prowess.¹⁸⁰ The first problem concerned the future of trade. During the

¹⁷⁴ Feldbæk, "Den danske asienhandel 1616-1807," 335.

¹⁷⁵ Svane, "Asiatisk Kompagni 1792-1807," 13.

¹⁷⁶ Richard Stone, "Iceland's Doomsday Scenario?," In Science <http://science.sciencemag.org/content/306/5700/1278.summary>, Accessed March 23, 2018.

¹⁷⁷ Tom de Castella, "The eruption that changed Iceland forever," BBC News, Magazine 16 April 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8624791.stm>. Accessed March 23, 2018.

¹⁷⁸ Erik Klemetti, "Local and global impacts of the 1793 Laki eruption in Iceland," Wired, 6 July 2013. <https://www.wired.com/2013/06/local-and-global-impacts-1793-laki-eruption-iceland>. Accessed March 23, 2018.

¹⁷⁹ Helen Duprat, "Grímsvötn - vulkansystemet ændrede Europas historie," Videnskab, 24 May 2011, <https://videnskab.dk/miljo-naturvidenskab/grimsvoetn-vulkansystemet-aendrede-europas-historie>. Accessed March 23, 2018.

¹⁸⁰ It seems obvious that the global downturn caused by the violent and globe-spanning eruptions would play a role in the crisis of the DAC – dependent as it was on luxury imports. Unfortunately, no clear link has been found, so the story

American Revolutionary War from 1775 to 1783, much of Europe and North America was engaged in conflict between on the one side the newly formed United States supported by the French and Spanish empires as well as the Netherlands. On the other side Great Britain stood alone. In 1778, the war spread to Asia, where the British East India Company attempted to drive the French out of India, and even more in 1779 when the Kingdom of Mysore in southern India also declared war on Britain. During these tumultuous years, the DAC had profited immensely from the mercantile weakening of the great powers of the war, so when a cease-fire was signed in February 1783, the outlook appeared grim. Britain had emerged victorious in India and with an almost total British dominance, so the trade of the DAC in Tranquebar and Bengal did not seem to have a bright future. Another very immediate problem for the company was the discovery in the beginning of May 1783 that funds were missing from the company treasury, as well as discrepancies between the accounts of the bookkeeper and the cashier. A few days later, most of the DAC directors assembled at the main company building in Christianshavn upon hearing the news that the cashier Christoph Battier had disappeared. A director, Otto Haaber, was also missing from the gathering and it was later discovered that he had drowned himself in a lake just outside the Copenhagen city walls!¹⁸¹ While the extent of the fraud was still unknown, rumours of the crime and the failure of the other directors to manage the company spread, leading to a large drop in the stock price as well as anger towards the directors: Peter van Hemert, Simon Hooglant, and Conrad Fabritius de Tegnagel. For the three directors still alive, the news was a shock as no one had suspected it for the trust in Haaber had been complete, especially as he owned no less than 33 shares in the company.¹⁸²

of the volcanoes is primarily used here as a dramatic element with the hope that future research will show a connection between the two.

¹⁸¹ Rasch, *Ryberg 1725-1804*, 140.

¹⁸² Rasch and Sveistrup, *Asiatisk Kompagni i den florissante Periode*, 140.

When visualising the family and other relevant connections to the four directors, a network approach helps to understand this intensive trust. With the exception of Haaber, the other three directors all have intensive links--all belonging to the same church, Fabritius de Tegnagel and van Hemert being brothers-in-law, Hooglant being the father-in-law of van Hemert, and both Hooglant and Fabricius de Tegnagel being Freemasons. It seems likely that the three men felt a high level of trust towards each other. Therefore, when Haaber was elected director in 1777, the same year as van Hemert, it seems likely that once one of the other directors trusted him, that trust would spread to the others given the close connection. Although Haaber was not connected as well to the other three as they were among themselves, the graph above in Figure 11 indicates other relations that might have raised the level of trust. The brother of Haaber was a freemason just like Hooglant and

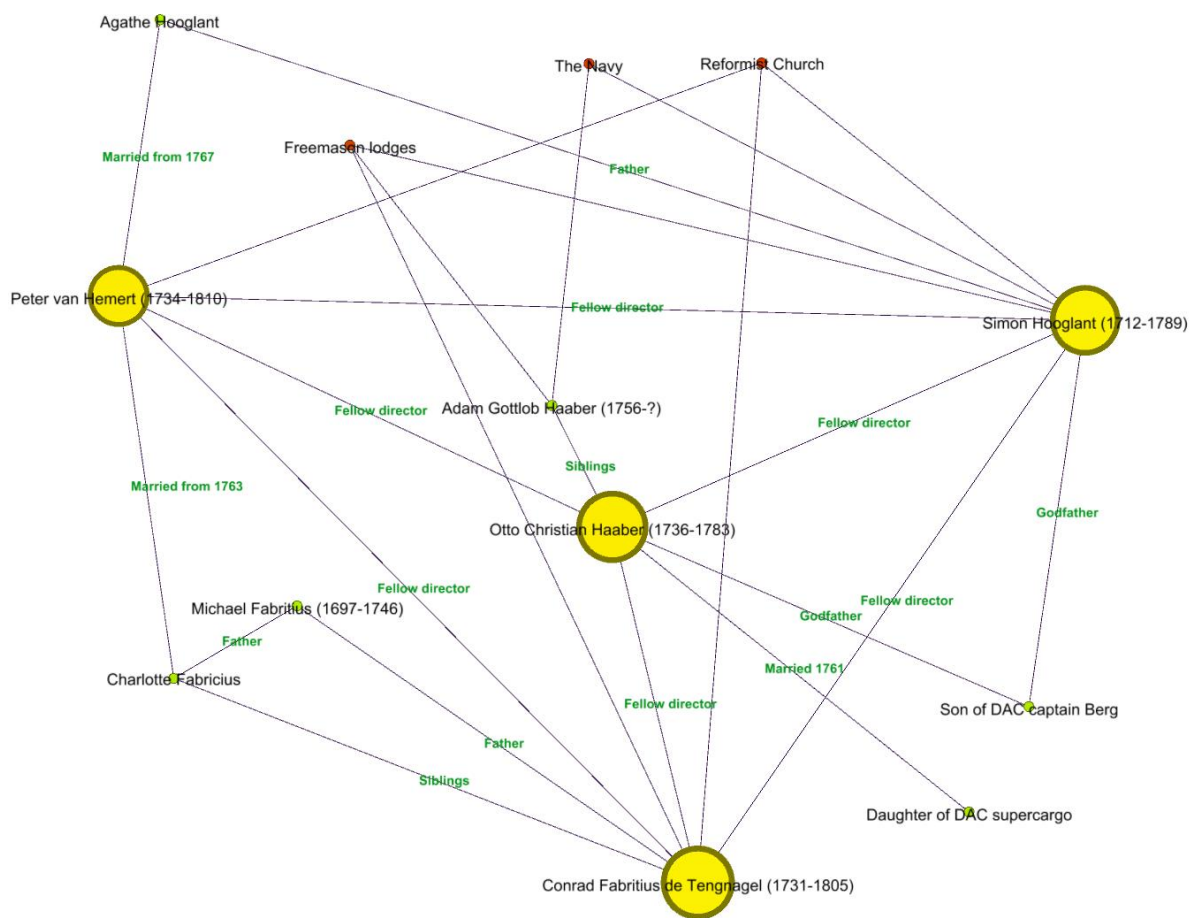


Figure 11 - A reconstituted network of the four directors Haaber, Fabritius de Tegnagel, van Hemert, and Hooglant at the time of the discovery of the massive fraud in the DAC. The yellow nodes are the directors, the green are selected relevant family connections, and the red nodes are relevant institutions. Sources: Please see the *Business Wiki of the Oldenburg Monarchy* for each actor for details about sources.

Fabricius de Tengnagel, as well as a navy officer like Hooglant. Both Haaber and Hooglant godfathered a son of a DAC captain, and Haaber had even married the daughter of DAC supercargo, Sylvester Brasen, who carried experience all the way back to the founding decade of the company.¹⁸³

Furthermore, he must have appeared respectable with a degree in law, one brother a priest, the other an officer, and himself a long time civil servant of the Copenhagen Magistrate.¹⁸⁴ Thus, given his own network as well as the embeddedness of the circle of directors he entered in 1777, Haaber must have relatively quickly achieved a structural embeddedness, as described by Burt.¹⁸⁵

Apparently, Haaber had conspired with the bookkeeper Christoph Battier, another seemingly very trustworthy and well-connected actor in DAC. Battier had served the company for more than ten years, and shared the reformist faith with the three directors. Originally from Basel in Switzerland, Battier had risen in the ranks of the church, becoming the Elder of the congregation in Copenhagen in 1778, the same church that the grandfather of Peter van Hemert had been a founding father of.¹⁸⁶ Like much of the elite of the epoch, Battier had his portrait, along with that of his wife, painted by the famous painter Jens Juel around the time of his employment in the DAC.¹⁸⁷ His wife, Anna Elisabeth Stolp, was the daughter of a mayor of Copenhagen – all in all a seeming respectable man, highly regarded by the directors.¹⁸⁸

An interesting detail so far overlooked in previous research¹⁸⁹ is how Christoph Battier shares his last name with the banking firm of Battier, Zornlin & Co in London. With roots in Switzerland just like the DAC bookkeeper,¹⁹⁰ the company handled large transactions concerning China,¹⁹¹ and a



Figure 12 - Christoph Battier - cashier of the DAC from 1773-1783. Photo: Bruun-Rasmussen.dk

¹⁸³ RA: DAC roll books 1736-1749, see wiki for details.

¹⁸⁴ Private genealogy site, <http://www.dk-rock.dk/kjeld/5390.html>, Accessed March 23, 2018.

¹⁸⁵ Ronald S. Burt, *Brokerage and closure: an introduction to social capital* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 97.

¹⁸⁶ Schovelin, *Fra den danske handels empire II*, 188.

¹⁸⁷ A curious detail of this painting illustrating how history tends to echo in time, is that it was much later purchased by the banker Emil Glückstadt in Copenhagen, son of one of the founders of the firm East Asiatic Company from 1897. He kept the painting until he himself was convicted of fraud and illegal bookkeeping in 1923. He died in prison before the sentence was passed. Ellen Poulsen, *Jens Juel, Selskabet til udgivelse af danske mindesmærker*; (Copenhagen: Christian Ejlers, 1991), 54.

¹⁸⁸ Rasch & Sveistrup, *Asiatisk Kompagni i den florissante Periode*, 140.

¹⁸⁹ Rasch & Sveistrup discussed the case of fraud in detail as well as the London merchant company as well but does not seem to make a connection between the two. Rasch and Sveistrup, *Asiatisk Kompagni i den florissante Periode*.

¹⁹⁰ Margrit Schulte Beerbühl, "The risk of bankruptcy among German merchants in eighteenth-century England," in *XIV International Economic History Congress*, Session 45. (Helsinki: 2006), 15.

connection between the two seems obvious. By investigating the British Acts of Naturalization of the period, a quite direct link shows up in the shape of Johan Jacob Battier, who was naturalised in England in 1760 along with his wife and three sons, one named Christopher and another named John Ralph,¹⁹² just like the merchant John Ralph Battier of the DAC merchant connection in London. It seems reasonable to assume that the Battiers in London and Copenhagen were indeed brothers, leading to new questions about their network and the fraud.¹⁹³ Was the London merchant house involved? If so, how early did the fraud begin and how much more was lost for the DAC in the years before? Future research is needed here, especially since the DAC bank connection with Battier & Zornlin in London lasted at least up till 1789¹⁹⁴ and probably longer.

As the accounts of the DAC were further investigated, the fraud was discovered to be no less than 674,000 rigsdaler, an immense amount, and several other problems and lesser fraud was discovered at the same time. After much debate, this resulted in a complete change of directors as well as of several DAC employees. The directors Fabritius de Tengnagel and van Hemert were issued fines of 10,000 rigsdaler each.¹⁹⁵

Finally, the last great problem of the company was the so-called Commutation Act, proposed in Britain in August 1784. The law, which was to take effect a year later, was to reduce the tax on imported tea from 106percent to 12.5 percent.. The proposal was controversial in Britain, as the high tax on tea had helped finance the huge British debt built up over the eighteenth century, the largest in the world. The high tax on tea had led to massive smuggling, which meant that much of the tea sold at the auctions in the DAC warehouses in Copenhagen was destined for British tea cups. Much of the tea would be confiscated on the way across the North Sea, leading to additional income for the British state.¹⁹⁶ Despite these objections, the law was passed, which was to be a massive blow to the sales of the DAC. With the low tax, the imports from the East India Company grew tremendously, dominating the export trade from Canton from the 1790s, and perhaps even worse for the DAC, halting the flow of private British money into Canton which had been a valuable resource for loans to fill the DAC ships with Chinese goods.

¹⁹¹ Rasch and Sveistrup, *Asiatisk Kompagni i den florissante Periode*, 123.

¹⁹² William Arthur Shaw and The Huguenot Society of London, *Letters of Denization and Acts of Naturalization for Aliens in England & Ireland. Vol 27 (1701-1800)*, (Lymington [England]: Printed for the Huguenot Society of London, by C.T. King: 1923): 160.

¹⁹³ Similar family connections are known from the earlier DAC-history. For instance, both Fabritius & Wever (director and *Hovedparticipant* of the company) were connected by distant family to the Amsterdam bankers firm van Orsoj, which was much used by the DAC – from Glamann, “The Danish Asiatic Company,” 111.

¹⁹⁴ RA: Asiatisk Kompagni, Afdelingen i København, Breve fra Canton, 1087A and 1087B, 1788-1789, entry from 1789-1-2.

¹⁹⁵ Rasch, *Ryberg 1725-1804*, 166.

¹⁹⁶ Kåre Lauring, “Kinahandelen - et spørgsmål om finansiering,” In *Søfart, politik, identitet - tilegnet Ole Feldbæk* (Copenhagen: Forlaget Falcon, 1996), 225.

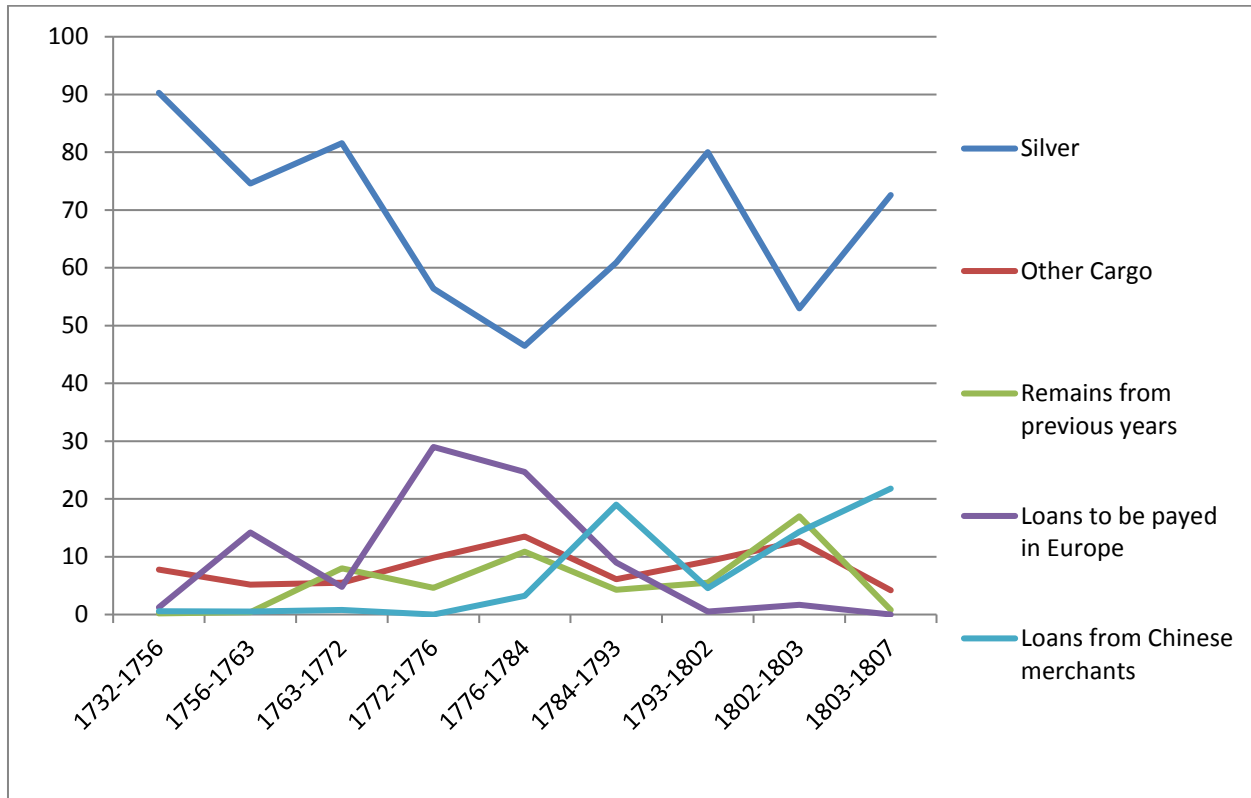


Figure 13 - The financing of goods purchased in Canton by the DAC 1732-1807. Please note that the periods follow international economic movements and separates at different times each year, hence a year might appear in two columns. Source: Lauring 1996, p. 222

As seen in Figure 13, loans from especially British but also Armenian, Portuguese, Dutch, and Swedish merchants and company traders in Canton had been a major source of funding for the DAC leading up to the Commutation Act in 1785, necessitating a much larger amount of silver to be exported now. These loans served the important function for the borrowers that they could transport their private, Asian profits back to Europe unseen and without involving their native trading companies. At the same time, loans from Chinese merchants grew in importance, leading to problems during the Napoleonic Wars and the resulting thirteen-year lapse in sending out expeditions to China.

The company's financial health thus suffered greatly from the peace among the great powers, the lack of incentives to smuggle tea from Copenhagen to Britain, as well as the great fraud, and within the government some believed that the DAC was about to fail.¹⁹⁷ Considering all these problems, the directors of DAC discussed in the fall of 1783 whether to send a single ship to China or even none at all,¹⁹⁸ a great change from the previous year where several ships had been sent to Canton, requiring so many company traders that the usual levels of expertise required could not be maintained.¹⁹⁹ But even though many large merchants might have preferred the remaining privileges

¹⁹⁷ Feldbæk, *De københavnske købmand*, 6.

¹⁹⁸ Rasch, *Ryberg 1725-1804*, 168.

¹⁹⁹ See Chapter III for details.

of the DAC to be dissolved in favour of a free trade, the fact that the same merchants often owned many stocks in the company and profited by delivering goods to the company as well as buying and reexporting goods at the auctions in Christianshavn, the feelings towards the company were ambiguous.²⁰⁰

At the end of the 1780s the DAC gained a new foothold on the Dutch tea market, which provided the company with a short respite. But already in 1791 the Netherlands issued a ban on all tea imports other than the one managed by VOC.²⁰¹ This led the DAC to halt the equipment of further China expeditions for a while. But while the China-trade went into serious decline, the India-trade continued. The DAC's profit from the China-trade from 1784-1793 was only 517,000 rigsdaler, while the more continuous India-trade brought in 2,332,000 rigsdaler and a large amount from taxes to the company from private traders dealing in India, perhaps around 500,000 rigsdaler.²⁰²

Conditions for the company's China-trade only deteriorated. With the involvement of the Oldenburg Monarchy in the Napoleonic Wars in 1807, trade halted completely and expeditions to China were not resumed until thirteen years later. In India, Tranquebar and the factory at Frederiksnagore in Bengal were conquered and plundered by the British, and the four ships docked there were also taken.²⁰³

Management & Organisation

In the Convention of 1787, the number of directors was lowered even further to four; one with knowledge of law and three merchants and one of these was possibly an experienced company trader. At the same time, the required number of stocks to be owned was reduced to six, and in conjunction with the lower prices of stocks, the price of entry was now much lower.

The same renewal of the concession as in 1772 occurred again in 1792 with 20 new years of privilege. The number of directors was still four, but now only ownership of three stocks was necessary. The new concession maintained the monopoly on the China trade to maintain the entrepôt status of Copenhagen, where 90percent of the Chinese goods brought in by the DAC was reexported to the benefit of the national balance of payments.²⁰⁴ According to Feldbæk, the Crown feared that while private trade in China in times of peace might be possible, continuing a stable import of Chinese goods would not be possible in times of war. Nevertheless, the new concession of 1792 contained the clause that the monopoly of trade in China would only be maintained as long as the economic climate demanded it. Just five years later, in the summer of 1797, all subjects of the

²⁰⁰ Feldbæk, *De københavnske købmænd*, 26.

²⁰¹ Svane, "Asiatisk Kompagni 1792-1807," 20.

²⁰² *Forskjællige Betænkninger, betreffende Factoriernes Afskaffelse eller Vedblivelse, foranledigede ved Udarbeidelsen af det Asiatiske Compagnies Conventions 5. Capitel, og ved Trykken bekjendtgjorte i Følge Interessenternes Beslutning i General-Forsamlingen, holden den 18. Febr. 1796*, (Copenhagen, 1796) CXXV

²⁰³ Deuntzer, "Af det asiatiske Kompagnis Historie. Andet Afsnit. Efter 1807."

²⁰⁴ Palle Kvist, *Mellem København og Tranquebar: på rejse med Asiatiske Kompagnis skib Kronprinsessen af Danmark 1748-1750* (Copenhagen: Selskabet for Udgivelse af Kilder til Dansk Historie, 2011), 19.

king were allowed to transport goods, but not to trade in Asia including China without paying a fee to the DAC.²⁰⁵

A major organisational change in the period was the decision to discontinue the permanent presence of the company in China. From 1791, supercargoes and assistants would no longer continuously remain in Canton and Macao to prepare cargoes for the ships for the upcoming year. Instead they would travel back and forth between Copenhagen and Canton, just as in the initial period of the China trade.²⁰⁶ Despite this regulation, some company traders still stayed behind, some at their own expense, and the DAC continued to pay the rent for the warehouse twice per year as well as keeping two Chinese servants to maintain the building until 1806. The tendency to move towards a decrease in the presence of the company can also be seen in the discussions about the Indian factories or trading post of Trankebar on the Malabar Coast and Frederiksnagore in Bengal. Among many others, the extremely experienced supercargo F.W.O. Vogelsang spoke in favour of maintaining the company's presence abroad, citing several reasons, some of which likely echoed the discussions about the continuation of the factory in Canton.²⁰⁷

1. [...] a travelling Supercargo can only purchase goods second hand, [...] [which] includes the risk that he is unfamiliar with the state of the economy and on which merchant houses, he should be involved with.
2. Skilled, experienced and honest Factors are on the other hand always capable of spotting change in the economy, using them for the good of the company.
3. Saving diets and space on board the ships for a supercargo and three assistants with their items, cargo etc., for fewer company traders could not handle the expedition of a ship.

Thus, Vogelsang points out that a travelling supercargo would have to buy goods from merchants rather than producers themselves, and would likely be unaware of the economic developments and which trading houses to trust. On the other hand, the honest and experienced factor (resident company trader) can recognise movements in the market and can use those to the benefit of the company. Finally, by maintaining the presence in a factory, expenses would be spared for the company traders on board the ships, a substantial cost, since Vogelsang argues that no less than a supercargo and three assistants are necessary to handle the cargo for a whole ship. Vogelsang himself states that he has no experience in the Indian trade, thus he argues from the written evidence of the workings of the Indian factories and more importantly from his substantial experience of the trading station in China, providing an insight into his time in Canton as well.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁵ Deuntzer, "Af det asiatiske Kompagnis Historie. Første Afsnit. 1792-1807." (1908), 7

²⁰⁶ Feldbæk, *Dansk søfarts historie III*.

²⁰⁷ My translation of "1. [...] en udkommende Supercargues kan alstaa ikkun faae Vabrene fra anden Haand, [...] [hvilket] medfører dette endnu den Rísico, at han er ukyndig om Conjuncturerne og med hvilke Handels Huuse han fortrinlig bør indlade sig med. 2. Kyndige, erfarne og redelige Factorer derimod ere altid i Stand til at iagttage Conjuncturerne Forandringer og kan anvende dem til Compagniets Fordeel. 3. Besparelse af Kost og Rum i Skibene for en Supercargue og tre Assistenten med deres Gods, Föring &c. &c. thi færre Betientere kunde ikke besörge et Skibs Expedition." from *Forskjellige Betænkninger, betræffende Factorierne Afskaffelse eller Vedblivelse, foranledigede ved Udarbeidelsen af det Asiatiske Compagnies Conventions 5. Capitel, og ved Trykken bekendtgjorde i Følge Interessenternes Beslutning i General-Forsamlingen, holden den 18. Febr. 1796, 1796, (Copenhagen, 1796) no. 11, III-IV*

²⁰⁸ See his narrative in Chapter IV for more details.

Another company director, Zinn, argued in 1796 in a later booklet about the above discussion that it seemed reasonable to have closed the Chinese factory, but only until “*it becomes apparent that the political trade revolutions would give reason to think that our company could regain its old glow in the trade, where two ships a year would be handled; in that case resident company traders could after the circumstances be of significant utility.*”²⁰⁹ The hope of a return to the former glory of the DAC seems to have still been there, despite the difficult times. On the other hand, director Duntzfeldt argued the same year that the time of the company had passed, and that competing with more inexpensive private traders would never be possible. Therefore, drastic savings measures were the only way to save the company, or at least prolong its life.²¹⁰ Some savings led to protests about the conditions for the crews on these expeditions: In 1829, for example, DAC Captain Thellesen published a booklet with numerous complaints including the wages for one of the last expeditions to China, where the officers would receive no more than 15 months of pay no matter how long the voyage lasted. Despite protests, the new conditions were enforced, and according to Thellesen no pay was issued for the last months of the voyage.²¹¹ Other complaints from the crew concerned the loss of the right of each crewmember to bring personal trading goods back from China, a ban that was introduced in 1826. The loss of this right, however, resulted in a higher wage,²¹² but judging from the memoirs of company trader Ludvigsen, both company traders and officers still used the old right with significant profits as a result.²¹³

Stocks

The DAC's stocks suffered a dramatic drop in the period after the drama in 1783-85. From a high point of up to 1,700 rigsdaler for a single share in 1782, the same share would be traded for 80 rigsdaler in 1792, a decrease in value of more than 95 percent.²¹⁴ But the price increased again, partly due to the European wars that once again offered possibilities for ships flying a neutral flag. In 1803 the price was at 800 rigsdaler per share, falling to below 700 rigsdaler in 1805.²¹⁵

²⁰⁹ My translation of “*man seer, om med Tiden de politiske Handels-Revolutioner kunde give Anledning til at formode, at vores Compagnie opnaaede igen sin gamle Lustrer i denne Handel, at to Skibe hvert Aar expederes; i saa Fald kan et overliggende Factorie være efter Omstændighederne til betydelig Nytté*”, from *Forskjællige Betænkninger, betræffende Factoriernes Afskæffelse eller Vedblivelse, foranledigede ved Udarbeidelsen af det Asiatiske Compagnies Conventions 5. Capitel, og ved Trykken bekjendtgjorde i Følge Interessenternes Beslutning i General-Forsamlingen, holden den 18. Febr. 1796*, (Copenhagen, 1796)

²¹⁰ Deuntzer, “Af det asiatiske Kompagnis Historie. Andet Afsnit. Efter 1807.” (1908), 404

²¹¹ J.A. Thellesen, *Et par Ord om mit Forhold ved det Danske Asiatiske Compagnies sidste Expedition til China i Aaret 1826 med Skibet Christianshavn etc.* (Copenhagen: S.A. Nissens Bogtrykkeri, 1829), 4ff.

²¹² Deuntzer, “Af det asiatiske Kompagnis Historie. Andet Afsnit. Efter 1807,” 491.

²¹³ The. E. Ludvigsen, *Erindringer om mine Søreiser og Livs Begivenheder: Trykt som Manuskript.* (Copenhagen: 1890), 72.

²¹⁴ Svane, “Asiatisk Kompagni 1792-1807,” 13.

²¹⁵ Deuntzer, “Af det asiatiske Kompagnis Historie. Første Afsnit. 1792-1807.”, 398

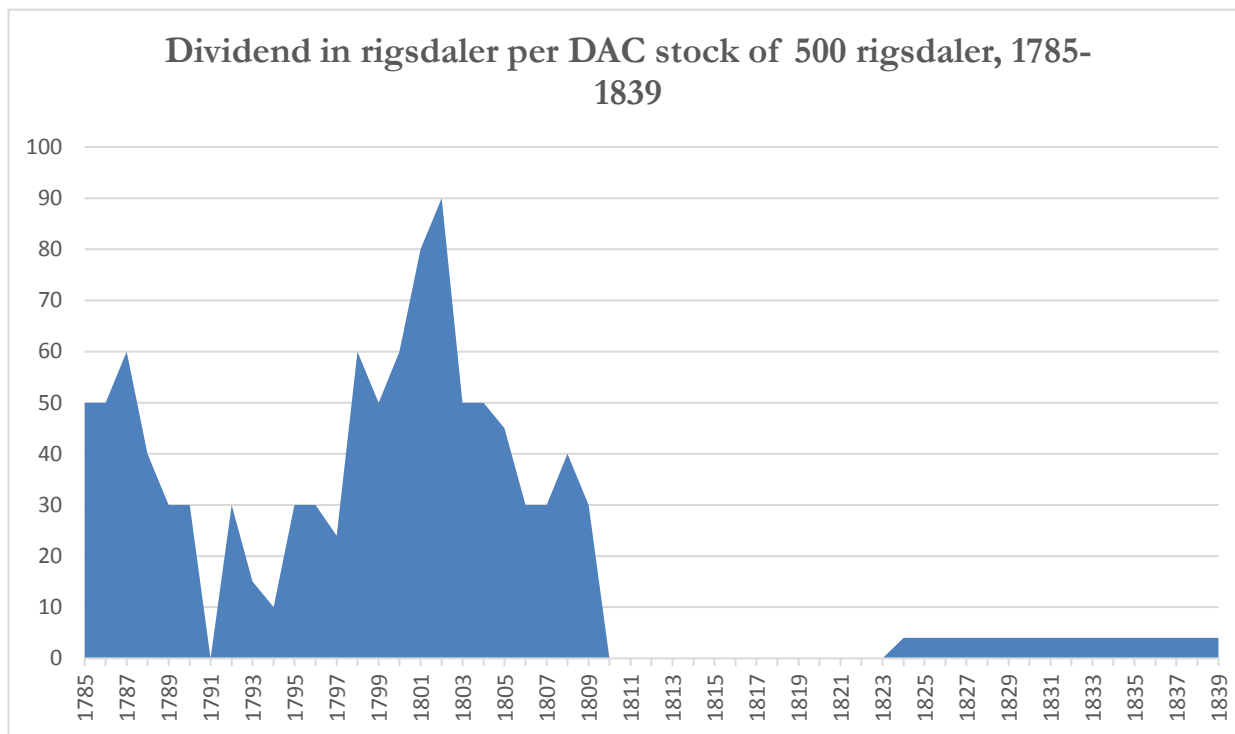


Figure 14 - Source: Deuntzer 1908, part II, p. 416

Despite the movements in the stocks' price, significant dividends were paid in most years of peace from 1792-1807 at 8.5 percent per year.²¹⁶ Well into the Napoleonic Wars, the payment of dividend ceased, adding to the falling prices of the stocks which reached less than 200 rigsdaler in late 1811. Even with the new expeditions the stocks continued to fall, reaching 100 rigsdaler in 1821. In the 1820s a dividend of 4 rigsdaler was paid, apparently issued because the directors believed that the stock owners were owed a share of the company fortune.²¹⁷ Perhaps this step was taken to prevent complaints, such as expressed in a pamphlet published in 1825 by the previous seaman, now *Krigsassessor* H. Randulff, praising the efficiency of the trade of the North Americans as a criticism of the running of the DAC. At the end Randulff scorns the directors for their lack of responsibility towards the many small stock-owners – “[...] do you not bear how hundreds of aged men, family-fathers, widows and fatherless younglings, whose life is spend in grief and sorrow, as well as poverty and complaining because a support that were given them in the shape of stocks in the Asiatic Company was starved and fallen [...] – do you not bear how they call you responsible toward the great Maker of the world and judge, because you let that support lie, instead of creating a new of the glorious elements that are in your power.”²¹⁸ For a company deeply dependent

²¹⁶ Deuntzer, “Af det asiatiske Kompagnis Historie. Første Afsnit. 1792-1807.”, 404

²¹⁷ Deuntzer, “Af det asiatiske Kompagnis Historie. Andet Afsnit. Efter 1807,” 487

²¹⁸ “My translation of “[...] høre I da ikke hvorledes hundrerer af Oldinge, Familie=Fædre, Enker ogFaderløse umyndige Smaae, hvis Liv hendrages i Kummer og Sorg, og Forarmelse, og Veeklager, fordi en støtte der var givet dem i Actier i det asiatiske Compagnie blev forsulet og styrtet [...] – høre I ikke hvorledes de kalde Eder til Ansvar for Aherdenens store Skaber, og Dømmer, fordi I lode Støtten ligge hen, ei reise en nye af de herlige Elementer der ere i Eders Magt.” H. Randulff, *Tordenrøsten! Noget om den chinesiske Handel til det asiatiske Compagnies Interessentere, og i den Anledning Tanker om hvad der for Dem maatte være at foretage* (Copenhagen: Udgiverens Forlag, 1825).

on a somewhat wavering favour of the Monarch, words like these must have been hard to ignore even if spoken in self-published pamphlets. In the following General Assemblies of the stock holders, the atmosphere grew steadily worse in the 1830s, culminating in February 1839 when the final decision to dissolve the old company was taken by the General Assembly, a decision that received an overwhelming majority of the votes.²¹⁹ After selling off all property, and with the state taking over all responsibility for pensions of retired employees, each stock was bought back for a total of 143 rigsdaler per share from 1840-1845. In 1844, the last concession of 1792 which had been prolonged several times, was officially withdrawn and the China trade was now opened up for all.

Residence

Even though the overall economic activity of the company fell dramatically after 1783, it was still a large firm in the Copenhagen business world. About thirty officials still worked at the DAC around the year 1800, supplemented by varying numbers of temporary hires when the need arose. The yearly expense of the company's administration in Copenhagen was about 34,000 rigsdaler.²²⁰

In the last period in the existence of the DAC, the stately buildings around the company harbour in Christianshavn must have been devoid of much life and activity. Beginning with the involvement of the Oldenburg Monarchy in the Napoleonic Wars in 1807 till the dissolution of the company in 1844, only five ships left for China as well as a single ship to India. The prolonged periods of disuse must have left its mark as decay, which is perhaps what inspired the Danish painter C. W. Eckersberg to paint a picture of the royal castle of Christiansborg, as seen from the harbour of the DAC.

²¹⁹ Deuntzer, "Af det asiatiske Kompagnis Historie. Andet Afsnit. Efter 1807," 503.

²²⁰ Svane, "Asiatisk Kompagni 1792-1807," 10.



Figure 15 - The view from the harbour of the DAC, painted by C.W. Eckersberg in 1832. The painting belongs to Brundlund Slot, Museum of Southern Jutland.

Eckersberg's style was an early example of the Romantic Movement in the early nineteenth century and he was fond of seeking out places of solitude and decay. One of the places he chose was the DAC area, and the overgrown mound to the left in the painting suggests the age of the old company, while the anchors lie still and useless nearby instead of being used to warp great Chinamen up the Pearl River. A wooden beam blocks the entry to the company harbour, while what appears to be a seaman²²¹ to the extreme right seems to hush the couple with a child on the opposite side of the quay. It seems likely that Eckersberg, who was an expert painter of maritime scenes, would have some knowledge of the place he had chosen as a vantage point and its former economic and political significance. The anchors are overgrown, the harbour blocked, the seaman telling others to be quiet, and even the small boat carrying cargo passes right by the previously grand harbour – Eckersberg seems to be telling a story of an institution of the past, which corresponds with the realities at the time. The focus of the painting seems to add even more to that narrative – while the important buildings of the Stock Exchange, the Royal Castle, and Holmens Church can be seen in the centre, their muted colours and lack of detailing compared to the bright colours and many details of the DAC harbour suggests that they are of less importance in the narrative the artist is trying to convey.

A somewhat similar story of decay can be told about the company factory in Canton. When the company traders from KONGEN AF DANNEMARK arrived at the DAC factory in Canton in

²²¹ A red scarf was a typical symbol of a seaman in images around the year 1800.

1799, it was revealed as being in a very poor condition – cracked walls, fallen ceilings, and rotten balconies. In the trading protocol, the company trader requested funds for repairs as it would be much more expensive to fix later.²²² The hot and humid climate quickly took its toll on the buildings since they were not properly maintained.

During the thirteen year lapse in sending ships to China from the beginning of the Napoleonic Wars in 1807 until the arrival of the first new ship in 1820, the factory rented by the Chinese Hong merchants every year found other uses. During the long absence, some of the factory's space had been taken over by an American running a boarding house and a tavern until at least 1810. After the return of the DAC, only part of the building would be used by the company traders allowing the remainder to be used as taverns by two other Americans.²²³

Fires were a frequent hazard in Canton with at least a hundred serious fires in and around the city throughout the century of the DAC's operations.²²⁴ Despite attempts from both Chinese authorities and western trading companies to prevent fires, a disastrous and huge blaze began on the first day of November, 1822, a couple of kilometers north of the European factory area. In the following days most of the western suburb of Canton burned, including the entire factory area. From the DAC ship KRONPRINSESEN, anchored further down the Pearl River, crews were sent to the factory to guard the vault where the silver was stored.²²⁵ Fortunately for the company, the factory rented from Chowqua contained a sturdy crypt constructed from masonry, so the funds were safe despite numerous attempts of theft during the chaos of the fire. Eventually the buildings would be rebuilt in a similar style as before, but now put to a variety of uses besides being rented to the DAC, before burning once again. In today's Guangzhou, a park and a new museum of the Thirteen Hongs now occupies the space, and no remains can be seen of where company traders worked, traded, and died for almost a hundred years.

Ships

As opposed to the earlier period, much more is known about the visual appearance of the DAC's ships in this time frame. From the 1760s onward, ship paintings became more common with numerous ship portraits from the end of the century preserved at museums such as the Maritime Museum of Denmark.

²²² J. Lehmann, *Til Østen under Sejl: med Handelsfregatten rundt Kap omkring Aar 1800* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1935), 88.

²²³ Paul A. Van Dyke, "The Hume Scroll of 1772 and the Faces Behind the Canton Factories," *Review of Culture* 54 (2017), 75.

²²⁴ Patrick Conner, *The Hongs of Canton: Western Merchants in South China 1700-1900, as Seen in Chinese Export Paintings* (London: English Art Books, 2009), 89.

²²⁵ Ludvigsen, *Erindringer om mine Soreiser og Livs Begivenheder*, 18.

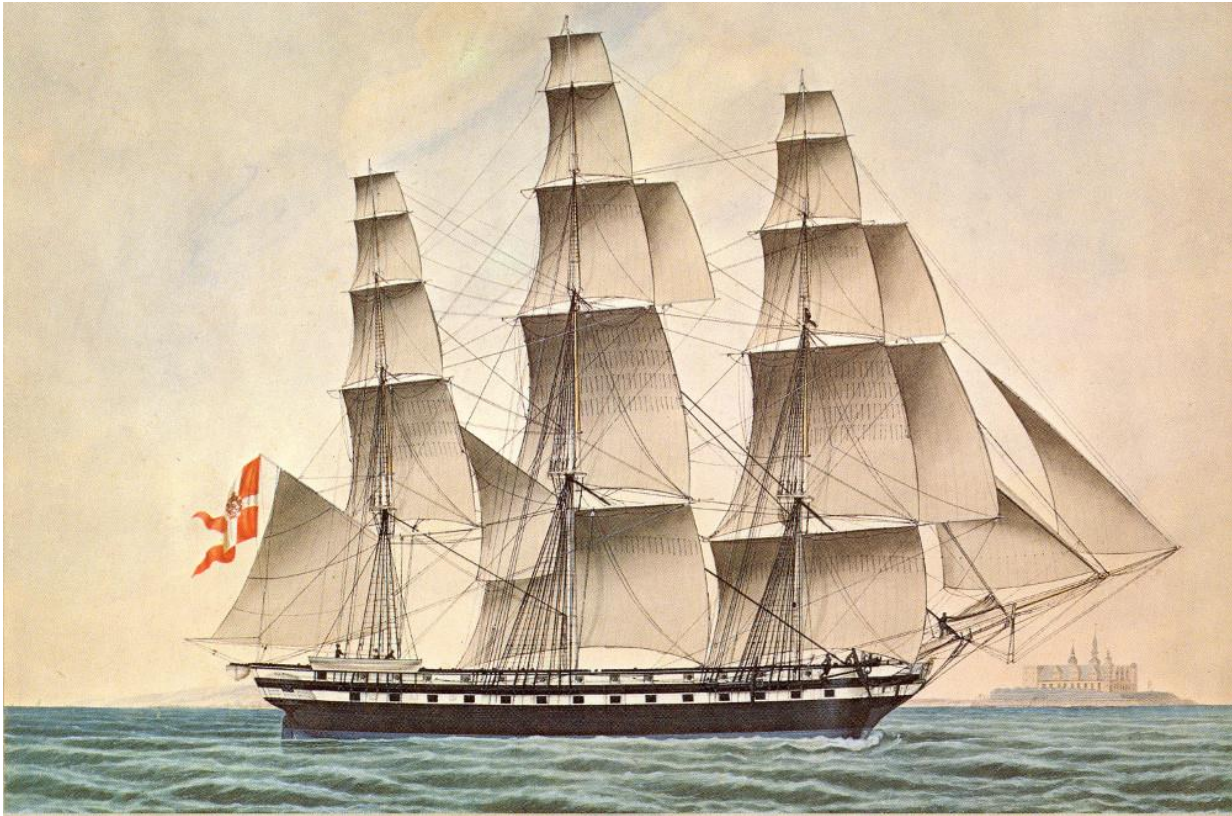


Figure 16 - The DAC's last ship to China, the FREDERIK VI passing Kronborg in the 1820s. The ship was bought in 1800, so it was an aging vessel setting out on the last expedition to China in 1833. Painted by Jacob Petersen, photo: Maritime Museum of Denmark

The company seems to have used depictions of its ships on its own. In late 1798, when a DAC ship reached the island of Lombok, taking an easterly course near the Philippines towards China, the crew went ashore for new supplies and presented the local king with various gifts, including a drawing of the ship KONGEN AF DANMARK with the Danish flag, so he would know the flag and ship type for future purposes.²²⁶

The gradual development of the ships from the earliest depictions from the 1730s is visible, but the technology behind the scenes remained essentially the same. Except for the introduction of the chronometer in the 1780s to determine the longitude on board, not much had changed in the hundred years from the first to the last voyage of the DAC. Even the crews remained a somewhat similar size, despite the many attempts to save on the expenses of the crew.

In the beginning of this period of decline, from 1792-1796, the number of ships in the company was halved after which it started rising again, although with smaller ships than in the boom period. This was not an intention of the company, rather a function of the trouble the DAC had in buying new ships of a sufficient size especially for the China-expeditions,²²⁷ but this carried the benefit that the now smaller China ships could also be used in the India-trade, which required smaller vessels.²²⁸

²²⁶ Lehmann, *Til Osten under Sejl*, 82.

²²⁷ Svane, "Asiatisk Kompagni 1792-1807," 12.

²²⁸ Deuntzer, "Af det asiatiske Kompagnis Historie. Første Afsnit. 1792-1807", 379.

At the same time, building new ships at the company shipyard was not possible due to the many repairs necessary to keep the aging fleet of large ships sailing. The difficult financial situation of the company made it necessary to buy ships rather than build them when the funds were there, leading to the purchase of ships from the navy in the 1790s which were less suited to the expeditions to Asia.

The close relationship between the state and the company once again became apparent during the Battle of Copenhagen in 1801, where the company lent a number of ships to the navy as well as its entire stock of silver piastre to the state.²²⁹ During the war from 1807, four ships were lost to the British in India and another taken at the Cape, leaving five ships in Copenhagen in the possession of the company.²³⁰ Although it was proposed that the company should equip privateers during the war and utilise its substantial maritime skillset, the company refused from fear of potential claims of compensation from the British after the ending of the war.

At the coming of peace in 1814, the DAC still owned two ships. In 1818, KRONPRINSESSEN was sent to India and the following year the other ship, CHRISTIANSHAVN, set off for China. After another voyage to China, the DAC management attempted to sell KRONPRINSESSEN, but as this was unsuccessful, the ship was turned into a lighter vessel and finally sold off in 1837.²³¹ The CHRISTIANSHAVN, more than a quarter of a century old in the late 1820s, received a complete overhaul in the Royal Dock and was renamed FREDERIK VI with the permission of the king. Its last two expeditions in 1829 and 1833 would be the last of the company, and around 1840 the ship was sold along with the company headquarters in Christianshavn and the remaining Asian goods.²³²

China Trade

Raising funds for the cargoes of silver going to China became a problem in the 1790s and 1800s. A great amount of the funds of the DAC were tied to stocks, especially in Indian goods, that proved increasingly difficult to sell, necessitating loans to keep the company going. Another strategy was to delay the payments due to the Asian merchants, which damaged the trade in the long run and only benefited the many competitors from other European countries.²³³ Nonetheless, twenty-nine expeditions successfully reached Canton from 1785-1807, which was an average of 1.3 expeditions a year. Compared to the fifteen expeditions from 1780-1784, three a year on average, times had clearly changed although some new opportunities presented themselves during the new wars among the great powers in the 1790s.

After the end of the Napoleonic Wars, the DAC was economically unable to immediately equip ships for the Asia trade, so instead two private companies were allowed to trade in China in

²²⁹ Deuntzer, "Af det asiatiske Kompagnis Historie. Første Afsnit. 1792-1807", 398

²³⁰ Deuntzer, "Af det asiatiske Kompagnis Historie. Andet Afsnit. Efter 1807," 459

²³¹ Deuntzer, "Af det asiatiske Kompagnis Historie. Andet Afsnit. Efter 1807," 490.

²³² Deuntzer, "Af det asiatiske Kompagnis Historie. Andet Afsnit. Efter 1807," 504

²³³ Svane, "Asiatisk Kompagni 1792-1807," 18.

exchange for a large fee paid to the DAC.²³⁴ The three major merchant houses behind the private venture all had connections to the DAC or would later become engaged in the company. The head of Ryberg & Co was director of the DAC in the 1770s; the late husband, whose widow now ran Blacks Enke & Co, served as director in the DAC for almost twenty years; and one of the brothers in Brødr. Tutein & Co would a few years later join the company as director.²³⁵

II.4 – Purposes of the DAC

As described above, the DAC employed thousands of people, equipped hundreds of Asian expeditions, and paid off great dividends to the many shareholders during its century of existence. But what other purposes did the company serve?

The DAC's original concession stated quite clearly why the privileges were awarded to the company, seen from the perspective of the king, namely for:²³⁶

- “*Advancing and establishing trade and shipping in our lands*”
- “[...] *the advancement of the depending common good*”
- “[...] *placing this Asiatic trade in our land in a more steady and constant pace in the future*”

The first paragraph stresses how the long-distance trade of the DAC will be a general boost to both trade and shipping. The direct effect of the great ships going to China was immense, bringing goods into the Copenhagen market with a value in many years comparable to the state budget. The ships also provided jobs and income through their construction and maintenance, as well as the provision of goods before setting off on the long expeditions. But the secondary effects of the trade might have been even larger, the *advancement of the common good* as mentioned in the second paragraph. The large quantities of goods sold at the auctions in Copenhagen drew merchants to the city, most likely benefitting other types of trade and providing the King's coffers with coins.

At the same time, the quantities of Asian goods available to the citizens of the Oldenburg state outside the capital also drastically increased. As shown in the recent work of the history of tea in Denmark by the historian Annette Hoff,²³⁷ the merchants of a typical, larger provincial town such as Horsens in eastern Jutland with around 2,000 inhabitants offered tea in their shops before the establishment of the DAC, but in the years following the first successful expeditions to China, much greater amounts of tea arrived.

²³⁴ Kund Klem, “Den danske Ostindie- og Kinahandel,” *Handels- og Søfartsmuseet paa Kronborg – Aarbog* (Elsinore, 1943), 101.

²³⁵ Deuntzer, “Af det asiatiske Kompagnis Historie. Andet Afsnit. Efter 1807,” 470-471 – Data for the years of directorship comes the relevant years of *Hof & Statskalenderen*.

²³⁶ My translation of “*Commerciens og Skibsfahrtens befordring og opkomst i Vores Riger og Lande.*,” “[...] *det deraf dependende Almindelige bestes fremtær.*” and “[...] *at sette denne Asiatiske Handel i Vores Riger og Lande for den tilstundende tid paa en meer bestandig Fod.*” from Feldbæk, *Danske handelskompagnier 1616-1843*, 17

²³⁷ Annette Hoff, *Den danske tehistorie* (Wormianum: Den Gamle By, 2015).

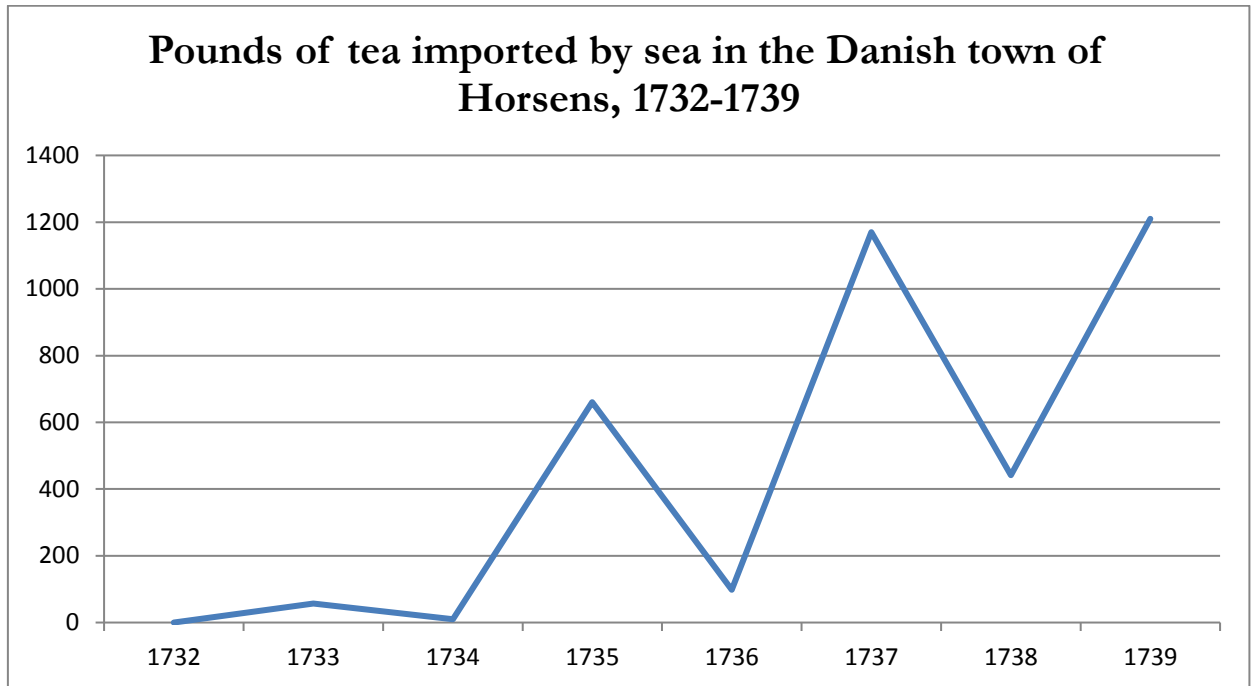


Figure 17 - Source: Hoff, 2015, p. 111

In the same period, hundreds of sets of tea cups, most likely from China, began to arrive in the town of Horsens. Hoff's research documents how tea drinking had become common among the skippers, tailors, merchants, gold smiths, and millers but not yet among peasants locked in serfdom in the area.²³⁸ According to Hoff, the lowest class of peasants began drinking tea in the years around 1790 in both Jylland and Sjælland in the kingdom of Denmark, while the tea drinking among the peasants of the Duchy of Schleswig seems to have started some decades earlier.²³⁹ This immense increase in trade and consumption led to greater tax revenues for the Crown and again led to a higher demand for other goods such as sugar from the West Indies to sweeten the tea, and silver- and metalware for serving the new drinks.

As requested by the King, Copenhagen actually became a Baltic entrépot for the trade of Asian goods for several decades of the eighteenth century and as ships loaded only with ballast is bad for business, the ships passing on about 80 percent of the Asian products to other countries, also carried goods for the markets of the Oldenburg state as well. In addition, the DAC was clearly seen as not only a tool to enhance wealth and prestige, but was also viewed as a way of reaching out into the world in a time of limited and slow communication. A good example is the scientific expedition to Arabia between 1761-1767, later known as the Carsten Niebuhr expedition, named after the sole surviving participant. After a successful expedition to the Arabian Peninsula, where the scientists gathered large quantities of materials, most of the participants died, leaving only two to attempt to enlist the aid of the DAC to transport the material back to Copenhagen from India. After many

²³⁸ Hoff, *Den danske tehistorie*, 122.

²³⁹ Hoff, *Den danske tehistorie*, 196.

difficulties, thirteen crates of scientific materials were eventually shipped from Tranquebar on a newly-built DAC ship via Canton to Copenhagen.²⁴⁰

Another factor was the continuous challenge for the Oldenburg Monarchy in the eighteenth century, namely the lack of capital available for investments and trade. While the agricultural sector was productive, the distribution of many of the products never progressed beyond the old barter economy, as opposed to the Netherlands, which otherwise shared several characteristics with the Oldenburg State. Both had a relatively small population, about 2 million people each, a large agricultural sector, as well as a focus on maritime trade. But early on, in the Middle Ages, merchants of the Netherlands began importing grain from the Baltic area, including Denmark, which enabled the peasants of the Low Countries to focus on other more advanced crops that to a higher extent could be monetized, especially vegetables, cheese, and flowers. These products were sold in towns and cities in exchange for money, providing a strong basis for a money-based economy, which benefited first the merchant class and later the emerging companies of the early seventeenth century, which had less trouble securing the necessary capital than in the Oldenburg State. At the same time the more advanced consumer market could absorb a much greater amount of imported goods than was the case in the cash-poor Oldenburg Monarchy. But the large trading companies, especially the DAC, helped prevent this problem and the merchants attracted to the company as directors and to the capital were instrumental in providing loans from abroad, thus moving the Oldenburg Monarchy towards a more money-centred economy.

Finally, another purpose of the DAC was to serve as a buffer for the state in terms of ships and manpower. Surplus ships from the navy could be sold to the company and in times of need, the large DAC ships could be enlisted as auxiliary fighting ships. The best example is during the Napoleonic Wars, after the Danish navy had been captured by the British. On request, the DAC lent its large ships KRONPRINSESSEN and ARVEPRINSEN to the navy in 1808, where they were used for two years. At the same time, the company built four gunboats in its shipyard as a gift for the navy under restoration.²⁴¹

II.5 – Summary – A Company in its Time

The DAC started and ended its course close to the two major economic depressions of its time, namely the 1730s and the 1820s.²⁴² The first depression originated in the economic hardships suffered for the trade during involvement of the Oldenburg Monarchy in the Great Nordic War in 1700 and 1709-20. The crisis worsened locally with the outbreak of plague in Copenhagen in 1711, where about a third of the population perished. The great fire of Copenhagen in 1728, where about a third of the city's buildings were destroyed could be seen as a contributing factor to the difficult economic climate, but seems to rather have been a means of stimulating economic growth, boosting the businesses of the city craftsmen, and thus securing trade for building materials, provisions, and much more. In the first depression, the company was one of the ways out of the crisis, providing

²⁴⁰ Asger Svane-Knudsen, "Den Arabiske Rejse og Asiatisk Kompagni 1763-1766," *Danske magasin* 51, no. 2 (2012), 499.

²⁴¹ Deuntzer, "Af det asiatiske Kompagnis Historie. Andet Afsnit. Efter 1807," 454

²⁴² Glamann and Oxenbøll, *Studier i dansk merkantilisme*.

jobs, trade, and attracting well-connected merchants from elsewhere in Europe. In the second crisis, after the Napoleonic Wars, the situation was different. The grand merchants, previously or presently directors of the company, were partly to blame for drawing the Oldenburg Monarchy into the war, but their exploitation of the neutrality, by transporting especially Dutch goods despite protests from the British,²⁴³ supported by the Danish navy by convoying. At the same time, the company represented the old economy, with direct attempts from the state to control the economy, in this case by issuing monopolies. While the concessions of 1732, 1772, and to a certain extent 1792 provided a foundation for an Asia-trade to find a stable footing, the monopoly kept by the many extensions of the 1792-concession until the end in 1840 did not seem to help the company. Perhaps it rather helped maintain an old structure that had outlasted its previous benefits, instead of encouraging new ways of doing business across the world.

²⁴³ See Chapter III, section on private trade for more details.

III - The Cast – The Prosopography of the DAC Actors

“Most china-travellers stayed in the China trade as long as they could, but the China trade required men of a certain caliber. [...] Men who could work their share in the sails, at the oars, at the cannons and with a saber. Many sensible and frugal chinamen gathered funds from a few expeditions and laid a foundation for a growing life in the mature years of manhood in more quiet conditions in the homeland.”²⁴⁴

This romantic description from the first book providing an overview of the China trade under Dannebrog, written in 1932, might primarily be focussed on the sailors but could also be extended to the traders on board the great ships to China. Descriptions like these are one of the few attempts to characterise part of the group of actors responsible for the China trade of the Oldenburg Monarchy. In this chapter, I will use the prosopographical approach assisted by historical network analysis to provide a clearer and probably less romantic image of two distinct, yet occasionally overlapping groups central in this trade, answering the first research question: *From the perspective of network analysis and prosopography, what characterised the merchants and traders as a group and how was experience transmitted among the company traders?*

In any prosopographical study, the essential task is defining the boundaries of the group to be examined. If it is too small, extraordinary persons in the selection will skew the results while too large a group will require too much time and will be impossible to handle. Therefore, to understand the mercantile actors of the DAC, a division into two categories is helpful. The first is the directors of the DAC, and it contains among others the most wealthy and successful merchants of Copenhagen of the long eighteenth century. Often referred to in the sources as *Kiobmand*, *Grosbandler*, or *Grosserer*, the great merchants become easier to classify after the formation of Grosserersocitetet in 1749, which was a new guild to manage the interests of these merchants. In this category we find people such as the brothers Fabritius, Joost van Hemert, Gysbert Behagen, Johann Friderich Wever, Frédéric de Coninck, and several others who were all characterised at some point as being directors of the DAC and at the same time profiting not only from their positions and stocks in the company, but also by supplying goods and provisions for the expeditions to China, as well as buying the imported goods at the auctions in Christianshavn. Without travelling to China, they were able to profit from every aspect of the trade. In some respects, the DAC seems to have been a vehicle for the business of these men, a way of achieving greater respectability when joined together in an esteemed company. Not only merchants were chosen to manage the company, however, during its 110-year lifespan, but also civil servants, military officers, and the nobility played a role. In the following discussion, they will be characterised as a group with numerous excursions into details of these fascinating individuals.

The second group, which I label *company traders*,²⁴⁵ are employees of the DAC who travelled with the expeditions to China to manage the trade in Canton. With each expedition from 1730-1833

²⁴⁴ My translation of “De fleste Kinafarere blev i Kinafarten saalænge de kunde, men Kinafarten krævede mænd af en vis Støbning. [...] Mænd, der kunde tage deres Tørn baade ved Sejl, Aarer Kanoner og blanke Vaaben. Adskillige fornuftige og sparsommelige Kinafarere samlede Penge op paa et Par Kinatogter og lagde derved Grunden til et Opkomstliv i de modne Manddomsaaer under roligere Forhold i Hjemlandet.” from Larsen, *Den danske kinafart*, 30.

²⁴⁵ My translation of the Danish word *Handelsbetiente*, which is often used in the sources about the employees travelling on ships being responsible for the trade on the destination, which almost always would be China and in rare cases India.

between two and eighteen company traders were responsible for the trade and the contact with the Chinese. Most of these company traders have only left tiny marks behind in the sources, despite having a key influence in the most profitable trade of the DAC. As noted in State of the Art, the literature about both the merchant houses and even more the smaller businessmen such as the company traders is minimal, and achieving an understanding of their lives and careers is a challenge in itself. Their lives beyond their careers in the DAC are also shrouded in darkness, except for the very few who either ended up in great wealth or in poverty because the DAC, just like other European companies, “[...] *provided a chance, but no guarantee, of wealth.*”²⁴⁶

Business Background

“[...] *[retail traders] can never succeed unless they lie most abominably.*”

“[...] *commerce if large and rich, importing much from all quarters, and making extensive sales without fraud, it is not so very discreditable.*”

“[...] *of all means acquiring gain, nothing is better than agriculture, nothing more productive, nothing more pleasant, nothing more worthy of a man of liberal mind.*”

Cicero: *De Officiis*, 44 BC²⁴⁷

The businessmen of the DAC and elsewhere in the Oldenburg Monarchy operated in the midst of a great change in the view of those working in the field of commerce. Cicero's views reflect the contempt shown towards petty traders in particular and the status offered to the nobility when seen as agriculturists. Overall, both the company traders and great merchants enjoyed the same general rise in the advancing liberal economy, a trend that took place throughout the 1700s, intensifying in the latter half of the century. One of the indicators of the rise, both financially and in terms of general respect of the commercial citizens, can be extracted from the lists of members of the society *Det kongelige Københavnske Skydeselskab* – the Royal Copenhagen Shooting Society. Formed some time before 1334, the society from the beginning became a meeting place for royalty, aristocracy, and citizens, especially urban craftsmen who came to numerically dominate the society during the Middle Ages.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁶ Hellman, “Navigating the foreign quarters,” 151.

²⁴⁷ Quoted from Backhaus 2012, 50

²⁴⁸ Jesper Gram-Andersen and Thyge C. Fønss, *Skiver til skue: personer og kunst i Det Kongelige Københavnske Skydeselskab og Danske Broderskab* (Odense: Kle-art, 2014), 97.

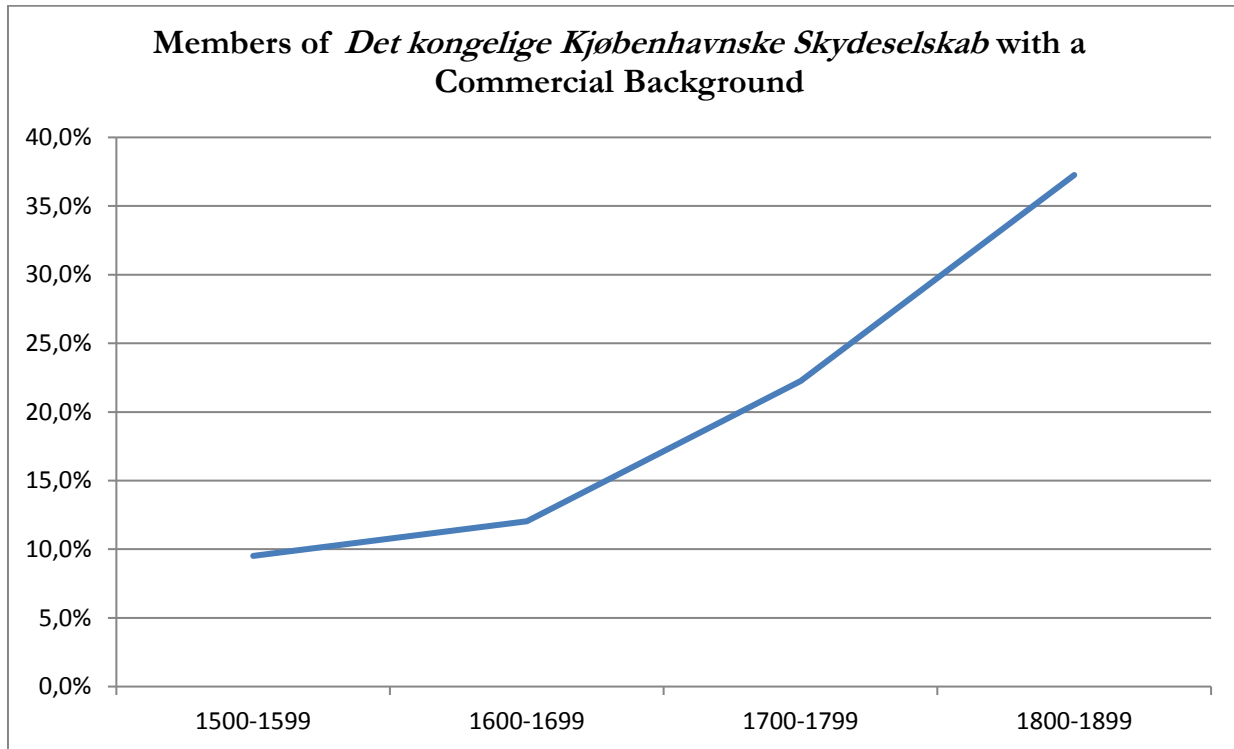


Figure 18 – Source: Houmøller 1958, p. 6

In the following centuries, however, while royalty and the aristocracy remained a steadied presence within the Shooting Society, members with a commercial background were on the rise. In the graph above, the share of members of the society with a background in trade, industry, seafaring, wholesale trade, and finance, as well as employees of the trading companies, is shown based on data painstakingly assembled by Houmøller.²⁴⁹ Rising to between a quarter and a third of the total number of members of *Det kongelige Kjøbenhavnske Skydeselskab* in the relevant period, it is clear that the influence of this new bourgeoisie was on the rise and that societies such as this provided the new actors with an access to the top civil servants in society and thus increased possibilities of advancing the causes of the merchants. From 1750 onwards, membership of the society came with the request to donate a round target to the society, decorated to reflect the social position and self-perception of the member. As will be discussed later, thousands of members offered such a target through the decades, offering insight into their perceptions of themselves.

In early modern society, trust was an essential component of business. In a world with a smaller degree of projection of state power, trust in individuals and businesses was required to keep transaction costs low. The British historian David Sunderland categorises trust between traders and businessmen in three forms, first the *competence trust*, the belief that the other is able to perform the task at hand in an adequate fashion. Secondly, the *contractual trust*, that the other will keep his word, whether in oral or written form, and finally the *goodwill trust*, that the other will not only consider his

²⁴⁹ Sven Houmøller, *Det kongelige kjøbenhavnske Skydeselskab og danske Broderskabs Medlemmer gennem 600 Aar* (København: 1958), 6.

own narrow interest in case of crisis or other unexpected events.²⁵⁰ Another important type of trust, of a more general nature than of only business, is the *kinship trust*, the tendency to favour relatives. While it has been disputed how much this type of trust mattered in a pre-modern society, where especially the members of rural communities would be attached in a dense network of family connections, it seems likely that the kinship bond was strong.²⁵¹ Sunderland also describes a number of factors essential in the generation of trust. Shared attributes such as religion, gender, and ethnicity provide the potential for a basic level of trust. Other factors that build trust are long relationships that enabled trust to be built upon transactions of increasing importance. Another factor is the trust attributes displayed by a person in terms of clothing, symbols, modes of transportation, dwellings, and perhaps most importantly, reputation.²⁵² Trust, and the connected attribute of credit-worthiness, does not seem to have been directly related to fortune or success – bad luck, wars, and politics could ruin a fortune quickly, but did not necessarily detract from overall trustworthiness. A relevant example of this is the recommendation letter brought by the young de Coninck on his first arrival in Copenhagen in 1763, which would lead to his employment as a DAC supercargo. The author - Thomas Isaac de Larrey, a top civil servant in Den Haag - first describes how the skilled Coninck requests a job, but emphasises how it is only due to bad luck on behalf of his father, whose possessions in the colonies have been compromised by a slave rebellion.²⁵³ By placing the blame of the father's misfortune on outside events, the skill of the father and thus the son is enhanced.

The general view of the economic world at the DAC's founding in 1730, later known as mercantilism, was that the amount of resources and wealth on Earth was fixed from Creation. The resources were divided between the nobility, the clergy, the bourgeoisie, and the peasants, ensuring the maximum stability of society. Attempts to change this, for instance by becoming a successful merchant, would disturb this order, thus creating imbalance and poverty somewhere else. A typical view of merchants among the public was one of greed; of people attempting to grab a larger share of the resources of the world than was rightfully theirs.²⁵⁴ Although this mercantilistic perception of the world economy endured through the eighteenth century, winds of change were blowing. The book *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* by the Scottish moral philosopher Adam Smith in 1776 is often seen as a milestone for the mental change towards a market-driven economy, but the book was a part of the shared, common flow of ideas of the Age of the Enlightenment in the West.²⁵⁵ Adam Smith created the term mercantilism as a general description of the economic policies of the previous 200 years as being fundamentally different from the new liberalism, where an open market, competition, and division of labour would take the national

²⁵⁰ David Sunderland, *Social capital, trust and the industrial revolution: 1780-1880* (London: Routledge, 2007), 166-167.

²⁵¹ Sunderland, *Social capital, trust and the industrial revolution: 1780-1880*, 136.

²⁵² Sunderland, *Social capital, trust and the industrial revolution: 1780-1880*, 6-8.

²⁵³ Jens B. Friis-Hansen and Finn Slente, *Frédéric de Coninck og Dronninggaard: en mosaik af tekster og billeder* (Holte: Historisk-Topografisk Selskab for Søllerød Kommune, 1987), 9-10.

²⁵⁴ Ulrik L. Langen and H. Laura, *1700-tallet: parykker, profit og pøbel* (Copenhagen: Golden Days, Politiken, 2010), 108.

²⁵⁵ Boje, *Vejen til velstand*, 18.

economies to new heights. Boje²⁵⁶ and others argue that these ideas were not new and that the old mercantilist system was not against competition as such, but nevertheless, Adam Smith played a vital role in advancing a new attitude towards the merchant and other actors on the market, namely legitimising the individual pursuit of fortune. The old understanding of the merchant as being immoral had permeated society and even appeared in textbooks for schoolchildren where merchants were called thieves who hurt their neighbour by not giving them the full worth of their goods.²⁵⁷ Naturally the merchants of the eighteenth century were themselves aware of their initially low moral status in society and it became a coveted goal by many to gather a fortune large enough to be able to buy a noble title, thus attempting to escape the moral scorn and become a respected aristocrat. However, as the Danish historian Peter Henningsen claims, the ideals of running a noble estate would usually be quite different from the aristocrat of old to the newly elevated merchant.²⁵⁸ While earlier, at least ideally, the nobleman would set the common good above all else to guarantee his peasants a minimum income, rather than attempting to reach a possible maximum output. The term *noblesse oblige* contains this ideal, reminding that with great privileges comes great responsibility. According to Henningsen the new merchant nobles felt less obliged to this old custom and were less interested in old agreements between land owner and peasant, and instead exploited their right in the largest degree. Complaints from peasants now ruled by newly elevated nobles were common in the late eighteenth century.

At the same time, ideas for the rising merchant class were more firmly put forward. In 1735, the young Danish nobleman count Otto Thott wrote a promemoria²⁵⁹ about the economic status and challenges of the Oldenburg Monarchy, especially Denmark and Norway. Titled *Allerunderdanigste uforgribelige Tanker om Commerciens Telstand og Opkomst*²⁶⁰ or “Most humble and personal thoughts about the condition and growth of business,” the report gave an overview of the state of farming, of production, and of trade in Denmark and Norway, along with several recommendations for improvement. In 1735, count Thott, who was of an old noble family, had recently completed a long voyage as part of his education which took him to Germany, the Netherlands, France, and England, where he met several great thinkers of the day, legal scholars, theologians, astronomers, and philosophers. The voyage also educated him in political science, and gave him the knowledge that enabled him to later write the promemoria, inspired by similar works in England and Sweden.²⁶¹

At the time of his writing, count Thott was a director of the DAC and a depute in Rentekammeret, the economic department of the Oldenburg state. In addition, in the same year as the promemoria was published, he was appointed as depute in the new *General Landets Økonomi- og Kommerce-Kollegium* or the General Economy- and Trade Assembly of the Country. Kommerce-Kollegiet, as it

²⁵⁶ Boje, *Vejen til velstand*, 21.

²⁵⁷ Langen and Laura, *1700-tallet*, 110.

²⁵⁸ Langen and Laura, *1700-tallet*.

²⁵⁹ Promemoria: Writings intended for a senior official, most likely in this case the king of the Oldenburg Monarchy, to remind them of a matter.

²⁶⁰ Reprinted in full in Glamann and Oxenbøll, *Studier i dansk merkantilisme*.

²⁶¹ Glamann and Oxenbøll, *Studier i dansk merkantilisme*, 21-22.

was called for short, issued several decrees and laws in the following years, among others based on the thoughts of Thott. After an introduction about the necessity of trade described by examples of Spain, the Netherlands, and England, Thott begins by discussing the role of farming and its products, where the mercantilist ideal of minimising imports while encouraging exports are clearly shown. In his prememoria, he states four ideals for an honest merchant.²⁶²

²⁶² My translation of “1. Flittig og dristig med Fornuft, thj den slumrende og frygtsomme falder ingen Due i Munden. 2. Sparsom; thj det hjælper lidet at vinde meget, om mand igien fortærer meere; og uden Penge lader sig ickun slet handle. 3. Af god Troe og Love; thj ellers haver hand slet ingen Credit, og Credit er høist fornøden, end og for dend rigeste Negotiant. 4. Kyndig i alt det som Kiøbmandskab vedkommer.” from Glamann and Oxenbøll, *Studier i dansk merkantilisme*.

1. “*Hard-working and bold with reason, for no pigeon falls into the mouth of the sleeping or the frightful.*”
2. “*Thrifty, because it matters little to gain much, if one later consumes more, and without money, trade is not possible.*”
3. “*Trustworthy, or else he will have no credit and credit is essential, even for the richest trader.*”
4. “*Skilled in all matters relevant for a merchant.*”

Thott then proceeds by defining the relevant matters for the merchant in more detail, namely:²⁶³

- Where goods can be found most easily and where to sell them more expensively.
- The regulations and laws of each place he wishes to trade.
- Which coins to use and how their value exchanges to his own currency.
- The laws of exchange and insurance as well as the customs related to their practice.
- Knowledge about ship-building and general seamanship in order not to be cheated by his captains
- Relevant knowledge about running a factory or production and how to optimise it.
- What changes are going on in every place he wishes to trade.

Recognising the challenge of learning all of the above, Thott recommends that all who wish to become merchants should spend some time abroad, especially in the large trading cities of Europe. His purpose with the promemoria, and especially with the above definitions, was to encourage the creation of a more professional class of merchant who could work on a grander scale than the more common petty traders for the good of the Oldenburg Monarchy. Seen from the perspective of the modern field of network analysis, the lack of mention of the use of a network of merchants is remarkable. Most likely Thott knew the value of networks, but did not find it necessary to mention.

Thus, informed on the ideals of a new merchant, we move to the prosopographical analysis of the first group, the DAC directors.

III.1 – The DAC directors

It is curious how no complete list of the DAC directors has ever been assembled in the existing literature. Several historians discuss a few of them or publish lists for a few decades, but in order to construct a complete list, I resorted to the *Königlicher Dänischer Hof- und Staats-Calender*, later *Hof & Statskalenderen*, which provides an overview of higher-ranking public employees, including the trading companies with a royal concession such as the DAC. The calendar was first published in 1735 and is an immensely valuable source in both the prosopographical approach and in historical network analysis, as will be demonstrated below. For the five years before the calendar was

²⁶³ Glamann and Oxenbøll, *Studier i dansk merkantilisme*, 195.

published, data on the directors comes from the statistical works of Frederik Thaarup.²⁶⁴ The complete list of fifty-three directors was then entered into the *Business Wiki of the Oldenburg Monarchy*, which was used as a base to gather information about these actors whenever it occurred in a great variety of sources, as well as tag them. In this process, the wiki proved both flexible and strong – not the least since it could simultaneously be used by other scholars working on the same actors.

²⁶⁴ Thaarup, *Historiske og statistiske Efterretninger om det Kongl*, 50.

Prosopographic overview

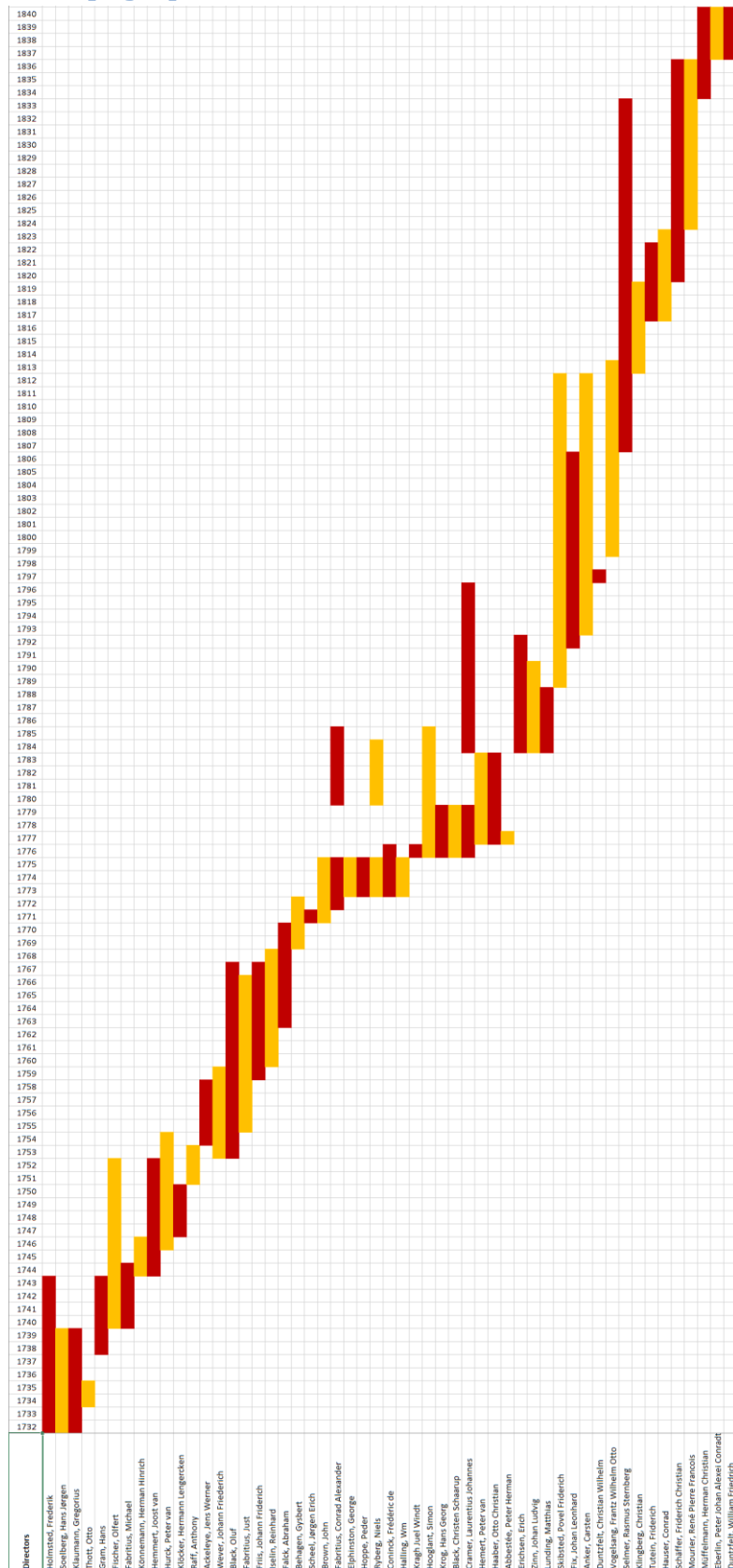


Figure 19 - DAC directors 1732-1840. Source: *Hof- & Statskalender* from 1735-1840 and Thaarup 1824.

A total of fifty-three men served as directors of the DAC in its period of royal privileges. When visualised as above, tendencies in the time the directors served become apparent. In the first forty years, from the first *Octroy* in 1732 until the second in 1772, the periods of the directors vary quite a lot. In general, there is a good overlap between directors, meaning knowledge potentially could be transferred without major breaks. However, in the second *Octroy*-period from 1772 until 1792 almost the entire group of directors are changed from time to time, which on the one hand might be a risk in losing valuable knowledge, but on the other hand could mean new ideas and fresh eyes upon the old company. The fact that the three directors Conrad Fabritius, Niels Ryberg, and Laurentius Cramer all took second terms as directors points to experience coming back into the management of the company in this essential period of the history of the company, with its economic peak and downturn.

In 1772, during the switch from the old Convention to the new, much disagreement arose in the general assembly, resulting in the old directors leaving the meeting in anger and a passing vote for creating a new board of directors.²⁶⁵ The legality of this new board was questioned and the old and new directors ended up in court to settle the matter, which ended in favour of the new board of directors consisting of Conrad Fabritius, Brown, Elphinston, Hoppe, de Coninck, Ryberg, and Halling. The goal of this new group of directors was to concentrate the power of the company into fewer hands, eliminate the posts of judicial director and navigational director, and have only five merchant directors running the company and in addition giving them the power to appoint all new company officials, including the accountants, *Revisores*, rather than being dependent on the general assembly as was the case previously. Finally, the new directors wished to end the new restrictions on the procurement of goods, including silver, from the merchant houses of the directors.²⁶⁶ While the old directors tried to stop this power concentration they mostly failed, and only limits placed on the directors' own trade within the company managed to get through to the new *Convention*. These battles show in the graph above, where the sharp borders between groups of directors hint that allies arrived and left together. These distinct changes of groups of directors seems to alter in the years around 1790, where new directors such as Fix, Skibsted, and Anker – and later Vogelsang, Selmer, and Schäffer all served for very long periods, hinting at a lack of competition for the seats on the board from other mercantile actors. A late change among the directors happened in 1812-13, the final years of the Napoleonic Wars, where first Skibsted died and then a while later Vogelsang passed as well. Along with the departure of Fix, no directors were left with expertise from the ground in Asia, which must have contributed to the passiveness of the company following the war. In general, most directors in the late period remained in their posts more or less until their deaths – another sign of a lack of competition.

Faith

²⁶⁵ Rasch and Sveistrup, *Asiatisk Kompagni i den florissante Periode*, 28.

²⁶⁶ Rasch and Sveistrup, *Asiatisk Kompagni i den florissante Periode*, 30-31.

A significant attribute of the DAC directors was which faith they belonged to. While the overwhelming majority of the population of the Oldenburg Monarchy was a part of the official Lutheran church with the King heading the church, Calvinists in the followed called Reformists, Catholics, and Jews were also present. Despite the Reformists accounting for less than a tenth of a percent in the king's realms, their presence in the management of the DAC was massive. Overall, at least twenty-two of the fifty-three directors managing the DAC in its century of operation belonged to the Reformed Church.²⁶⁷ At various intervals, members of the church dominated the board, for instance in the middle of the 1770s where four out of seven directors were Reformists. A large majority can also be found in the early 1760s as well as in the period around the discovery of the great fraud in 1783, where three out of four directors were Reformists.²⁶⁸ (More discussion about this issue of faith appears in section III.3.)

Origin

Another characteristic of the directors are their birthplaces. Complaints of foreign-born nobles and officials entering the elite of the Oldenburg Monarchy, especially from Germany, were numerous.²⁶⁹ After the fall of the German-born Struensee in 1772, who had seized power from the king and issued numerous reforms, the conflict escalated, eventually leading to the law of Indfødsretten – Right of the Native-Borns – in 1776. This law was strongly marketed, but in effect did little to change the procedures of the previous years as a number of exceptions were possible within the boundaries of the law.²⁷⁰ Although the complaints seem to have primarily been targeted towards the highest level of civil servants, the wealthy merchants of the DAC must have been obvious targets as well.

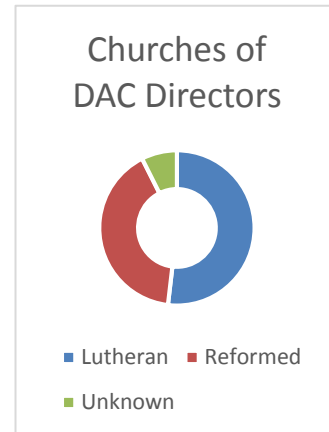


Figure 20 - Faiths of the directors of the DAC from 1730-1840. Sources: Especially Biografisk Leksikon I-III, please see the Business Wiki of the Oldenburg Monarchy for further details about the sources.

²⁶⁷ See section III.3 for a discussion of the Reformist Church and its effect on the business life of Copenhagen.

²⁶⁸ Data of the directors are from the relevant years of the *Hof & Statskalender*.

²⁶⁹ As excellently described in Gunner Lind, "Elites of the Danish Composite State, 1460-1864: Zones of Fracture, Mixing, and the Struggle for Hegemony," in *Zones of fracture in modern Europe, the Baltic Countries, the Balkans, and Northern Italy, Zone di frattura in epoca moderna, il Baltico, i Balcani e l'Italia settentrionale* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2005).

²⁷⁰ Lind, "Elites of the Danish Composite State," 132.

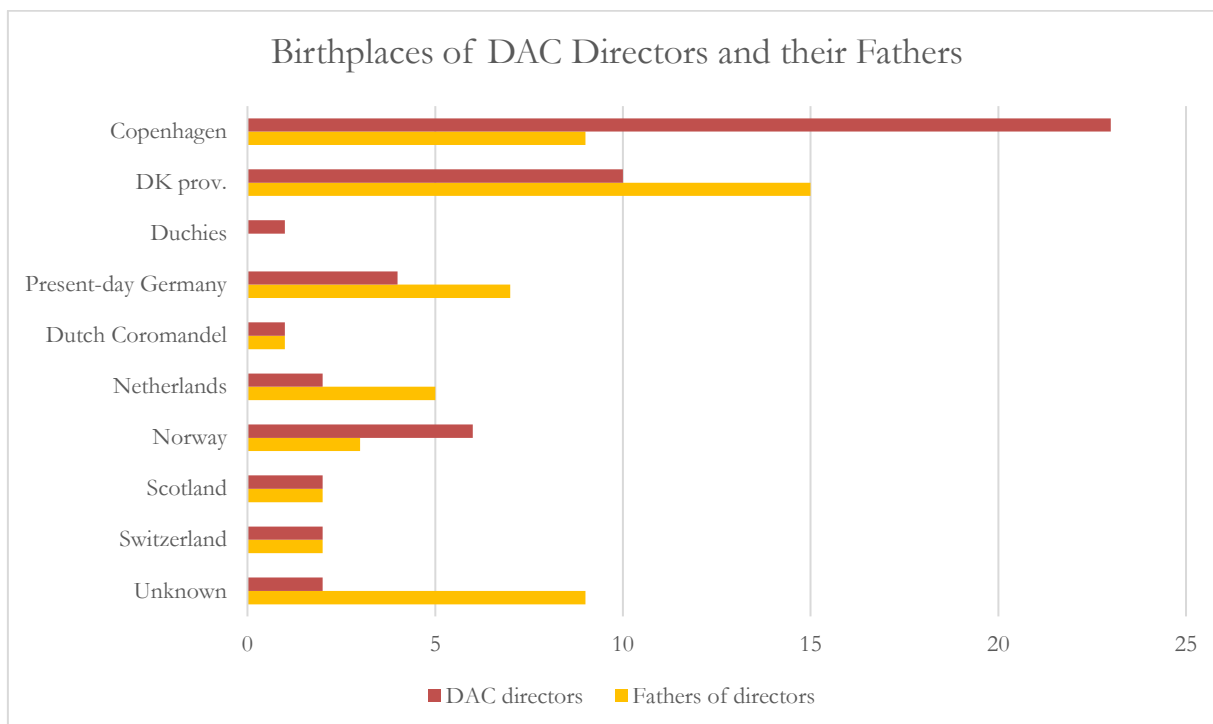


Figure 21 - Source: Mostly Biografisk Leksikon I-III, please see the *Business Wiki of the Oldenburg Monarchy* for further details about the sources for each director and their fathers. The tag “DAC director” can be used to show the complete list of directors.

In Figure 21 above, the birthplaces of the directors of the DAC in its century of operations is shown, marked in red. In total, forty of the fifty-three were born in Denmark, Norway, or in the Duchies, but with a large minority coming from surrounding countries, almost all of the Reformist faith. But this measurement might be misleading, for the birth place might not reveal much about their sense of nationality, language, and who others might have perceived their possible foreignness.

By looking at the fathers of the DAC directors as a whole, a new picture emerges.²⁷¹ Far fewer were born in Copenhagen and many more were born in either the Danish provinces or in areas of present-day Germany or the Netherlands. Several of the fathers might on the basis of their name be assumed as coming from present-day Germany. Thus, most of the directors came from families

²⁷¹ As several of the fathers were born as early as the 17th century, data has been hard to obtain and the graph includes the following assumptions: Because Hans Jørgen Soelberg’s father owned a saw mill in Bragenes in Norway and had a Norwegian name, it is assumed that he was born in Norway. As the father of Olfert Fischer is described as Dutch and has a Dutch name, he is assumed to be born in the Netherlands – the same for Simon Hooglant. As Anthony Raff was born in Kolding, it is assumed that the same holds true for his father, as the online database “Nygards Sedler” at *Danske Demografiske Database* describes a number of people with similar names at a time fitting parents and grandparents of Raff. Acelevey was born in Norway, and the same seems to be the case of his father, as the family name shows up for instance in Jens Kraft, 1820: *Topographisk-statistisk Beskrivelse over Kongeriget Norge*, Vol. 1 in the 18th century. Wever was born in Cleve, and since it is described that he is related to Michael Fabritius, whose father also came from Cleve, it seems fair to assume that Wever’s father was also born in present-day Germany. As Behagen’s father was a wine merchant in Hamburg and his mother was born there, it is assumed the father was also born in present-day Germany. Several others are estimated on accounts of name, working place, baptism of children, or simply placed in the “Unknown” category.

new to the capital, which in itself might not be surprising considering that Copenhagen can be considered a city of immigrants, and remembering the great plague in 1711 had wiped out a third of the population. But when less than half, twenty-six out of fifty-three, of the fathers of the directors originated from the Oldenburg Monarchy, the families must have been identified as outsiders, who were either invited by the king or had immigrated to seek their fortune. In this respect the group of directors goes against the idea of an increasing general antagonism between the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie of the eighteenth-century Oldenburg Monarchy where the aristocracy was seen as German and thus foreign, while the new, emerging bourgeoisie assumed a Danish identity.²⁷²

The outsidership is supported by the dissertation of Parby, who goes as far as describing a shared experience of migration tying the grand merchants of Copenhagen together.²⁷³

Inheritance

Another fascinating aspect of looking at the family heritage of the directors is how it highlights where the directorship was passed down in the family, in this case a senior in a family somehow paving the way for a son, stepson, son-in-law, or nephew to enter the prestigious company.

Senior	Period as director	Relation	Junior	Period as director
Michael Fabritius	1740-1744	Son	Conrad Alexander Fabritius de Tengnagel	1772-1776 and 1780-1785
Michael Fabritius	1740-1744	Son-in-law	Reinhard Iselin	1760-1768
Michael Fabritius	1740-1744	Nephew	Peter Herman Abbestée	1777
Joost van Hemert	1744-1752	Son	Peter van Hemert	1777-1783
Joost van Hemert	1744-1752	Stepson	Gysbert Behagen	1769-1772
Oluf Black	1753-1767	Son	Christen Schaarup Black	1776-1779
Hans Jørgen Soelberg	1732-1743	Son-in-law	Abraham Falck	1763-1770
Frédéric de Coninck	1773-1776	Son-in-law	Christian Wilhelm Duntzfelt	1797

²⁷² As discussed by Rasmus Glenthøj, quoting the Czech historian Miroslav Hroch. Glenthøj, Rasmus, *På fædrelandets alter: national identitet og patriotisme hos det danske borgerskab 1807-1814* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum, 2007), 22.

²⁷³ Parby, Jakob Ingemann, *At blive... Migration og identitet i København, ca. 1770-1830* (2015), 104

Christian Wilhelm Duntzfelt	1797	Son	William Friedrich Duntzfelt	1837-1840
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Director dynasties of the DAC. Sources: Especially Biografisk Leksikon I-III, please see the *Business Wiki of the Oldenburg Monarchy* for further details about the sources for each director. The tag “DAC director” can be used to show the complete list of directors

The table above only includes directors but data hints that if the *Hovedparticipanter* of the first period would be included, even more examples of influence being passed on would become visible, for instance director Hermann Lengerken Kløcker was the son of *Hovedparticipanter* Abraham Kløcker. Family members related as brothers or brothers-in-law would probably show even more connections, such as director Friis being the brother-in-law of both of the *Hovedparticipanter* Johannes Edinger and Abraham Lehn,²⁷⁴ and the directors Hoppe and Kløcker being brothers-in-law just as Müffelmann and Tutein.

But despite the limited scope, the table above still points towards a narrative about a generation of early directors, in the 1730s to the 1750s, who managed to pass on their influential posts in the company to juniors in the family from the 1760s to the 1780s. Perhaps even more interesting about the passing-on of power is that it clearly stops. With the exception of the Duntzfelts, the practice disappears around the same time as the beginning of the crisis of the company in the 1780s, suggesting that the most influential merchants moved their interests elsewhere, away from the old company whose composition of directors thus began to change. This will be discussed in more detail later.

Age

The fifty-three directors were generally in their forties (20 individuals) or fifties (20 individuals) when entering the position of director, on average forty-eight years old. The youngest, Laurentius Johannes Cramer, was only twenty-eight years old when entering the management in 1776, but was well-connected to the director Niels Ryberg, head of the House of Ryberg, Thygesen & Co, where Cramer was a partner from 1769 to 1775, seemingly ending in friendship.²⁷⁵ The second-youngest was the twenty-nine-year old adventurer and soldier William Halling. He returned from India after British service and became director shortly after, perhaps influenced by his kinship to the influential politician Ove Høegh-Guldberg.²⁷⁶ On the other end of the spectrum we find Johann Friderich Friis, who was sixty-eight years old in 1759 when he became director. Coming from a long career of civil service, among other things employed at Commercecollegiet,²⁷⁷ Friis seems to have been keen on limiting the other directors’ exploitation in the purchase of silver for China, although without much success.²⁷⁸ The oldest director was Conrad Hauser who entered the company late in its life as well. Hauser was seventy-four and continued until he turned eighty, dying shortly thereafter. Hauser

²⁷⁴ *Personallhistorisk Tidsskrift* 1930, p. 54-55

²⁷⁵ Holmgaard, “Aa. Rasch: Niels Ryberg, 1725-1804,” 84.

²⁷⁶ Biografisk Leksikon I

²⁷⁷ *Personallhistorisk Tidsskrift* 1930, 55

²⁷⁸ Glamann, “Studie i Asiatisk Kompagnis,” 365.

was a merchant from Marseille, although originally from Basel. He came to the Oldenburg Monarchy after marrying a Danish woman, was recommended by DAC director Simon Hooglant, and received the title of royal agent.²⁷⁹

Length of Time

On average, once elected as a director by the general assembly, the directors would stay for seven years, in a few cases being reelected for a second period distant from the first.²⁸⁰ Several only held the position for months before leaving, but for others, especially during the long decline, their time in the company lasted for decades. The most significant here is Povel Friderich Skibsted, who was director for twenty-three years from 1789-1812. Skibsted had a degree in law and served as Generalfiskal in the same period, the highest level of state prosecutor in the Oldenburg Monarchy.²⁸¹ The longest reigning director was the Copenhagen merchant Rasmus Sternberg Selmer, who saw the company through crisis, war, and decline from 1807 to 1833. Selmer was also a major in the city guard and through his marriage to Marie Louise Gandil of the Reformist faith he was connected to a number of DAC company traders.²⁸² Another personal connection for Selmer was his son, Christian Mathias, who sailed as a seaman to China for the DAC.²⁸³

²⁷⁹ Biografisk Leksikon I

²⁸⁰ Niels Ryberg was director from 1773-1775 and 1780-1784, Conrad Alexander Fabritius de Tegnagel from 1776-1779 and 1784-1796 and Laurentius Johannes Cramer from 1776-1779 and 1784-1796. The phenomenon seems to have been mostly restricted to the flowering trade of the 1770's and 1780's. Data from *Hof & Statskalender*.

²⁸¹ It seems likely that he remained on his post so long due to a desire in the state administration to keep the merchants of the company in short reigns, but no sources have been found showing this or the opposite.

²⁸² Christian Gandil, "Nogle Meddelelser om Slægten Gandil. I Anledning af 200-aaret for Pierre Gandils Indkaldelse til Danmark," *Personallistorisk tidsskrift* 57, 10 (1936), 139.

²⁸³ Public Census for Copenhagen, 1801. Dansk Demografisk Database Ref. DDA-2755, Kipnr. A5027. Sogn: Snarens Kvarter. Herred: København (Staden). Amt: København. Post nr. 123 af 3676. He did not sail as a part of the *Negotie*-crew, so it seems fair to assume he was part of the *Navigation*-crew.

Occupations

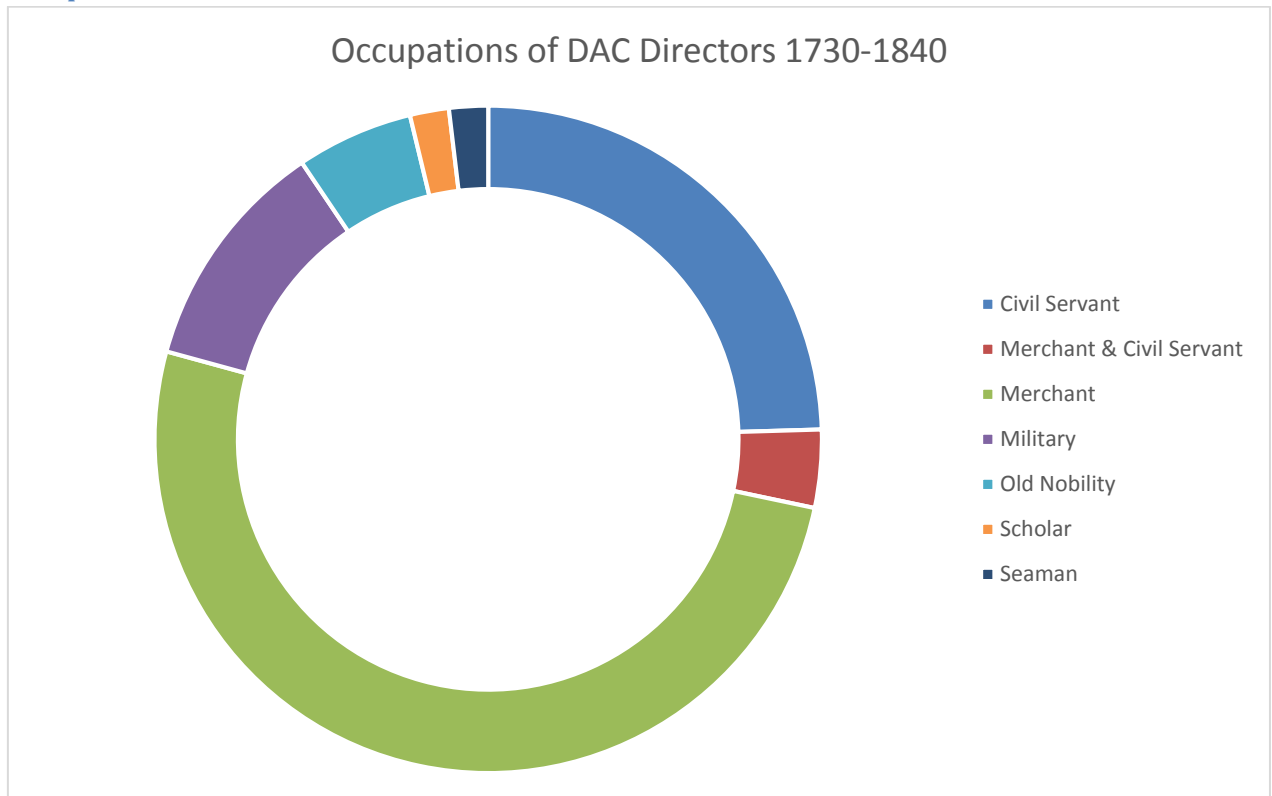


Figure 22 - Sources: Especially *Biografisk Leksikon I-III*, please see the *Business Wiki of the Oldenburg Monarchy* for further details about the sources for each director.

Another relevant question concerning the prosopography of the DAC directors are their occupational backgrounds. When viewed in the entire period as above, it is clear that the most common background for a director was to be a merchant himself. The second largest group consists of the various types of civil servants, including employees of the company eventually making director.²⁸⁴ A military background is the third largest, and with a single exception, all with a background in the navy. But another narrative emerges if we divide the directors into the two periods described in chapter II – before and after the great crisis in 1783.

²⁸⁴ These are George Elphinston, previously captain and quartermaster; Frantz Wilhelm Otto Vogelsang, previously supercargo (see his narrative in Chapter IV) and René Pierre Francois Mourier, previously secretary at the HQ in Copenhagen.

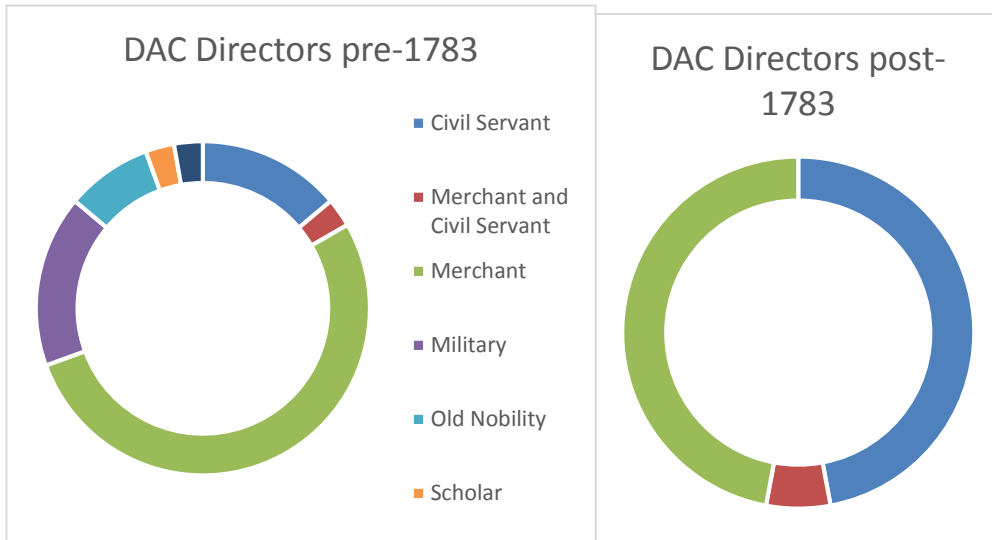


Figure 23 - Sources: Mainly Biografisk Leksikon I-III, please see the *Business Wiki of the Oldenburg Monarchy* for further details about the sources for each director.

The early period of the company - the growth and blossoming – shows approximately the same picture as in Figure 22 – a majority of merchants, civil servants, and military significantly present with a sprinkling of old nobility and even a single historian, Hans Gram. But in the later period, defined as directors beginning their service after 1783, the picture changes. Merchants and civil servants are now equally balanced, perhaps pointing to an increased desire to control the company directly from the shareholders and indirectly from the state. The new lack of diversity is also significant with the old nobility and military officers being absent during the long decline. An interesting question to examine in relation to this is how successful and prominent the merchant directors were in the two periods. After working with them for years, it is my distinct impression that the directors after the crisis in the 1780s were significantly less prominent than earlier, but a lack of sources for these individuals makes this difficult to quantify.

The merchant directors of the DAC were, as previously mentioned, involved in the economy of the company in several ways. Besides managing the company and deciding where and what to trade, they also provided much of the silver and the provisions for the expeditions. At the same time, they were large customers at the company auctions, where tea, porcelain, and silk from China were sold. Although few private records have survived to describe this, the Danish historian Rasch used the company archives to get an idea of these transactions.

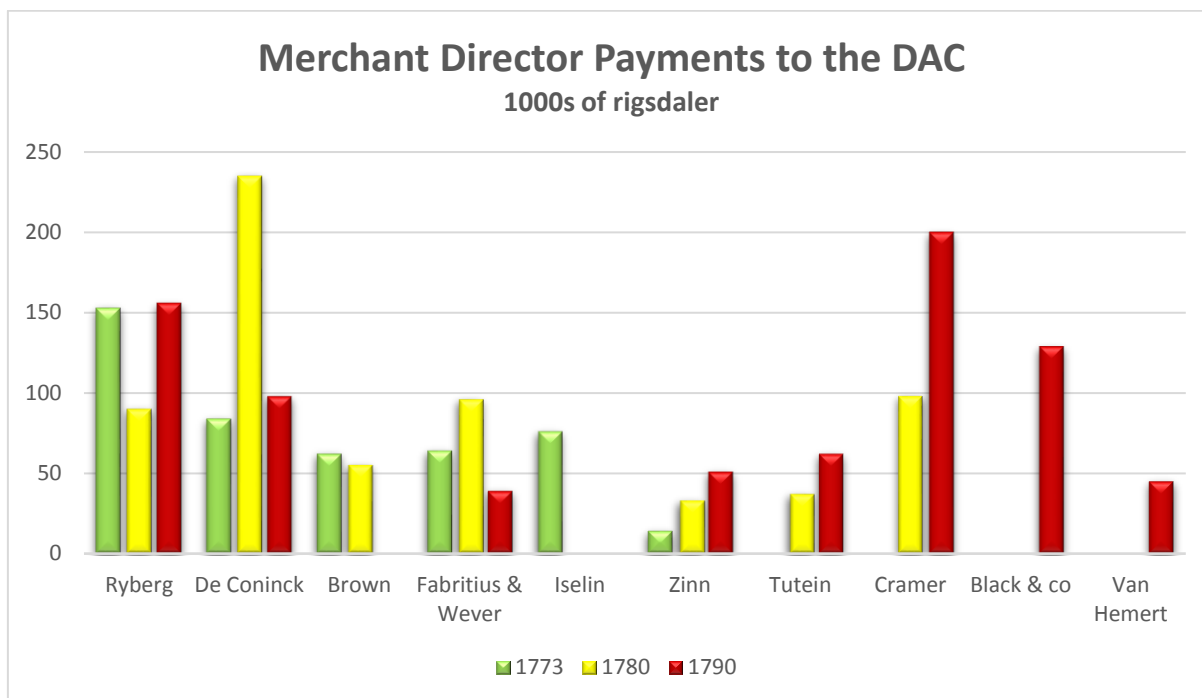


Figure 24 - Source: Rasch 1964, p. 159

Figure 24 above shows the payments made to the DAC by selected directors or their merchant houses. Although the sums are vast, examples of even greater sums can also be found in Rasch's work. For instance, Ryberg paid the DAC more than 200,000 rigsdaler for goods purchased in 1772, 1784, 1785, 1788, and 1791, while de Coninck reached astronomical sums of more than 700,000 rigsdaler per year in the hectic years of 1783 and 1784.²⁸⁵ This can be seen as a testament to the success of the intentions behind the original DAC concessions – that Copenhagen would evolve as a centre of commerce and larger capital be present for new ventures and trade. In total, Ryberg and de Coninck paid more than five million rigsdaler to the DAC in the flourishing 1780s, providing hints of the grand sums now circulating in the capital of the Oldenburg Monarchy.

Interlocking Directorates

Working as a historian with merchants, civil servants, sailors, and institutions of the eighteenth-century Oldenburg Monarchy for a long time provides a kind of innate understanding of the importance of the actors, an understanding that can be both helpful and deceiving. In this case, the feeling of especially the early directors being almost omnipresent in the business life of Copenhagen in the first half eighteenth century grew stronger over the years. To go beyond this feeling, a network of essential institutions and actors will be quantified in the following section.

Another way of assessing the networks of the merchants and others is by examining how the directorates of the privileged trading companies and related organisations of the Oldenburg Monarchy interlock. The concept of interlocking directorates and the assumption that participation in the same boards leads to shared norms, transmitting of information, and social control has been studied in various business studies from the 1970s, most significantly in the book *The Inner Circle* by

²⁸⁵ Rasch, Ryberg 1725-1804, 156.

Michael Useem from 1984, but also in eighteenth-century business history.²⁸⁶ In Useem's fundamental study of boards of companies from the UK and US in the 1970s and early 1980s, the idea of joining the board of another company was encouraged for senior managers.²⁸⁷ Even though conflicts of interest might arise from being a part of more than one company, the managers presented in the book generally agree on a moral obligation not to abuse the knowledge gained in another board to one's own advantage. Access to other boards would most often arise from personal networks of businessmen, resembling the hiring process too often encountered in the eighteenth-century business environment. The position in interlocks seem from the modern study to require skills of keeping various areas of knowledge separate, and to not divulge information, even though it might benefit one's own company. The social control inherent in the interlocks made these acts of separation necessary, risking expulsion from all boards in case of transgressions.

To shed light on to which degree corporate interlocks took place in the business environment of the Oldenburg Monarchy, as well as identifying the central private actors, the boards of several organisations have been coded as a two-mode network in Gephi. The network covers the period from 1730 until 1745 – the first twenty-five years of the China trade. While a single year might show interlocks, this longer period has been chosen to highlight the tendency to slowly move or expand from company to company as well as the continuity of the actors. The sources for the organisations are primarily *Hof- & Statskalenderen*, a yearbook that was first printed in 1735, detailing the highest ranked employees of various branches of the state as well as the privileged trading companies. The organisations included are:

- The Danish Asiatic Company – founded in 1732, as detailed in the previous chapter.
- The West Indian-Guinean Company – founded in 1671 and created the colony of the Danish West Indies in the Caribbean. Purchased enslaved Africans on the Gold Coast in Africa, transported them to the West Indies, and returned to the Oldenburg Monarchy with the fruits of their labour, sugar in particular.
- The Icelandic Company – first founded in 1619 with a monopoly on all trade in Iceland. At various periods, it expanded to include the trade in Greenland and the Faroe Islands as well.
- Sø-Assurance-Kompagni – the maritime insurance company, founded in 1726 by merchants, sailors, and civil servants. Possessed a monopoly on maritime insurance till 1786.
- Commerce-Collegium – the state organisation responsible for the management of industry, trade, agriculture, shipping, finance, tolls, and insurance – founded in 1735. From 1735 until 1768 known as *General-Landets-Økonomi- og Kommercekollegium*.
- Copenhagen Banco – the first private bank of the Oldenburg Monarchy, founded in 1736.

²⁸⁶ For instance, Robert J. Bennett, "Network interlocks: The connected emergence of chambers of commerce and provincial banks in the British Isles, 1767–1823," *Business History* 55, no. 8 (2012): 1288-1317., and to a certain extent Kansikas, "The Business Elite in Finland."

²⁸⁷ Michael Useem, *The Inner Circle: Large Corporations and the Rise of Business Political Activity in the U.S. and U.K.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 50.

- Kinesiske Societet - received a royal concession in 1730 for trade to China, and was responsible for equipping the first expedition to Canton the same year, the CRONPRINTZ CHRISTIAN.²⁸⁸
- Almindeligt Handelskompagni, founded in 1747 to further trade in the Baltic region, but later also traded in Greenland, the Gold Coast, and the West Indies. It was terminated in 1774.
- Grønlandske Handel – the predecessor of the later and very long-lived *Kongelige Grønlandske Handel* with a monopoly on trade in Greenland.
- Kongelige Salt=Werck – a small company only existing in the 1740s, but an excellent example of court capitalism as described by Per Boje. The company extracted salt from Christianshavn in Copenhagen.
- Slave-Cassen – founded in 1715 with the purpose of paying ransoms for sailors from the Oldenburg Monarchy captured by Barbareque privateers in North Africa. The institution was usually managed by two merchants and a bishop.
- Nordiske Compagnie – apparently only existing from 1747 to 1750, but with a royal concession. While the purpose of the company seems impossible to find in existing literature, it was backed by highly connected elite merchants.²⁸⁹
- Copenhagen Magistrate – the public governing body of Copenhagen with extensive privileges dating from the siege of the city in 1659. Besides inspecting the industry, trade, and craftsmen of the city and appointing several positions, the Magistrate functioned as a court of law between the ordinary city court and the Supreme Court.

Together, these organisations provide a view of the management of central public-private actors in the business life of the Oldenburg Monarchy and due to the regularity of the *Hof- & Statskalender*,²⁹⁰ long datasets can be constructed. The criteria for selecting the organisational actors was first all privileged trading companies of the period and then additional organisations of significant influence in the trade, including the bank, insurance company (including the Slave=Casse which served a similar purpose), city government, and the state government institution providing the framework of the trade, the *Commerce-Collegium*. In general, directors and *Hovedparticipanter*, as well as the largest stock-owners have been included for the trading companies, but not the regular employees. For the Copenhagen Banco, directors and the five bank commissioners have been included and for the

²⁸⁸ While data from the other institutions come from *Hof- & Statskalender* for the relevant years, the four merchants and four main stock-holders of *Kinesiske Societet* are taken from Caspar Christiansen, *Til Commerciens och det deraf dependerede Almindelige bestes: Handelskompagnier i dansk økonomisk politik 1670-1754* (København, 2008), 130. While this means that one institution has data from 1730-32 while the rest is from 1735-55, samples of the previous years have shown that it makes little or no difference, since the actors were the same as later, and thus already included.

²⁸⁹ The company first appears in 1747 and for the last time in 1750. The company might be connected to Almindeligt Handelskompagni, which appears in *Hof- og Statskalenderen* in 1750, but with very different actors involved. Another option is that it is another name for the company trading in Iceland etc. Finally, it might relate to the *Norske Kompagni*, founded in 1739 to better use the timber not exported from Norway. From Feldbæk, *Danmark-Norge*, 87.

²⁹⁰ Published every year from 1734-2014, except the years following the Napoleonic Wars and the state bankruptcy in 1813.

Commerce-Collegium both deputies and *Committirte*, but not regular employees. For the Copenhagen Magistrate, the president, mayors, vice mayors, *Raadherer*, and *Vice-Raadsherrer* have been included, but not the scribes.

The period chosen, from 1730-1755, is interesting not only as being the first twenty-five years of the China trade, but also since the king for the first time in the concession to the DAC left the choice of directors to the company itself, instead of being personally chosen by the Crown, which had been the case for the Ostindisk Compagni and the West Indian-Guinean Company before.²⁹¹

A remarkable feature when coding the data from the *Hof- og Statskalenderen* is how constant the directors and others remain. Year after year, the same small group of people stayed at their posts, despite in most case having to be reelected at general assemblies.

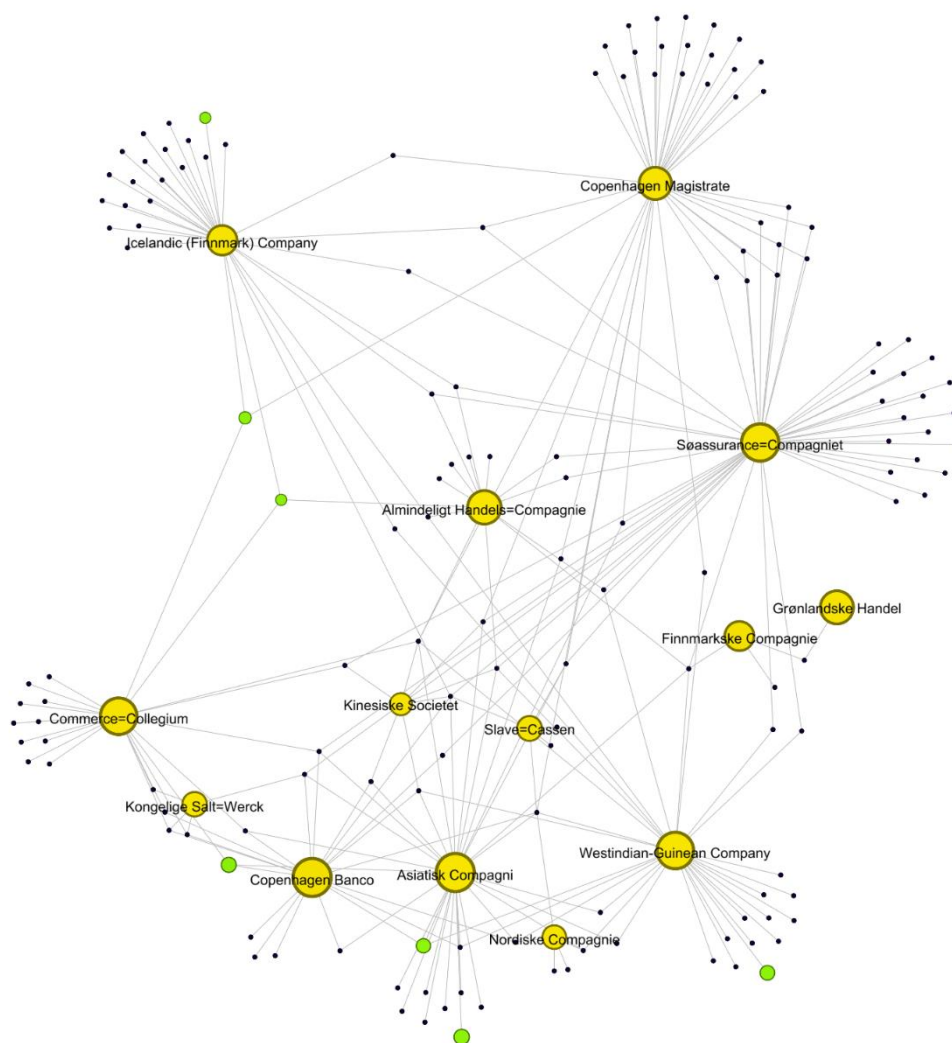


Figure 25 - Interlocking directorates among major business-related organisations of the Oldenburg Monarchy 1730-1755. Small black dots are directors etc., large yellow dots are central organisations relevant for business, and medium green dots are noblemen functioning as *Præsides*, or president. Sources: *Hof- & Statskalenderen* for relevant years etc. See note 2883 for details.

²⁹¹ Christiansen, *Til Commerciens och det deraf dependerede Almindelige bestes*, 131.

In Figure 25, the organisations mentioned above for the first twenty-five years of the China trade have been visualised as yellow circles. Their directors etc. are shown as small black dots, connected to one or more organisations. An additional layer shows the presidents of the companies, who were usually high-level noblemen connected directly to the government. These are shown by green circles. The exact positions of the organisations are not essential, although the layout used, Force Atlas, is selected for its spatial qualities, which is useful for interpreting small-world networks where every node is connected to relatively few other nodes.²⁹²

Organising a part of the business life of the Oldenburg Monarchy as a network, it becomes possible to calculate and describe properties of the network mathematically, such as the centrality of nodes defined as “*the contribution the node makes to the structure of the network.*”²⁹³ Centrality can be calculated in several different ways, each describing different aspects of the relations among the actors, but all requiring care from the researcher in order to understand what each particular calculation actually say about merchants and organisations in eighteenth-century Copenhagen. In general, when using Social Network Analysis, the main workload besides coding the data is trying to connect the results with the people of the past and their ideas, actions, and relations. So what does this particular graph in Figure 255 really show? Every time two organisations are tied together by the same person, potentials for the sharing of information, ideas, and norms arise. A certain social control of both individuals and organisations also grows stronger, as each actor at least in principle knows that misconduct will now mean losing face and power over more people and organisations, every time a new one is joined. But as the density of the network is rather low, 0,019 according to Gephi, it means that many actors are not connected to more than a single organisation - most likely also due to the long timespan of the network, twenty-five years.

In Figure 25, several organisations have a similar appearance which is a symptom of the low density. Several nodes project outwards from the graph, showing the managers are not connected to other organisations. Others point towards other organisations, describing potential flows of information, norms, ideas, and even social control.

But by zooming in on the seemingly unconnected managers of the DAC as above and studying each one in turn, we get a glimpse of the many connections not captured by the original graph. Both Olfert Fischer and Jens Werner Ackeleye were naval officers, providing an essential link to an organisation sharing both ships, sailors, skills, and more with the DAC. The *præses* until 1742, Christian von Plessen served as minister of finance until 1734, providing an important link to the government for the then young DAC. Reinhard

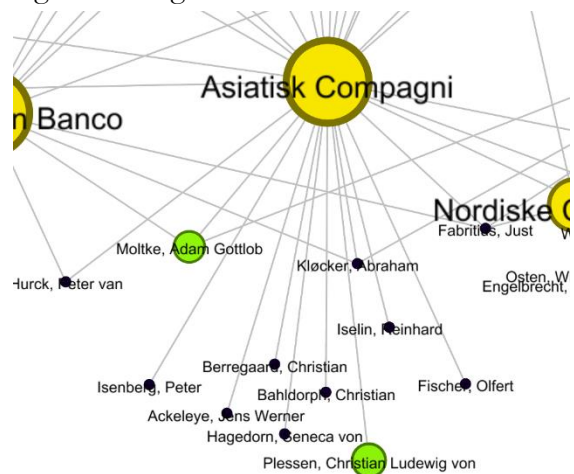


Figure 26 - Detail of figure 25.

²⁹² Devangana Khokhar, *Gephi Cookbook* (Birmingham: Packt Publishing, 2015), 70.

²⁹³ Borgatti, Everett, and Johnson, *Analyzing Social Networks*.

Iselin was a Swiss-born merchant, whose trading house in Copenhagen became one of the wealthiest in the kingdom, thus symbolising an important group of actors missing from the graph, namely the private merchant houses, of which very few sources tell. Christian Dahldorph (or Bahldorph), included as a *Hovedparticipant*, also served as a *Kasserer* of the company until 1738, and thus serves as an example of the employees of the companies making money for themselves from various sources and becoming wealthy and influential stock-owners.

Another very well-connected organisation is the Copenhagen Banco, in which some of the most influential businessmen of the time gathered to work as commissioners. As the bank was given the power to issue bank notes, the great trust radiating from these powerful merchants must have been essential for the early success of the bank.

Almost in the middle of Figure 25, a short-lived, but important organisation can be found, namely the Kinesiske Societet, which existed from 1730-1732. Here, the merchants interested in the new prospects of the China trade gathered their resources and managed to receive a temporary royal concession to send a ship to China, the CRON PRINTZ CHRISTIAN in 1730. Four merchants made up the first board of directors, namely Klaumann, Edinger, Soelberg, and Holmsted, all four extremely well-connected and part of many other business ventures.

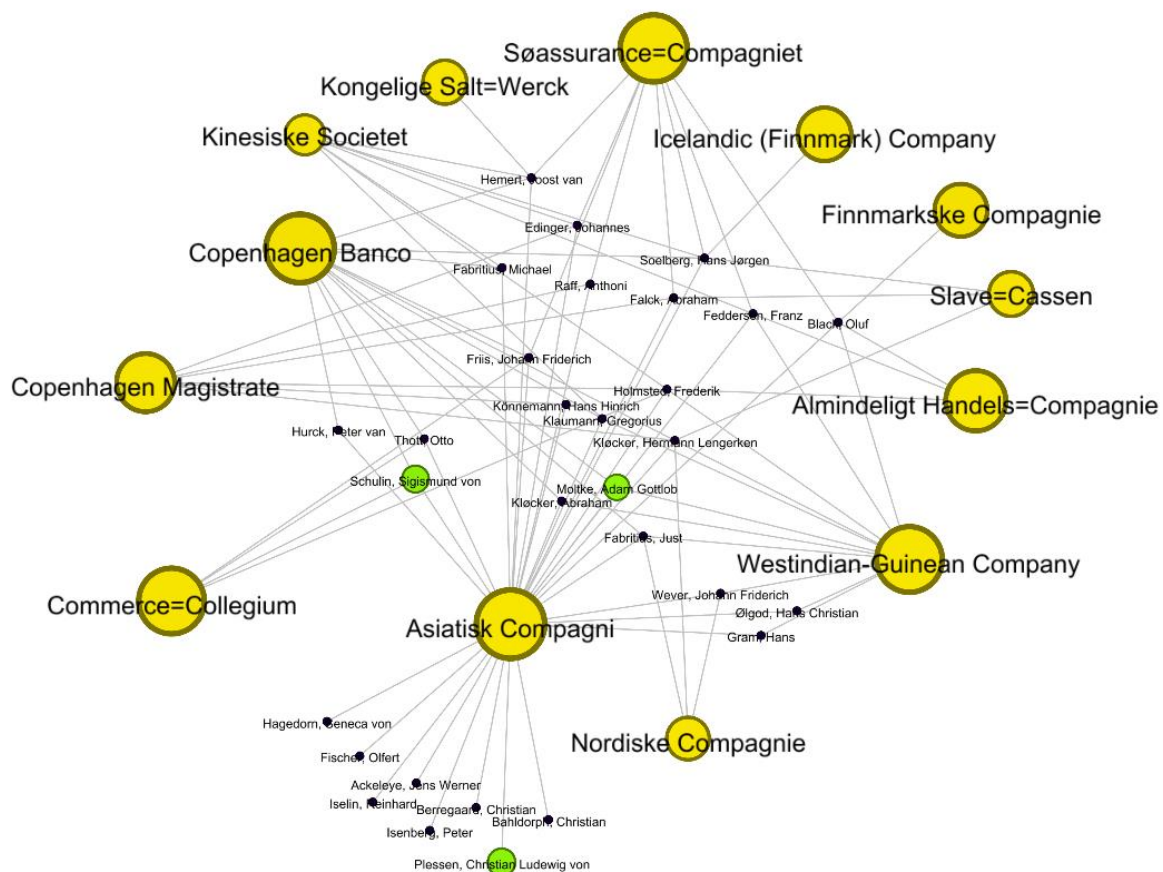


Figure 27 - Ego network of the DAC with a range of two. Source: Hof- & Statskalenderen etc., see note 293.

The four *Hovedparticipanter* shared almost the same level of connectedness, especially van Hemert and Michael Fabritus. The last, Jens Poulsen Dreyer, was a secretary of Commerce-Collegium, providing a link to this important state regulatory institution.

In this early period of 1730-1755, the presidents, *Præsides*, marked by green circles, who were employed by the larger companies seem to play a role in tying the companies together, and more importantly, which the graph does not show, provide a link to the top level of the government.

By zooming in on the DAC in an ego network as above, we get a clear view of not only the directors of the company, but more importantly all the other organisational actors they were connected to in the first twenty-five years of the China trade. The following ego networks have been calculated from the total network, showing the network of a particular node in a certain range, in this case two, meaning that for an organisational actor, both the individual actors will be shown as well as any other organisation they are connected to, showing a range of potential inputs of knowledge etc.

An important observation of the DAC ego network is the many ties coming from most of the organisations, providing the DAC with strong and continuous sources of information and influence in the entire period. The ego network of the Copenhagen Banco (not shown) displays almost the same level of connectedness, crucial to the trust of early banks.²⁹⁴ The ego network of the Icelandic Company also include most of the organisations, but only with a single, potentially fragile link in the shape of Hans Jørgen Soelberg, who is the only tie between the Icelandic Company on one side and Copenhagen Banco, DAC, Kinesiske Societet, and Slave-Cassen on the other. As for the West Indian-Guinean Company, its ties also reach most of the organisations, although the links to the governing bodies such as the Commerce=Collegium and the Copenhagen Magistrate are weak.

²⁹⁴ As described Bennett, "Network interlocks."

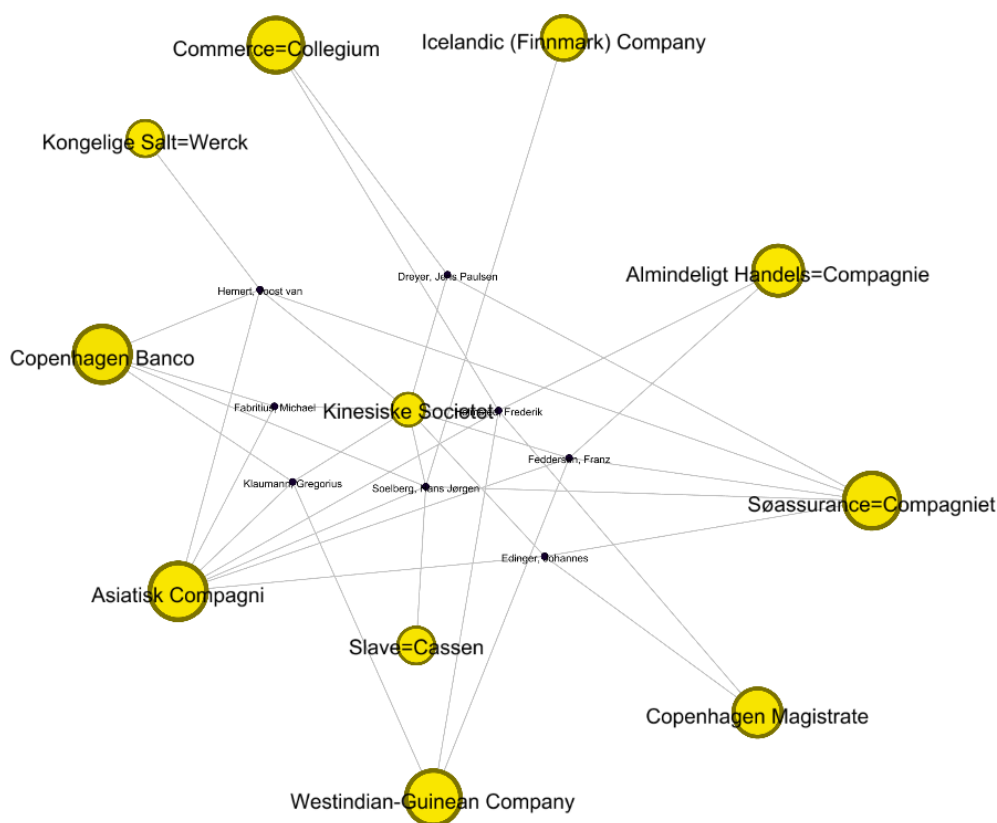


Figure 27 - Ego network of the Kinesiske Societet with a range of two nodes. Source: *Hof- & Statskalenderen* etc., see note 2883.

Finally, the ego network of the Kinesiske Societet above clearly illustrates the vast network reach of the eight actors responsible for starting the China trade of the Oldenburg Monarchy. At the time of its formation and in the coming twenty-five years they would be keys actors in the business environment, although it is relevant here to dwell a bit upon cause and effect. For did the eight actors of the Kinesiske Societet become wealthy and influential because of their involvement here, or did the society become successful because the actors behind it were already of a high status? Examining the actors in detail for the years leading up to the start of the China trade in 1730, however, gives a clear answer to this potential trap, namely that the merchants were already established and successful when they founded the China trade.

Organisation	Degree	Eigenvector	Centrality
Søassurance=Compagniet	46	1,00	2,17
Copenhagen Magistrate	38	0,72	1,89
Asiatisk Compagni	30	0,70	2,33
West Indian-Guinean	29	0,54	1,86
Copenhagen Banco	19	0,40	2,11
Icelandic (Finnmark)	29	0,38	1,31
Almindeligt	14	0,28	2,00
Commerce=Collegium	20	0,26	1,30

Kinesiske Societet	8	0,25	3,13
Slave=Cassen	5	0,12	2,40
Nordiske Compagnie	5	0,09	1,80
Kongelige Salt=Werck	5	0,08	1,60
Finnmarkske Compagnie	3	0,04	1,33
Grønlandske Handel	1	0,00	0,00

Figure 28 - The organisations of the network and their centralities. Source: *Hof og Statskalenderen* etc.

In the table above, the organisations have been listed after the highest eigenvector centrality, calculated in Gephi with the data coded from the *Hof & Statskalender*. While the degree centrality simply describes the number of ties for each node in a network, the eigenvector centrality calculates relative scores for all nodes in a network, based on the idea that connections to nodes with a higher centrality are of greater importance than nodes with fewer ties.²⁹⁵ Thus, it describes not only the number of links in a network, but also judges their quality. In this case, the ranked centralities clearly show the importance of three organisations in this period, namely the maritime insurance company, the Copenhagen Magistrate, and the DAC. Another high-ranked organisation, especially considering the temporal aspect is the Kinesiske Societet as mentioned above. Despite only existing for two years its centrality is quite high, describing the connectedness of its directors and main investors who all either were, or were to become, directors or main investors of the DAC.

This list also sheds interesting light on the Slave-Casse, the organisation for ransoming enslaved sailors of the Oldenburg Monarchy. At first glance, the few people meeting here make it appear as an unimportant organisation with only five members in twenty-five years, three merchants and two bishops taking turns. But it is noticeable that the merchants participating are Soelberg, Falck, and Kløcker, three of the most well-connected actors as well as DAC directors. Their motivation for working with the Slave-Casse might have been charitable, but other factors could be at play as well, such as a connection to the clerical elite or the additional insight into the general maritime trade of the epoch, of which the captured sailors can be seen as an aggravated indicator. The fact that Falck takes over after the older Soelberg in the Slave-Casse is also interesting, since Falck was not only born in the same area as Soelberg, but he also married his daughter Anna Elisabeth around 1739.²⁹⁶

In his analysis of the shareholders of the trading companies of the Oldenburg Monarchy in the middle of the eighteenth century, Kelsall describes the social hierarchy of the companies. The DAC would at its peak be dominated by nobility and senior civil servants, the West Indian-Guinean Company would be ranked lower with its more bourgeois actors, while the Icelandic Company was run by smaller merchants and traders.²⁹⁷ The table in Figure 29 seems to support this.

Finally, to quantify the average quality of the managers of each organisation, a Centrality Index has been calculated as shown in Figure 28, dividing the eigenvector centrality with the degree centrality times 100 for the sake of readability. This provides very interesting results with the top of the index being occupied by the Kinesiske Societet with a centrality index of 3.13, pointing towards the

²⁹⁵ Borgatti, Everett, and Johnson, *Analyzing Social Networks*.

²⁹⁶ Th Thaulow, *En dansk-norsk slægt Falck* (Trydes Boghandel, 1931).

²⁹⁷ Kelsall, "The Danish Monopoly Trading Companies," 24.

society being formed by the most well-connected merchants and civil servants in the entire twenty-five-year period. Second in the index we find the DAC, describing how the company was successful in attracting the most well-connected directors and major shareholders of all the longer-lasting companies.

Actor	Degree	Betweenness
Holmsted, Frederik	6	1108
Soelberg, Hans Jørgen	6	1042
Black, Oluf	5	933
Kløcker, Hermann	6	862
Bentzon, Jacob	3	592
Friis, Johann Friderich	4	576
Henrichsen, Niels	3	402
Feddersen, Franz	5	328
Falck, Abraham	4	327
Hemert, Joost van	5	308
Berckentin, Christian	3	303
Bjørn, Andreas	3	302

Figure 29 – Key human actors of the network and their centralities. Source: *Hof- og Statskalenderen* etc.

This point is supported by the table in Figure 30, listing the actors of the network after the highest betweenness centrality, which measures how often a node falls on the shortest path between two other nodes in a network.²⁹⁸ Actors with a high betweenness are generally in an advantageous position to both obtain and influence information as it passes through them, unless the information can find another route.

Of the top twelve human actors of the network Bentzon, Henrichsen, Bjørn, and Berckentin were not involved in the management of the DAC, although Bjørn's shipyard built several ships for the company.²⁹⁹ The rest were either directors, or in the case of Feddersen, as *Hovedparticipant* and bookkeeper. At the very top with very similar scores of betweenness centrality we find Holmsted and Soelberg, both founders of the *Kinesiske Societet* sending the first expedition to China and both founders and directors of the DAC for several years. Soelberg is of particular interest since he provides an important link to Norway and the important timber production of the industrious southern Norway. Born in 1681, Soelberg received his citizenship in Copenhagen in 1707 as a merchant and timber trader, utilising the family links of his father and older brother who owned saw mills.³⁰⁰ Soelberg must have been quite successful, getting married shortly after arriving in Copenhagen, buying stocks in the West Indian-Guinean Company in 1719, and four years later being a *Hovedparticipant*. In 1728, he was part of the founding of the *Søassurance=Compagniet*, two years later director of the West Indian-Guinean Company, and director of one of the sugar refineries of the company. After starting *Kinesisk Societet* and DAC, buying stocks, and becoming

²⁹⁸ Borgatti, Everett, and Johnson, *Analyzing Social Networks*.

²⁹⁹ Klem, *Skibsbyggeriet i Danmark og bertugdommerne i 1700-årene*. Vol I

³⁰⁰ For references to the biographical details of Soelberg, please refer to his entry in the Maritime Museum of Denmark, "Business Wiki of the Oldenburg."

director of the latter, he was part of the creation of the Copenhagen Banco, thus being an extremely well-connected and central part of the business elite of the Oldenburg Monarchy.

Just underneath Holmsted and Soelberg we find Black, who was not only involved with the DAC and a large private merchant himself, but also provided an important link to the trade in the colonies of the North Atlantic, Finnmark, and Greenland.

Viewing the business landscape of the Oldenburg Monarchy as a network provides new insights into the most central actors of the period and also gives the opportunity to get a glimpse of the importance and revenue-generating potential of the trading companies of the time seen from the perspective of the merchants, as it can be assumed that they would have enough knowledge to primarily join the successful ventures. But what is missing from the network? As previously mentioned, the main source for the network is the *Hof- & Statskalender* which describes public and public-private companies, of which the royally privileged trading companies were also seen as. But all the private merchant houses of the period are missing due to a lack of sources, which explains the low eigenvector centralities of Michael Fabritius (0,16) and Johann Friderich Wever (0,15) despite their merchant house Fabritius & Wever seemingly being one of the most influential and wealthy of the eighteenth century. Much more research on the private merchant houses is needed, although the *Business Wiki of the Oldenburg Monarchy* already contains substantial, although scattered information about several of the houses. But despite the lack of data on the purely private trade and those merchants, the use of Social Network Analysis can still show not only how central the DAC was in the business landscape of the first half of the eighteenth century but even more importantly, how well-connected and influential its managers were. The same holds true for the Kinesiske Societet, founded by the top of the merchant elite.

Seen from the perspective of the China-trade, the social network analysis details how the trade was launched by the absolute merchant elite and later, how the DAC employed the most influential managers of any business organisation of the period.

Finally, the analysis highlights the need for further biographical studies of especially Soelberg, Holmsted, and Black for a deeper understanding of these extremely central actors of the business world. For as shown in this section, network analysis is very relevant in answering the who-, what- and how-questions,³⁰¹ such as who were the most central business actors of the 1740s in Copenhagen, what potential transfers of information, norm, and social control could take place in that business environment, or how were the central business organisations connected? But the more elusive why-questions still remain for the historian to answer, fortunately better equipped with the visualised information brought forth from network analysis.

The above analysis of the period would be interesting to repeat for a later period, but this is hindered by the disappearance of most of the companies later in the century. As Rasmus Nyerup wrote in 1800: “*Of proper trading companies none now exist except for the Asiatic Company. The story of the*

³⁰¹ As discussed in Stone, “The Revival of Narrative,”12.

*several trade societies, which were founded especially from the ascension of king Frederik V and [...] acted for a while, must now be found among [...] statisticians.”*³⁰²

Private Trade in China under Dannebrog

Having established a prosopographical overview of the directors and some insights into their business network, the interesting question emerges of how the networks, skills, and high levels of information available to present and previous directors were utilised. One way of examining that is to look at the emerging private trade in Canton. For although the DAC held a royal monopoly on all trade east of the Cape of Good Hope from 1730 to 1772 and a monopoly on China trade for the citizens of the Oldenburg Monarchy until its closure around 1840, several signs point towards private businessmen, many DAC-related, making money on the profitable trade as well. Although the concession from 1792 confirmed the monopoly of the DAC on the China trade, it also included the clause that this could change according to conditions of the market.³⁰³ Seven years later, in June 1797, all subjects of the Oldenburg Monarchy were allowed to sail and transport cargoes from China, but could not trade without paying a large fee to the DAC. The private ships trading in Asia were even allowed to fly the official swallow-tailed flag of the state for “[...] *the maintenance of the necessary respect*”³⁰⁴ as opposed to the simpler rectangular flag normally used by merchant’s ships.

But the private trade began sooner than that. In early 1778, the Hong merchant Ingsia of the Yan family was in financial difficulties, owing money to several business partners. He wanted to repay a loan to the East India Company, but was unable to since the DAC withheld part of their payment to him to settle Ingsia’s debt to a private Danish merchant.³⁰⁵ At the same time private merchants, most with ties to the DAC and their directors, sent ships to Canton despite the monopoly.

Seemingly emerging from the India trade, which required less capital than the China trade, the relationship between the DAC and the private trader was complex. An example is the short-lived clause in the 1778 DAC commission, stating that the leaders of private expeditions to Asia must not also hold positions in the DAC. After complaints from grand merchants such as the previous DAC-directors C.A. Fabritius, de Coninck, Ryberg, Brown, and others, the clause was evoked.³⁰⁶

As much of this trade was on the wrong side of the law, sources are hard to come by. But due to the impressive collection of data and sources by the historian Paul van Dyke in Guangzhou³⁰⁷, some of these shadowy ships can still be outlined, sometimes even with the owners and backers behind them by combining van Dykes work with Danish sources. Due to the nature of van Dyke’s data, a ship database based on information gathered by European captains actually on the Pearl River,

³⁰² My translation of ”*Egentlige Handelscompagnier er der nu ingen uden det asiatiske Compagnie. Historien om de adskillige Handelselskaber, som isar fra Friderich den Vtes Regeringstiltraedelse af ere blevne stiftede og [...] have gjort Figurer for en Stund, og derefter ere indgangne, maa søges hos [...] Statistikkere.*” R. Nyerup, *Kjøbenhavns Beskrivelse*, 380

³⁰³ Deuntzer I 1908, 372

³⁰⁴ My translation of “[...] *den dertil fornødne Anseelses Vedligeholdelse.*” Werner, *Christian Wilhelm Duntzfeldt*, 42.

³⁰⁵ Paul A. Van Dike, *Merchants of Canton and Macao* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011), 158.

³⁰⁶ Rasch and Sveistrup, *Asiatisk Kompagni i den florissante Periode*, 136.

³⁰⁷ According to conversations with van Dyke in 2017, the complete dataset will eventually be published, either in a book or digitally.

seeing or at least hearing about the ship first hand, they contain new information seemingly not possible to obtain using Danish sources. As this field does not seem to have been touched by historians before,³⁰⁸ all private ships under flying the Danish colours will be included in the following, no matter whether links to the DAC directors and company traders are apparent or not, as the true owners of goods and ships in several cases seems to be hidden beneath several layers not always visible to the first historians examining the area.

The first private ship appearing in the records flying the Danish colors was the CONCORDIA, which arrived at Whampoa in October 1778 from Bombay³⁰⁹ and finally going to Tranquebar, the main colony of the Oldenburg Monarchy in India and again in September 1779, this time from Madras,³¹⁰ on both occasions under the command of an Alexander Jamison. The ship was apparently taken by French privateers in the Strait of Malacca in 1780.³¹¹ No sources seem to describe who was backing the ship, which might have been carrying opium to China, but a likely candidate is the merchant and later DAC director Johan Leonhard Fix (1735-1807), who arrived in India in 1767 as a *Bogholder* or bookkeeper for the DAC³¹² and in 1776 partnered with the merchant and Freemason John Fenwick³¹³ of Elsinore, Denmark after being fired from the DAC service the same year. Together, they owned up to five ships before their partnership ended in court after disagreements between them.

Fix seems like a suitable candidate for being involved with this first private ship, as he was definitely involved in the second ship, the snow³¹⁴ CAROLINE MATILDA, which made two voyages to Whampoa under the command of Captain Adrian de Visser, a Dutch name. The first, arriving in August 1783 from Malacca,³¹⁵ carried DAC expertise in addition to opium, as the former DAC company trader Peter Kall who held the position of Assistant on the DRONNING JULIANE MARIA in 1776,³¹⁶ accompanied the ship, now as a private company trader. Due to his network, he was permitted to stay in the DAC factory in Canton and was praised as a man of vast knowledge,

³⁰⁸ An exception is the article by van Lottum and Brock describing a few sailors, among others Ponsaing, who was the captain of EENRUM, see below. Although their primary focus is on the sailors, interesting perspectives on the semi-illegal private China trade can be found here. Jelle van Lottum and Aske L Brock, "Evner, stædighed og held. Sømandsskæbner og social mobilitet i 1700-tallets København," *Siden Saxo* 3 (2014).

³⁰⁹ Van Dyke, "Ship Database."

³¹⁰ Van Dyke, "Ship Database."

³¹¹ Van Dyke, "Ship Database."

³¹² RA: DAC roll books for CRON PRINCEN AF DANEMARK, 1767.

³¹³ *Personallistorisk Tidsskrift* 1936:7. He is listed as a Freemason in K.L. Bugge, *Det danske Frimureriers Historie indtil 1765: Udarb. efter Den danske store Landsloves Arkiv* (Copenhagen, 1910), 221. Fenwick was previously the commissioner for the merchant and DAC director John Brown. Fenwick had also partnered with Carl Friedrich Godenius apparently the son of the earlier DAC supercargo J.H. Godenius, who sailed to China in 1744. Hakon Müller, "Af et helsingørsk Handelshus Historie," *Personallistorisk Tidsskrift* 56, 1935, 194. (RA: DAC Roll Books)

³¹⁴ Two-masted medium-sized sailing ship, similar to the later brig.

³¹⁵ Van Dyke, "Ship Database."

³¹⁶ RA: DAC Roll Books

especially of the Malay coast.³¹⁷ On the second voyage, the ship arrived in October 1784 with a cargo of opium from Bengal,³¹⁸ more precisely from the Danish trading station in Frederiksnagore on the Hoogli River. The cargo was handled in Canton by supercargo Mourier (see his narrative in Chapter IV) who described it quite openly in letters³¹⁹ back to the DAC directors in Copenhagen as a way to secure additional funds for the tea trade back to the Oldenburg Monarchy. This time Fix was partnered with the Frenchmen Melchoir le Beaume, who had previously obtained citizenship in Copenhagen with the help of DAC director Conrad Fabritius de Tengenagel.³²⁰ Le Beaume had earlier invested heavily in the trading house of DAC director Reinhard Iselin, previously of Basel, and an even larger sum in Tranquebar.³²¹ Iselin was the brother-in-law to Fabritius de Tengenagel.³²²

Another private Danish ship was the PRINCESS AUGUSTA,³²³ arriving in Whampoa in July 1786, perhaps named after the then twelve-year old Danish princess, daughter of the former queen Caroline Mathilde, exiled in 1772.

More is known about the fourth private ship flying Dannebrog, namely the brig BORNHOLM which arrived at Whampoa in July 1797 with Captain Herbert as its master.³²⁴ The relatively small ship departed from the Danish trading station in Frederiksnagore, where it also returned after delivering its cargo which consisted of opium on British accounts.³²⁵ The Security Merchant in Canton was Ponqua, who handled a total of thirteen DAC ships during his time from 1792-1805.³²⁶

The first private ship flying Danish colours to arrive from Copenhagen was the EENROON³²⁷ in August 1797.³²⁸ Three times the size of the BORNHOLM, the ship stopped in Plymouth, St. Jago, the Cape of Good Hope, and Batavia on the way, suggesting that the cargo to China was assembled on the go rather than consisting primarily of silver as with the official DAC ships. This is supported by other British sources claiming that the EENRUM, as they named it, carried a cargo of wine, iron, tea, gin, and other articles to Batavia, the income of which was sold to buy Chinese goods in

³¹⁷ RA: DAC Copenhagen: Letters from Canton 1783-12-7

³¹⁸ Van Dyke, "Ship Database."

³¹⁹ RA: Asiatisk Kompagni, Afdelingen i København: Indkomne breve fra faktoriet i Canton (1773-1791), 237, letters #56-58.

³²⁰ *Personalthistorisk Tidsskrift* 1936:7

³²¹ *Personalthistorisk Tidsskrift* 1936:7

³²² Biografisk Leksikon III

³²³ Van Dyke, "Ship Database."

³²⁴ Van Dyke, "Ship Database."

³²⁵ RA: Asiatisk Kompagni, Afdelingen i København: Negotieprotokol for CRON PRINCESSE MARIA 1796-1798, Ask 1211. Entry for 1797-07-14.

³²⁶ Paul A. Van Dyke, "The Danish Asiatic Company and the Chinese Hong Merchants 1734-1833," in Asmussen et al (ed.), *Business, Shipping and Culture: Danish-Norwegian Shipping in China for 300 Years* (Shanghai: National Maritime Research, China Maritime Museum, 2017).

³²⁷ Should rightly been EENRUM – "solitude" in Danish, see below.

³²⁸ Van Dyke, "Ship Database."

Canton.³²⁹ In Plymouth, the EENRUM seemed to have picked up British navigation officers to be used in later ship smuggling contraband Dutch goods without being discovered by the British navy. The captain, Joseph Anton Ponsaing, was very familiar with both the area and business from his many years in the DAC, first serving as a company trader, namely as a scribe and servant on two expeditions to China 1772-1774 and 1776-1778.³³⁰ After that, he decided to join the Navigation-section of the crew instead, with a long career as a mate in the DAC³³¹ and also became a freemason in the Copenhagen lodge *Zorobabel til Nordstjernen*.³³² Ponsaing was the captain when the EENRUM arrived on the Pearl River, but for unknown reasons attempted to take his own life, first with a saber and then with a razor blade. The attempt failed, and after being relieved of command and returning home, he would once again be hired as a mate on DAC ships. The trip home became quite long as the ship was captured by British privateers who suspected it was carrying contraband and the crew were taken prisoners.

Regarding the financial backers of the ship, the name reveals its connection to the previously mentioned Conrad Fabritius de Tegnagel, director of the DAC from 1772-1776 and before that *Hovedparticipant*, one of the main stock owners in the company.³³³ Besides being one of the founding members of the above-mentioned freemason lodge in Copenhagen, he also spent much time in his country estate *Enrum*, north of the city, purchased by his father in 1745.³³⁴ That he is behind the ship is further supported by Dutch sources which mention the house of Fabritius & Wever,³³⁵ one of the most influential and long-lasting Copenhagen merchant houses, founded by the father of Fabritius de Tegnagel and his father's distant relative, the merchant Johann Friederich Wever of Cleve, who also was deeply involved in the DAC.³³⁶ Although the history of the Copenhagen merchant houses is generally unexplored, it seems certain that the merchant house continued after Johann Friederich's death in 1759,³³⁷ probably run by Caspar Wilhelm Wever, merchant,

³²⁹ From an interrogation of a British captain Greenway, claiming to be the Danish master of the ship DENMARK, confiscated by the British for carrying goods in service of their enemies, the Dutch. Greenway was transported on the EENRUM as a passenger from Plymouth, most likely in the company of several others. *Papers Respecting Illicit Trade*, *38f (PDF p. 596f).

³³⁰ RA: DAC Roll Books for DRONNING SOPHIA MAGDALENA and PRINTZ FRIDERICH in the mentioned years.

³³¹ Lottum and Brock, "Evner, stædighed og held," 28-37.

³³² E.N. Ritzau, St. Joh.: *Zorobabel og Frederik til det kronede Haab: dens Historie og Medlemsfortegnelse fra de ældste Tider indtil 31. Decbr. 1881* (Copenhagen: 1882).

³³³ Holck, *Dannemarcks Handels=Speil 1766* (Copenhagen, 1766), 71.

³³⁴ Klem, *Skibsbyggeriet i Danmark og hertugdømmerne i 1700-årene*, vol. I, 200.

³³⁵ Van Dyke, "Ship Database."

³³⁶ Biografisk Leksikon III

³³⁷ It is mentioned as active in 1771 and 1772 by Schovelin, *Fra den danske handels empire* II,106, 151., as well as in 1776 by Kund Klem, *Skibsbyggeriet i Danmark og hertugdømmerne i 1700-årene*, 174., and finally up to 1797 in Jørgen Marcussen, *Rederier - Nogle oplysninger om danske rederier*. Database.

<http://www.jmarcussen.dk/maritim/mart/lexref/rederier/fabritius.html>. Accessed September, 2017.

freemason³³⁸ and seemingly his son, as well as Fabritius de Tengnagel. The EENRUM had more DAC connections beyond the backers and its captain – the first mate Carl Christian Tronier had a long career as mate on board DAC ships and would later be the captain of the last DAC ship.³³⁹

More hidden in the dark remains the LOUISA MARIA, also called the MARIA LOUIZA, which arrived in Whampoa in October 1797. Arriving from Batavia and continuing to Mauritius, a single Dutch source³⁴⁰ describes the ship as Tuscan, while another Dutch source along with Swedish and British sources describes it as Danish.³⁴¹ The name of the ship is not clearly indicative but perhaps leans a bit towards the Tuscan side, just like the name of its master, Captain Constantine.

One or more interesting characters that show up on numerous occasions on ships flying the Dannebrog in China is Captain Thystrup, the name suggesting a family origin in either the village or the shire of the same name in southern Jutland. From British, Dutch, Swedish, and Danish records, the following private ships appear under his or a similar name:

Captain	Security Merchant	Ship ³⁴²	Tonn.	Coming from	Arrived in Whampoa	Left Whampoa	Dest.
Thystrup	Cheongqua	FREDERIKS-NAGORE	200	Manila	1797-10-26	1798-01-00	?
P. Juhnstrup	Ponqua	COMMERCE	400	Manila	1798-10-17	1798-12-21	?
Tijstrup	Ponqua	CRON PRINCESSEN	550	Manila	1799-09-14	1799-11-22	?
P.Thustrop	Ponqua	COMMERCE	400	Manila	1799-09-29	1799-11-25	?
P. Thystrup	Ponqua	ALEXANDER	150	Bengal	1800-10-07	1800-11-15	Manila
P. Jönstrup	Ponqua	COMMERCE	400	Madras	1800-11-05	1800-12-21	Manila

The various spellings, together with the overlapping dates, points towards three possible scenarios:

1. A single captain named P. Thystrup or something similar was registered as the captain of all the above mentioned private ships flying Dannebrog. The overlapping dates in September 1799 and November 1800 are due to the same man bringing the first ship into the Pearl River Delta and then travelling back to for instance Macao to take over the next ship as soon as it arrived. Only with a Danish captain would the ship be allowed to fly Danish colours, leading to a recycling of captains.

³³⁸ Ritzau, *St. Job*.

³³⁹ From *Dansk Demografisk Database*, http://ddd.dda.dk/dop/visning_billed.asp?id=5964&sort=f Accessed November 2017

³⁴⁰ Van Dyke, “Ship Database.”

³⁴¹ Van Dyke, “Ship Database.”

³⁴² Van Dyke, “Ship Database.”

2. Besides Captain Thystrup and his ship-switching routine as mentioned above, another captain by the name of Jønstrup or something similar would be commanding the COMMERCE on its two voyages.
3. A third man also named Thystrup, perhaps a brother or father to the first Thystrup could also be present, commanding ships along with his relative in partnership from Manila.

Depending on the narrative we choose, between one and three captains appear. Opposed to scenario #2 is the ship COMMERCE, that both had a Juhnstrup/Juunstrop and a Thustrop as its master. Another thing vaguely pointing towards a single man behind the ship is a gravestone preserved at the cemetery at French Island, now Changzhou Island, in the Pearl River next to Whampoa. The text on the stone reads “*The Remains of Peter Tonstrup Esquire of Madras who departed this life on the 17th November 1810. Born in Copenhagen April 23rd 1756.*”³⁴³ Tonstrup might be yet another form of spelling the name, and the city of Madras links the deceased Tonstrup with the destination of the COMMERCE in 1800. Supporting this are two entries in the Dutch Dagregisters of 1810 discovered by Paul van Dyke – on November 12, 1810, the brig ELIZE arrived in Whampoa from Manilla with a supercargo Jünströp on board, deadly ill. Furthermore, the Dagregister mentions him as dead on the November 18th, which pretty much fits the tombstone. Confusingly, he is called a supercargo here, but captain in the ship database above, which hints at two men present instead of one. Hopefully, future research will provide clearer clues to this private trader using Dannebrog in China and where the financial backing came from – DAC directors and merchants remain prime suspects!

Another group of private ships in China under the Danish flag with more sources available consist of three ships, all carrying revealing names:

Captain	Security Merchant	Ship ³⁴⁴	Ton n.	Coming from	In Whampoa	Left	Destination
Herbert	Noeyqua	GREVE CHRISTIAN BERNSTORFF	750	Batavia	1798-10-18	1798-12-19	Copenhagen
Knudsen	Poeyqua	HENRIETTA	900	Batavia	1798-10-18	1799-01-13	Copenhagen
Alcock	Chonqua	CANNING-HOLM	774	Madras/Penang	1798-10-20	1799-01-13	Copenhagen

The three ships arrived within three days of each other, the first two even on the same day, suggesting they had accompanied each other from Batavia. Compared to the ships previously discussed, these three ships are quite large and similar, but perhaps a bit smaller to the DAC ships of the same period. Their arrival on the Pearl River in October 1798 suggests that they were equipped shortly after private transports to China were allowed in June 1797 as mentioned above.

The GREVE CHRISTIAN BERNSTORFF was purchased in Batavia a year before by Captain John Kennier Thompson in partnership with the two merchant houses of the Oldenburg Monarchy

³⁴³ My own transcription from visiting the site in September 2017.

³⁴⁴ Van Dyke, “Ship Database.”

of De Coninck & Co and Duntzfelt & Co for a price equivalent to 50,000 Danish rigsdaler.³⁴⁵ From the point of view of the historian, the fortunate event of this ship was its seizure by the British in 1798 at the Cape of Good Hope. Documents, letters, and other text were taken into custody and published for internal use by the British East India Company in the tome *Papers Respecting Illicit Trade*, containing several hundred documents believed to point towards what the British saw as contraband trade in Asia. Therefore, this ship provides an insight into the details of the intricate dealings of grand merchants such as the former DAC director de Coninck. The first voyage of GREVE CHRISTIAN BERNSTORFF must have been to Bombay, where it arrived in June 1797 with a Dutch cargo of sugar disguised as Danish.³⁴⁶ Another purpose was to throw the British off the tracks of the ship, which would later return to Batavia. The ship's Captain Smith died shortly after arrival in Bombay, and it was seen as very important by the men behind the smuggling scheme to replace him with a new Dane in order to keep up appearances. This was reported by Frantz Lichtenstein, a Dane born in India, second in command at the Danish colony of Tranquebar³⁴⁷ and working with the governor Peter Anker, brother of the DAC director Carsten Tank Anker and heavily indebted at the time.³⁴⁸ In his letter, he admits to his position as a civil servant has forced him to be “*covering, with a veil, my commercial connections*”³⁴⁹ and secretly being a full part of the merchant house of Ican, Bourguine & Co.

Another letter from April 1798 reveals details of the cargo on board the GREVE CHRISTIAN BERNSTORFF of 130,000 pounds of sugar as well as the involvement of Copenhagen merchant houses such as Fabritius & Wever³⁵⁰ and Schaarup, Black & Co,³⁵¹ both Schaarup and Black being directors of the DAC in the 1770s and 1750s-60s, respectively.

³⁴⁵ Marcussen, *Rederier*.

³⁴⁶ “Translation of a letter, dated 4th September, 1797, from Mr. Lichtensteen, at Tranquebar, to Mr. Englhard, at Batavia, intercepted at St. Helena.” in *Papers Respecting Illicit Trade*, *18 (PDF p. 576).

³⁴⁷ Kjell Hodne, *Danske embetsmenn og indiske eliter i kolonien Trankebar: interaksjoner, 1777-1808*, (MA thesis. University of Oslo, 2007).

³⁴⁸ Biografisk Leksikon III

³⁴⁹ *Papers Respecting Illicit Trade*, *20 (PDF p. 578).

³⁵⁰ *Papers Respecting Illicit Trade*, *23 (PDF p. 581).

³⁵¹ “Extract of a Letter from JOHN ENGLEHARD to Messrs. FABRICIUS and WEAVER, dated 18th April, 1798.” in *Papers Respecting Illicit Trade*, *25 (PDF p. 583).



Figure 30 - The existence of a painting of HENRIETTE entering the Pearl River poses interesting questions. Was it ordered by de Coninck himself, or by crewmembers on the journey? Was it displayed at de Coninck's manor to proudly tell the story of his worldwide trade, or was it hidden in a private study, reflecting the dubious nature of the trade? Was it painted by a Chinese painter in 1798-99 or later as remembrance of the event?

Photo: Maritime Museum of Denmark

After the initial trip to Bombay, the ship returned to Batavia via the Danish trading station at the Malabar Coast, under the command of a Gerrit Belmar, arriving at Christmas in 1797.³⁵² From here it must have headed towards European waters, and was captured by the British at the Cape of Good Hope most likely around summer time in 1798. Nonetheless, the ship shows up at Whampoa on the Pearl River in October 1798,³⁵³ indicating that just the cargo of the ship was confiscated by the British, allowing the ship to continue its trade. Just before Christmas 1798, the ship again set sail for Copenhagen. After this voyage, the flag of the ship changed from Danish to Prussian, although the captain remained the same. Another voyage must have begun in Copenhagen in the early summer of 1800 and after a stop in Emden in Friesland and Sourabaya in Java, the ship reached Whampoa in January 1801, returning to Emden later.³⁵⁴ On another voyage flying Prussian colours, GREVE CHRISTIAN BERNSTORFF reached Whampoa in July 1802, coming from Batavia.³⁵⁵ Although the flag changed, it seems reasonable to assume that some of the same financial backers were behind it since the ship kept its distinct name after the Danish foreign minister count Christian

³⁵² "EXTRACT of a Letter, dated 28th of February, 1798, from Mr. ENGLEHARD at Batavia, to a Mr. SCHMEDT" in *Papers Respecting Illicit Trade*, *24 (PDF p. 582).

³⁵³ Van Dyke, "Ship Database."

³⁵⁴ Van Dyke, "Ship Database."

³⁵⁵ Van Dyke, "Ship Database."

Günther Bernstorff (1769-1835), the last in his family dynasty to fill the post as foreign minister of the Oldenburg Monarchy.

The two other ships indicate similar connections by their names. The ship HENRIETTE was named after one of the daughters of Frédéric de Coninck, which is further reinforced by the existence of a painting in the collection of the Maritime Museum of Denmark, showing the clearly named ship entering the mouth of the Pearl River, with the painting listed in the museum records as showing de Coninck's ship. By sheer luck, the roll book of the HENRIETTE was discovered by a curator of the Maritime Museum of Denmark in a used-book shop just after the Second World War, providing a unique insight into the composition of the crew. The roll book is dated May 8th, 1797 and is signed by the Copenhagen harbour master Jens Klim. The names, positions, and origins of the planned 105 crew members are filled in except for 15 positions where names and origins have been left out.

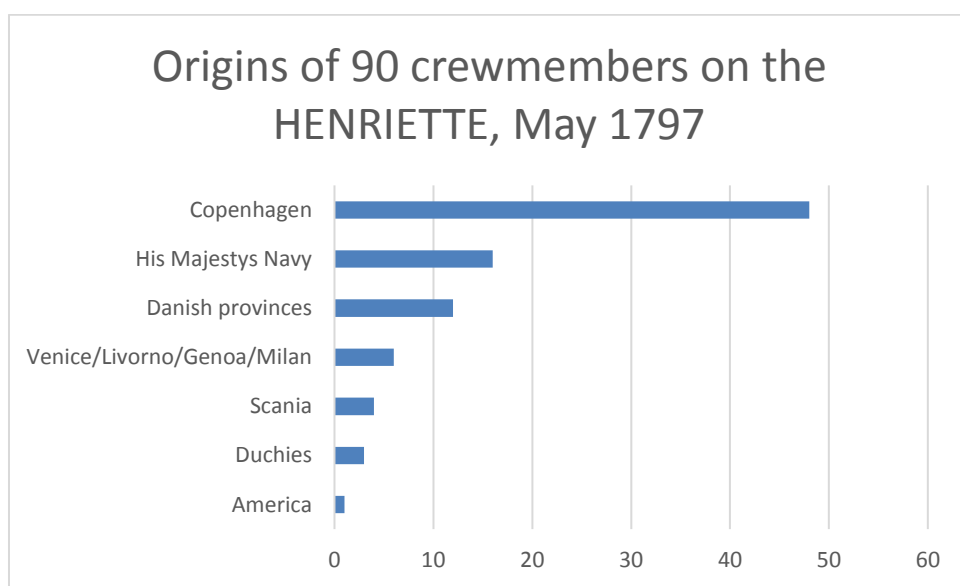


Figure 31 - Source: Museum object #1948:0176, Maritime Museum of Denmark.

While the clear majority of the crew originates from Copenhagen, a large group seems to have been permitted leave from the Navy to participate in the expedition, hinting at a governmental goodwill towards the expedition. Even the captain, Peter Norden Sølling was on leave from the Navy, just as he had been earlier participating in several expeditions with DAC ships to India.³⁵⁶ He was also responsible for purchasing the HENRIETTE in Marseille for the House of the de Coninck in 1796.³⁵⁷ His experience would however not be utilised fully on this expedition, as the HENRIETTE had to enter the Thames for repairs early in the voyage and here Sølling fell ill, leading him to being left behind. Several members of the crew deserted due to the higher wages in Britain, and forty

³⁵⁶ Biografisk Leksikon II

³⁵⁷ O.C. Nielsen, *Commandeur, Waterschout, Ridder Peter Norden Sølling og Somandsstiftelsen Bombebøssen: personalhistorisk-byhistorisk-topographisk Skildring* (Copenhagen: Arnold Busck, 1936), 6.

crewmembers were sent from Copenhagen to fill the ranks.³⁵⁸ Most likely along with the fresh crew members, Captain Knudsen also arrived who would take the ship to Batavia and Whampoa.³⁵⁹

The roll book also describes no less than six of the original crewmembers from present-day northern Italy, four from the province of Scania, lost by the Oldenburg Monarchy to Sweden in 1659, and finally a single sailor listed as coming from *America*, emphasising the international sailor's environment that must have been present in Copenhagen. To handle the trade, a single assistant named Hasfeldt was brought along. Another noteworthy detail is the inclusion of no less than three trumpeters among the crew. It was customary for the DAC to include trumpeters on their ships until the middle of the eighteenth century, according to the company roll books. Whether it became unfashionable to bring them anymore or if ordinary seamen would be playing the instruments remains unclear, but their inclusion on board the HENRIETTE clearly speaks about the need of manifesting status as a private vessel and of de Coninck's ownership, perhaps even more than the DAC ships.

The last ship, CANNINGHOLM, should rightly be named KANINHOLM, named after a peninsula at the lake Furesøen, next to de Coninck's impressive estate Dronninggaard north of Copenhagen. The frigate KANINHOLM was captured by a French privateer in May 1799 and taken to Bordeaux.³⁶⁰ This has made the ship and its backers appear in a number of sources, allowing for a glimpse of the owners behind it. The ship was originally English with the name RODNEY, and was sold to the company of Duntzfelt & Co in 1797, led by the DAC director of the same name, who was also the son-in-law of de Coninck. The captain, John Alcock, was also originally British but had received citizenship in Copenhagen in 1795. On the way from Copenhagen to Canton via Trankebar, the ship stopped in Portsmouth to pick up a Dutch supercargo, Becker-Teerlin, who would be in charge of the trade in China. On the return journey, however, it was captured packed with Chinese tea and was eventually confiscated under the suspicion of being British property. The ironic fate of a ship smuggling Dutch goods behind the back of the British navy, but eventually being captured by the French who were allied with the Dutch and were enemies of the British, leads the biographer Werner to speculate whether de Coninck who was the owner of the ship, had used his extensive network among the British to make sure that it could safely travel across the British blockades.³⁶¹ That the frigate HENRIETTE also made a stop in Britain on the way to Asia seems to back this, although it could also be because of an accident at sea. The three ships were part of a grand scheme set up by de Coninck and other Copenhagen merchants with links to the DAC to move the cargoes of the new Batavian Republic, which the British considered contraband, to Europe. The Batavian Republic, from 1795 the successor-state to the United Netherlands and client-state to France, had been at war with Britain since its founding and along with the decline and eventual bankruptcy of the VOC, this led to large

³⁵⁸ Jarle G. Bjørklund and Arne E. Christensen, *Peter Norden Sølling – Den dekkede losbåtenes far* (Kystverkmusea & Kystverket, 2012), 17.

³⁵⁹ Van Dyke, "Ship Database."

³⁶⁰ Werner, *Christian Wilhelm Duntzfeldt*, 87.

³⁶¹ Werner, *Christian Wilhelm Duntzfeldt*, 91.

cargoes being available for shipment to Europe. In this case, 19,000 tons would be available for transport, valued around five million rigsdaler and requiring thirty-eight ships for transport from Batavia.³⁶²

The ship GREV CHRISTIAN BERNSTORFF is especially interesting in this regard, especially with its connection to the city of Emden in Lower Saxony. This had been the home of the short-lived Emden East India Company or KPAC,³⁶³ started in 1752 to trade with Canton. Although the trade went well, the company closed as the city was captured by the French during the Seven-Years War. Connections between merchants of Emden and Copenhagen and their use of flags seems like an interesting topic for further research, as other signs point towards a shared interest. For instance, on the return voyage from Canton in June 1797, the DAC ship DANNEMARK encountered a small ship by the name of DEN JUNGE THOMAS flying Dannebrog. The ship was on its way from Emden to Surinam.³⁶⁴

Another ship of the almost same name, GREV BERNSTORFF had been equipped by a private company in Copenhagen led by de Coninck as well as the merchants Thalbitzer, Reiersen, and John Brown³⁶⁵ in 1774, with both de Coninck and Brown being DAC directors at the time. The ship was sold in India in 1779 after several voyages to the East Indies, and a new one purchased and given the same name in 1780. After five voyages to India, this ship was also sold in 1789,³⁶⁶ and the ship's name does not seem to appear again connected to de Coninck before 1796. The use of the name by de Coninck must have reflected the gratitude felt by him towards the earlier Count Johan Hartvig Ernst Bernstorff, foreign minister of the Oldenburg Monarchy from 1751. He was thus in command when the young de Coninck first arrived in Copenhagen in 1763 with letters of recommendation³⁶⁷ among others directed towards the older Bernstorff, written by de Coninck's father. The feeling of gratitude must have endured despite generations of the Bernstorff family serving as foreign ministers, allowing the merchant ships of de Coninck and others to be convoyed from Asia back to Copenhagen – one of several factors leading to the involvement of the Oldenburg Monarchy in the Napoleonic Wars first in 1801 and later from 1807-14. The approval of the transport of Dutch contraband cargoes disguised towards the British was approved by the foreign ministers, at least according to de Coninck.³⁶⁸

After the grand plot of bringing Dutch contraband back to Europe, using Canton as part of a guise to hide the origins of the cargo, the last ships appearing in the sources as flying the Dannebrog seems more peaceful. The ANGELINA arrived in Whampoa as a private Danish ship in September

³⁶² Feldbæk, "Dutch Batavia trade via Copenhagen," 49.

³⁶³ Its full name was the *Königlich Preußische Asiatische Compagnie in Emden nach Canton und China*. Daniel Suebsman, "Chinese Porcelain Shipped by the Royal Prussian Asian Company of Emden. 1753-1756," in *Have a Cup of Tea! Chinese Porcelain and Tea in North-West Germany* (Ostfriesisches Landesmuseum Emden, 2015).

³⁶⁴ Lehmann, *Til Østen under Sejl*, 63.

³⁶⁵ Marcussen, *Rederier*.

³⁶⁶ Marcussen, *Rederier*.

³⁶⁷ Hennings, *Familien de Coninck*, 1901, 6-8

³⁶⁸ Feldbæk, "Dutch Batavia trade via Copenhagen."

1800, led by Captain G. Streng.³⁶⁹ Coming from Madras and Manila, the ship soon after returned to Manila. The AMAZON came from the trading station of Frederiksnagore in Bengal, arriving in Whampoa in September 1806 under the command of Captain C. Sonningsen.³⁷⁰ Like the previous ship, it is quite possible that it carried a load of opium. The same can be said for the Danish ship ERNESTINA, also coming from Frederiksnagore to Whampoa in late 1806 under the command of Captain F. du Puy and proceeding to Manila.³⁷¹ The ship ANTONETTA is a more special case, arriving at Whampoa in January 1816³⁷² after the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars, and thus apparently flying the Danish colours for the first time since before the war. The relatively large ship was commanded by Captain J.P. Rhode, which sounds Danish. The ship was one out of two private ships allowed under special permission from the state to trade in China, paying fees to the DAC, the other ship being NORDEN, sent off via Lisbon a year after the ANTOINETTE, as the Danish sources call it, which stopped in Brazil on the outward journey.³⁷³ The financial backing for the expedition came from several previous DAC directors such as Erichsen and Ryberg as well as the future director Tutein³⁷⁴ and the company Blacks Enke & Co, named after its previous director.³⁷⁵

Several other private ships flying Dannebrog began to sail from 1828, as detailed by Gøbel in his article from 2017, where the China trade of the Oldenburg Monarchy began to enter a new and more fragmented phase.

In conclusion, it is clear the grand merchants with ties to the DAC were very quick to make use of the new possibilities offered by the lifting of the monopolies of the DAC in both 1772 and 1797, entering into what Feldbæk has described as “*a tangled web of competition and cooperation.*”³⁷⁶ For while the companies and private merchants competed among each other and their respective countries did the same, cooperation was also present. Loyalties lay with the home country but also among business connections in Asia, and neutral flags like the Dannebrog were used as a veil to allow trade to continue unhindered, despite wars in Europe. This was not new, and the companies, merchants, and flags cooperating to reach new markets or use favourable conditions of others seems to have been an important factor in the European trade in Asia early on. An interesting example was in 1745, when the first Danish ship was sent from Tranquebar in India to Manila. Behind the expedition was a French merchant, who persuaded the DAC to buy a French ship, along with a Scottish supercargo with experience from the Oostende Company, and a crew consisting of Portuguese and Indian sailors. The Tranquebar administration supplied the ship with Danish papers, renamed the ship DANSBORG after the town fort, and hired a Danish captain. Hindu

³⁶⁹ Van Dyke, “Ship Database.”

³⁷⁰ Van Dyke, “Ship Database.”

³⁷¹ Van Dyke, “Ship Database.”

³⁷² Van Dyke, “Ship Database.”

³⁷³ Erik Gøbel, “The Danish Asiatic Company and Its China Trade 1732-1838” in *Business, Shipping and Culture: Danish-Norwegian Shipping in China for 300 Years* (Shanghai: National Maritime Research, China Maritime Museum, 2017), 20.

³⁷⁴ Marcus Rubin, *1807-14: Studier til Københavns og Danmarks Historie* (Copenhagen: Phillipsens Forlag, 1892), 500.

³⁷⁵ Deuntzer, “Af det asiatiske Kompagnis Historie. Andet Afsnit. Efter 1807,” 470.

³⁷⁶ Feldbæk, “Country Trade under Danish Colours,” 97.

merchants provided goods for the trip to Manila which was a great success, leading to similar voyages which included British actors in the years to come.³⁷⁷

Not long after private ships of the Oldenburg Monarchy were allowed in India, merchants, especially of Copenhagen, took advantage of this opportunity and almost the instant that private trade is allowed in China, ships appeared from the merchant houses in Copenhagen at Whampoa. This suggests that the present and former directors were active in forming the politics and not just using them to their advantage, taking advantage of the complex mercantile situation in China and Asia.

Finally, the analysis also details that despite operating in a time before telegraphs and other fast methods of communication, the long distance did not stop the merchants of Copenhagen from trading far away, engaged in complex schemes, thanks to their networks. Despite the monopoly of the DAC, private trading began early and grew over time, utilising the experience and especially the networks created by merchants connected to the DAC.

Merchant Houses

Several of the DAC directors were engaged in merchant houses, especially in Copenhagen. Seen from a modern perspective, the merchant houses of the eighteenth century were quite fragile organisations often wholly dependent on the skills and network of a single person. Johan Leonhard Fix, one of the directors of the DAC from 1791-1805, described the workings of the European merchant houses in India in a discussion on whether the DAC should maintain permanent factories for the benefit of the trade in India or instead use travelling company traders or local merchant houses. Most likely his concerns can also be applied to similar houses in both Copenhagen and Canton:

The merchant who has gathered funds ships them to Europe as soon as possible and follows suit later. The merchant house is now left to another, who intends to do the same as the predecessor, but lack both his diligence and experience, and even a slight push can force the house on its knees. Experience shows, that the merchant houses that 10-12 years ago were the highest regarded in Madras and Calcutta no longer exist, but others and aliens now hold that position.³⁷⁸

Fix's fear that merchants disappear as soon as they have made an adequate sum of money resonates with concern expressed by Count Thott fifty years earlier. Both for the state and for a large company, stability among the merchants and their houses was to be preferred, but other rationalities seems to have been favoured by the actors themselves.

³⁷⁷ Holden Furber, *Rival empires of trade in the Orient 1600-1800* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976), 287-288.

³⁷⁸ My translation of "Den Kjøbmand, som haver samlet Midler, sender dem til Europa, saasart god Lejlighed gives, og gaar selv bag efter. Handelshuset overlades nu til en anden, som tænker at gjøre det samme som Formanden, men mangler baade hans Virksomhed og Erfarenhed, og ved et lidet Stød er det paa Knæerne. Erfarenhed viser, at de Handelshuse, som for 10 á 12 Aar siden vare meest i Anseelse paa Madras og i Calcutta, existere ikke nu, men det er andre og fremmede, som nu ere i Anseelse." from *Forskjællige Betænkninger, betræffende Factoriernes Afskæffelse eller Vedblivelse, foranledigede ved Udarbeidelsen af det Asiatiske Compagnies Conventions 5. Capitel, og ved Trykken bekjendtgjorde i Følge Interessenternes Beslutning i General-Forsamlingen, holden den 18. Febr. 1796, 1796*, Copenhagen, 2

One way of handling the fragility of a firm resting upon the shoulders of only one individual was by entering partnerships, and several merchant houses built on successful partnerships seem to have lasted for longer periods. One example is the merchant partnership between Peder Leuch of Christiania in Norway and Peter Collett of London, whose joint house of Collett & Leuch would continue for a hundred years after its founding early in the eighteenth century, engaged in the prosperous timber trade.³⁷⁹ The most relevant example from Copenhagen would be the likewise long-lived house of Fabritius & Wever, founded in 1740³⁸⁰ by Michael Fabritius, merchant, director of the DAC, commissioner of the Copenhagen Banco, and member of the Reformed Church in Copenhagen. He partnered with his distant relative Johann Friedrich Wever, who was a merchant, *Hovedparticipant*, and later director of the DAC. After the death of Fabritius in 1746, Wever married his widow and continued the merchant house, most likely with his possible son Casper Wilhelm Wever, merchant and freemason.³⁸¹ The house of Fabritius & Wever continued at least as long as the last years of the eighteenth century, where they were involved in transporting Dutch contraband from Asia to Europe, as described in the previous section. Another similar example is the House of Black, founded in Copenhagen by the merchant Oluf Black from Aarhus in 1740. After Black's death in 1767, his son Christen Schaarup Black took over until his own death in 1783. The family firm was carried on by his widow Johanne Black under the name of C.S. Blacks Enke & Co, the "&Co" referring to a previous senior employee of the firm, Erich Erichsen, who married the widow Johanne in 1785 and led the firm until his personal bankruptcy in 1833, remarkably continuing the old company through the difficult period of the Napoleonic Wars.³⁸²

III.2 - The Company Traders

Due to the thorough bureaucracy of the Oldenburg Monarchy, the well-preserved archives and the many searchable, digitised sources makes it possible to get an

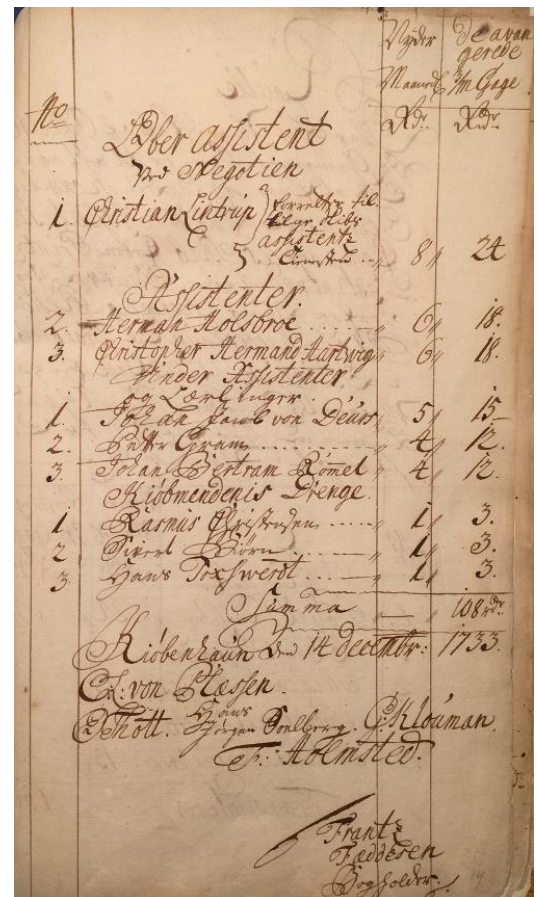


Figure 32 - The last page of the roll book of the DAC ship SLESWIG, signed in December 1735. The names of the senior assistant, assistants, junior assistants as well as merchant's boys are listed along with their monthly wages. Often, details about promotions, deaths, loans, etc. would be noted in the margin for a person. Photo by the author at the National Archive in Copenhagen.

³⁷⁹ John P. Collett and Bård Frydenlund, *Christianias handelspatrisiat: en elite i 1700-tallets Norge* (Oslo: Andresen & Butenschøn, 2008), 236.

³⁸⁰ Marcussen, *Rederier*.

³⁸¹ Ritzau, *St. Joh.*

³⁸² Marcussen, *Rederier*.

impression of all of the fifty-three directors of the DAC. The situation is different when it comes to the approximately 400 company traders. Most of them are shrouded in darkness. To shed light on the actors who facilitated the trade between the Oldenburg Monarchy and China, an overview in the shape of a database was needed. Fortunately, a single type of source well suited for at least identifying all company traders had been preserved – namely the roll books for every ship the DAC sent to China. For each expedition, the *Navigation*-section of the crew was first listed, the individuals who were responsible for the voyage itself, typically between 100-140 people. Then, the *Negotie*-section of the crew was listed, between 2-18 men. Finally, any eventual passengers on the expedition would be listed, and the books would be signed by the bookkeeper and the directors.

To get an overview of the company traders and allow analysis of both the traders and the expeditions, a database was created containing almost 1,100 person-expeditions. Each entry in the database was given a ID-number and then data was entered, namely: the traders name, position, wages and bonus if available, ship, the date the roll book was signed, expedition destinations, as well as any additional information from the margins of the roll books, such as information on loans taken before the journey, whether the trader was staying or returning from Canton, and sometimes even the death of the trader on the voyage.

An initial challenge lay in cleaning the data for analysis due to the wide variety in the spelling of names, necessitating for instance figuring out whether Georg Frik was the same as Gregoris Frich, if the assistants Allewelt and Ahleveldt were the same etc., as well as taking care not to mix family members with very similar names. Fortunately, most of the names are relatively uncommon or even rare in an Oldenburg State-context, so no duplicate traders of the exact same name seem to have been working for the trading section of the DAC in the more than 100 years of its existence. Nonetheless, the risk of fusion – where several actors melt into one – or fission – where a single actor appears as more than one – remains. After trimming the data to remove expeditions that never really got started, the database contains 1,014 person-expeditions, one entry for every time a person signed up for a voyage. After identifying the traders with a unique name each, a list of 422 names appears - names of all the company traders who made one or more voyages to China from 1732 to 1833.

The names in the roll books were usually entered some time before the departure of an expedition, thus they represent an intention of participation in a journey. Several ships suffered shipwrecks at some point in their journey, disappeared in storms, or burned. As the interests of this thesis concern the company traders, as well as their accumulation and transmission of knowledge rather than on the ships, a few expeditions have been omitted from the database. The first is SLESWIG, which shortly after saluting for Kronborg on January 23rd, 1741 was wrecked near Gothenburg on the Swedish coast. The second is the CRONPRINTZEN, which in early 1745 was wrecked at the Orkney Islands and finally the CHRISTIANSBORG SLOTT and the PRINTZ FRIDERICH AF DANNEMARC, both wrecked near Gothenburg in 1750 and 1769. With respect to experience of the trading crew, these expeditions never really got started, and it seems like the crews found their way back to Copenhagen where the same crew would participate in new expeditions a year or two later. Other ships that suffered accidents, such as the DRONNINGEN AF DANMARCK, which vanished in the Indian Ocean in 1746, the PRINCESSE WILHELMINE CAROLINE which was wrecked at St. Helena in 1755 on the return voyage from China, and the PRINCESSE SOPHIA

FRIDERICIA which burned in Canton in 1780 have been included in the database as it seems that despite the failure to complete the voyages, the trading crews still carried experiences and knowledge from previous expeditions and in most cases, eventually made it back to Copenhagen to continue their jobs. Their exclusion, therefore, would limit the potential of the database to answer questions.³⁸³

All company traders as well as data about their voyages and ranks on board was then transferred to the wiki, where additional data would be added from both systematical and random searches, providing extra details about some of these actors. Finally, all the additional data was transferred from the wiki and into another database, allowing analysis of the company traders.

Company Traders on Ships and in China

A first step is establishing the number of company traders on each expedition to China. With the data from the DAC roll books, a tendency in the number of company traders is clear.

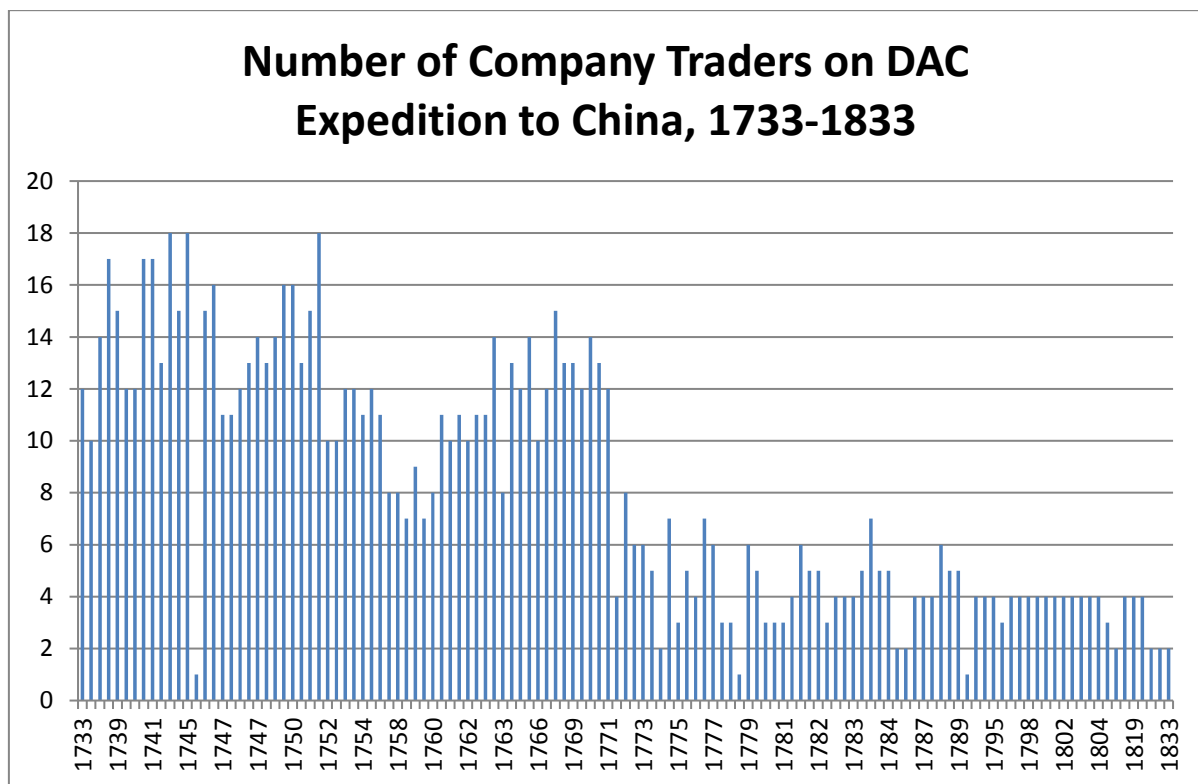


Figure 33 - Source: DAC Roll Books, National Archives of Denmark

Figure 34 highlights the move towards higher cost-efficiency in the crews of the Chinamen of the DAC. While the expeditions to China in the 1740s and 1750s brought up to eighteen company traders, four to six became the norm from the 1770s, going all the way down to only two company traders in the final voyages. The graph could also be interpreted as a measure of the difficulty of the trade and of the number of obstacles the company traders had to overcome. The graph points to a development in the Canton System towards a greater standardisation, making it possible for two

³⁸³ All expedition data above comes from the master thesis of Gøbel from 1978

men to do the work that previously was thought to require the work efforts of eighteen men. Experienced supercargoes like Vogelsang had previously stated that at least one supercargo and three assistants were needed to secure goods for a single ship, if the company traders were brought along from Copenhagen instead of staying in the local environment,³⁸⁴ but the trade was nonetheless carried out.

In Figure 34, the early 1770s marks the major shift in the number of traders sent to Canton. This interestingly correlates with the effect of the changes made to the market in Canton by Chinese officials to advance competition among merchants, as described by van Dyke.³⁸⁵ In 1764, Chinese officials responded to a growing concern that the Co-Hong had become too powerful by allowing inland tea suppliers to supply up to 30 percent of the needs of the European merchants. The effect was immediate, allowing trade to grow, and by 1770 Chinese production and European demand were in balance, allowing ships to depart on schedule and variations in the number of ships arriving were easily met with similar changes of supply. Thus, the severe decline in the number of company traders, beginning with the voyage of PRINTZ FRIDERICH, which saluted castle Kronborg in late November 1772, correspond with the news of the new and easier conditions for trade in Canton. However, 1772 is also the year where the original forty-year *Octroy* or concession from 1732 for DAC ran out, and a new royal monopoly was given. The new concession maintained the monopoly of the company on the China trade, but now allowed private traders to participate in the Indian trade. The new concession stated that the factory in Canton should constantly be staffed by two supercargoes and two assistants, and that every DAC ship going to China should bring both a supercargo and an assistant.³⁸⁶ The Roll Books reveal, however, that this goal of efficiency was not reached until much later. Most likely the news about the greater flow of trade had reached the directors of the DAC, who discussed and prepared the new concession along with government officials in late 1771 and early 1772, thus supporting the endeavours to minimise the costs of the expeditions.

Seen from the perspective of network theory, the decision to change from travelling company traders to more permanent positions in China also meant a change in the individual networks of the traders. While the company traders prior to 1772 would spend about fifteen months on board the ship and three months in China for each expedition, the numbers were now reversed with most of their time spent in China and only a short time with other DAC personnel from each expedition. Thus, their business networks must also gradually have shifted from primarily other DAC traders to that of Chinese merchants as well as other Western traders in the Pearl River Delta. Therefore their position as brokers must have grown in importance, emphasising their role as intermediaries between the Chinese and Oldenburg merchants.

³⁸⁴ *Forskjællige Betænkninger, betreffende Factoriernes Afskaffelse eller Vedblivelse, foranledigede ved Udarbeidelsen af det Asiatiske Compagnies Conventions 5. Capitel, og ved Trykken bekjendtgjorde i Følge Interessenternes Beslutning i General-Forsamlingen, holden den 18. Febr. 1796*, 1796, Copenhagen, III

³⁸⁵ Van Dyke., *Merchants of Canton and Macao*, 217.

³⁸⁶ Rasch and Sveistrup, *Asiatisk Kompagni i den florissante Periode*, 27.

Company Trader Positions

Almost every DAC ship going to China brought between one to three supercargoes. The supercargoes were overall responsible for the trade in Canton and with their responsibilities came substantial wages, both in pay per month, usually 24 rigsdaler, as well as a bonus, *föringspenge*, which was to be paid upon a successful journey. Both the monthly pay and the bonus varied with rank and experience, as the Roll Books of each expedition clearly shows. The bonus varied between 1,000 rigsdaler, as was paid to 3rd Supercargo Stephen Balck after a successful voyage with the PRINCESSE LOWISE from 1757-58, to the 7,000 rigsdaler which was due to 1st Supercargo Marcus Christian Swensen after his voyage with GRAF MOLTKE, 1759-62, and again after his subsequent voyage with KONGEN AF DANNEMARK, 1762-64.

Positions on board changed names during the decades of the trade, including that of the trader who was overall responsible for the cargo. In the 1730s he was called *Kiøbmand* or merchant, which from 1737 was termed *Supercargo*, often with degrees such as 1st, 2nd or 3rd Supercargo, until the term changed to *Negotiechef* or head of trade from 1794 until the last expedition in 1833. The word supercargo comes from the Spanish *sobrecargo*, literally meaning “above the cargo.” In the eighteenth century it was used generally for the person in charge of the cargo on board a ship. The position seems to have been used occasionally for the DAC India trade, even though the roll books do not reveal who filled that position on board. Slave ships seem to have used the term as well, at least in the late seventeenth century.³⁸⁷

The numerous assistants who accompanied the ships to China had several assignments. They could be responsible for the packing of a specific type of good, keeping journals and protocols of the trade, as well as making copies of these. One of the assistants kept the *Negotieprotokol*, where detailed information about the transactions of goods in China was kept.³⁸⁸ A new position appearing at the lower end of this middle hierarchy in 1772, after the new concession, was the *Volonteur*, meaning volunteer. Despite the title, this type of company trader was indeed paid, as the Roll Books show, but somewhat less than even the junior assistants.

An example of this division of labour can be seen with the expedition of KONGEN AF DANMARK which arrived in Whampoa in 1799. In the instructions from the company directors, the tasks of the individual company traders were established before the ship even left port. The negotiechef oversaw the packing of tea, sugar, and nankeens,³⁸⁹ as well as checking the weight of all goods and handling the correspondence. An assistant oversaw the porcelain packing and kept the trading journal and main account book. Two assistants kept copies of the trade journal, assisted in the packing, and were in charge of goods sent from the ship and into the factory in Canton. The volunteer kept the letter copy book, wrote bills, and generally assisted in the packing.³⁹⁰

³⁸⁷ F. Krarup, Jørgen Iversen (Dyppel): *Dansk-vestindisk Compagnies første Gouverneur paa Sankt Thomas* (Copenhagen, 1891), from page 20.

³⁸⁸ Lehmann, *Til Østen under Sejl*, 40.

³⁸⁹ Chinese cotton cloth, usually a pale-yellow color.

³⁹⁰ Lehmann, *Til Østen under Sejl*, 89-90.

In the early voyages of the 1730s and 1740s several journeys included one or more *Kiobmandenes Dreng* or merchant's boys and sometimes a *Lærling* or apprentice as well. This practice seems to stop according to the DAC Roll Books in around 1750 for the apprentices and in 1744 for the merchant's boys. Instead, a new category appears in the middle of the 1740s, namely *Supercargoens Serviteur*, or the supercargo's servant.

Apprentice			Merchant's Boy			Servant of Supercargo		
# Total	# Career	% Further	# Total	# Career	% Further	# Total	# Career	% Further
24	12	50.0%	28	7	25.0%	112	11	9.8%

Figure 34 - Source: DAC roll books, National Archive of Denmark

These three occupations constitute the lower tier of the company traders and for some, a point of entry to a career in the China trade. But were these positions mostly career beginnings or were they to a higher extent jobs in themselves? With the complete data of all the company traders from the Roll Books, it is possible to see the careers in the China trade of all company traders from 1730 till the end of the DAC in the 1840s. In Figure 34 every person who at some point worked in one of the three occupations has been tracked to see whether they continued in the China trade or not. For the Apprentices, it seems clear that it was a point of entry for many with ambition, since half of them continued a career in the China trade. Other might have continued in the service of the DAC with the trade in India or in the navigation section of the crew, but in order to answer that question, tens of thousands of names from the Roll Books need to be transcribed.³⁹¹

For the merchant's boys, even fewer continued on to a longer career in the China trade. For about 25 percent of them, a beginning as a merchant's boy led to an apprenticeship and then to a further careers. This applies for instance to Eliser Dyssel, who continued to sail for fifteen years, ending as 3rd Supercargo on a voyage in 1755. Dyssel also gives us a clue to the age of the merchant's boys, as he was around nineteen years old when he undertook his first voyage to China as such.³⁹² Unfortunately the age of the remaining merchant's boys cannot be established, but it is my expectation that it is somewhat lower than in the case of Dyssel.

After around 1750, only the servants of the supercargoes remain in this tier. However, they are quite numerous partly due to the many years of operation, but only around 10 percent continued in the China trade. This seems to suggest that being a servant was a career choice, although there are examples of servants of supercargoes entering the trade with great success such as Frantz Wilhelm

³⁹¹ Hopefully, this will be a project in the coming years for either the Maritime Museum of Denmark or the National Archives, as a complete database of all crew of the DAC ships going to Asia would be immensely useful for both researchers and genealogists alike, however so time-consuming that volunteers are needed for the transcription.

³⁹² *Personallistorisk Tidsskrift*, 1911, 74 reveals that he was born around 1721 and his first voyage in the Roll Books was in early 1740.

Otto Vogelsang, who eventually rose to the rank of director of the DAC.³⁹³ (See his narrative in chapter IV.) Due to the completeness of the data from the DAC Roll Books, patterns of entry into the service of DAC emerge. Jens Østrup completed six expeditions as a supercargo from 1748-1768, and on the last two voyages he was accompanied by a man named Søren Jensen Østrup as a servant, most likely his son. Another example is Johan Henrich Vassmer, who worked his way up from junior assistant in 1744 to 2nd supercargo on his sixth and final voyage in 1753. On his two voyages, a man named Johan Christian Vassmer was employed as the servant of the supercargo, likely his son, nephew, or younger brother.³⁹⁴

Servants for the supercargoes was the norm from the beginning in 1730, and in the hectic years of the early 1780s even some assistants began having servants on board, such as on board the MARS in 1781, as well as the DISCO and KONGEN AF DANNEMARK in 1782. On board these ships there were no supercargoes at all, likely a result of the numerous expeditions sent off in the booming years, but the spot of servant was filled nonetheless. At the end of the flourishing trade period in the middle of the 1780s, the use of servants for captains and supercargoes seems to have been abolished.³⁹⁵ From the expedition of PRINCESSE SOPHIA MAGDALENA in late 1785, the servants no longer appear in the DAC roll books, most likely a sign of the changing times with a harsher economic climate for the old company. Instead, some company traders would hire one or more servants in China.³⁹⁶

Company Traders in Canton

Not long after the beginning of the Oldenburg trade in Canton, it was decided by DAC's general assembly to let a few company traders stay in Canton between expeditions. First in 1742, and again later in 1744, seven company traders stayed in China to attempt to secure tea at more advantageous prices than was possible during trade in the short season, where all the Europeans ships arrived at more or less the same time.³⁹⁷

In DAC's new *Octroy*, or concession of 1772, it was decided to keep the factory in Canton permanently staffed with two supercargoes as well as two assistants.³⁹⁸ Their salary consisted of a set percentage of the value of the cargo auctioned off in Copenhagen – namely 1.5 percent if only one ship returned in a particular year, going down to 0.75 percent per ship if three ships returned. The supercargoes in China were also given 2,400 Spanish Piasters to cover their living expenses. At a

³⁹³ See "Vogelsang, Frantz Wilhelm Otto," [http://oldenburgbusiness.net/index.php?title=Vogelsang, Frantz Wilhelm Otto](http://oldenburgbusiness.net/index.php?title=Vogelsang,_Frantz_Wilhelm_Otto). Accessed March 23, 2018.

³⁹⁴ See "Vassmer, Johan Christian," [http://oldenburgbusiness.net/index.php?title=Vassmer, Johan Christian](http://oldenburgbusiness.net/index.php?title=Vassmer,_Johan_Christian). Accessed March 23, 2018.

³⁹⁵ RA: DAC Roll Books for relevant years.

³⁹⁶ As described by assistant Ludvigsen, who in 1829 hired a first servant as well as another Chinese servant for simpler work. Upon sighting the ship in Macao, the servants would sail to the DAC ship and offer their services – in Ludvigsen's case the same servants as during his previous visit. Ludvigsen, *Erindringer om mine Soreiser og Livs Begivenheder*, 43-44.

³⁹⁷ Glamman, "Studie i Asiatisk Kompagnis," 381.

³⁹⁸ Rasch and Sveistrup, *Asiatisk Kompagni i den florissante Periode*, 27.

later point it was decided to assist the company traders in the work at the factory with a *Hofmester* or court master. The Roll Books describe how a Jørgen Steffensen Howitz travelled with the KONGEN AF DANNEMARCK in 1775, which arrived in Canton after six and a half months of sailing.³⁹⁹ Several complaints seem to have been sent home claiming the allowance too small for the company traders to live on.⁴⁰⁰ Apparently the expenses for travelling between Canton and Macao rose over time and the supercargoes claimed that participating in the life of the European society in Macao was essential for a successful trade. A preserved letter from supercargo Mourier, written to his old army friend in Copenhagen in 1775, claims that even though there were ways of making money in China, he believed that the DAC should at least pay a similar salary as the Swedish East India Company. Mourier claims that “[...] *a worker is worth his pay and a healthy policy encourages that people skillfully handling more than half a million Piastre a year and risks both life and health, will thereby be capable of making a handsome, sizeable fortune in 6 to 7 years.*”⁴⁰¹

The captains were instructed to allow ”*Factoriets Lemmer,*” the employees of the trading station in Canton, to repatriate and to return to Copenhagen. The returning traders were to be treated as officers and allowed to dine at the captain’s table.⁴⁰²

Until 1791,⁴⁰³ when the permanent presence of DAC company traders in China was suspended, several traders would spend the off-seasons in the Portuguese colony of Macau, south of Canton.⁴⁰⁴ Considering the slow communication between Copenhagen and China, these traders were quite independent and without specific knowledge about when the next ship would arrive and what kinds of new instructions it would carry.

Personal Characteristics

Analysing the data from the DAC roll books from the National Archive in Copenhagen provides insights into several characteristics of the company traders as a group.

³⁹⁹ Asiatick Kompagni, Afdelingen i København: Rullebog (1723-1833) 650: 1781 marts 21 - 1785 december 14, RA

⁴⁰⁰ For instance in RA: Asiatick Kompagni, Afdelingen i København: Indkomne breve fra faktoriet i Canton (1773-1791) 234 - 237A, letter #236 from 1783-1-29

⁴⁰¹ My translation from ”[...] *en Arbejder er dog sin Løn værd: og sund Politika udfordrer at folk som manierer aarligen over en halv Million Piastrer og sætter Liv og Sundhed i Vove, bliver derved i Stand ret at gjøre en skikkelig moderat Fortune i en 6 a 7 Aar*”. Letter from P.P.F. Mourier to army captain H.V. von Warnstedt, Canton 1775-12-10. In private ownership, copy with the author.

⁴⁰² *Instruction for Capitaen ... førende Det Kongelige Octroyerede Danske Asiaticke Compagnies Skib ... destineret til Canton i China*, 1789, §34, p. 24. Old book collection of the Maritime Museum of Denmark.

⁴⁰³ Deuntzer, “Af det asiaticke Kompagnis Historie. Første Afsnit. 1792-1807,” 12.

⁴⁰⁴ Rasch and Sveistrup, *Asiatick Kompagni i den florissante Periode*, 226.

Voyages and Careers

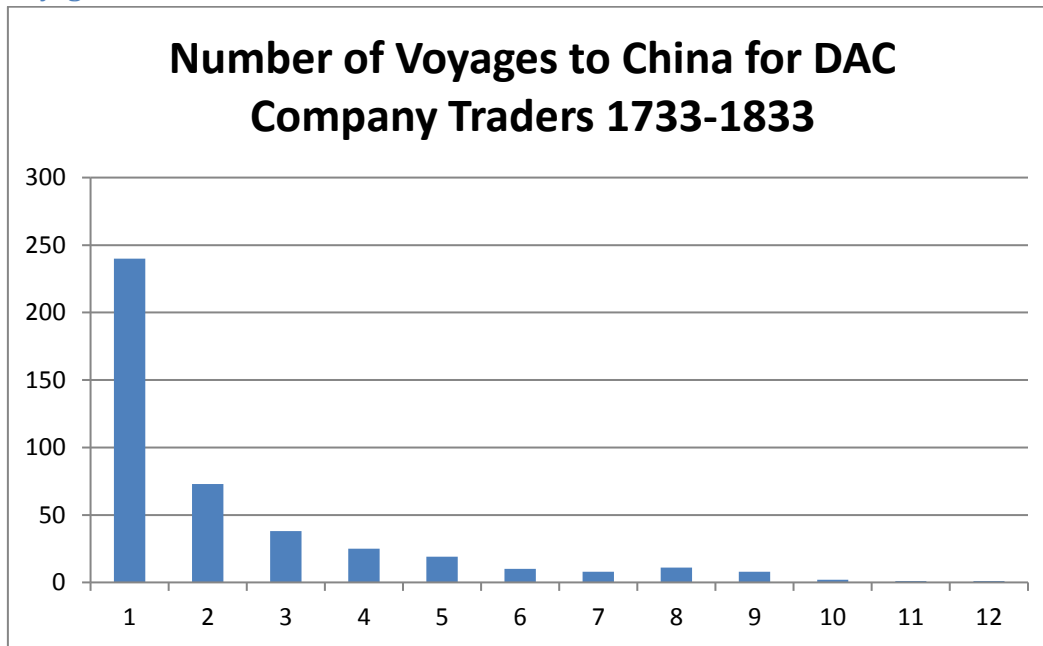


Figure 35 - Source: DAC roll books, National Archive of Denmark

Examining the data, it is clear that most of the traders, about 55 percent, only participated in a single expedition. At the other end of the scale several supercargoes stand out, each pointing towards stories of individuals who in some way must have found enough satisfaction either in travelling, encountering the Chinese, or perhaps just through their high wages and possibilities for illegal income to continue for year after year. At the very top is Peder Molbeck, who worked his way up through the ranks of the company traders, beginning in 1762, where his name appears on the roll of the KONGEN AF DANNEMARK. The first expedition lasted a total of 584 days and despite being close to the 153 other crewmembers on board the ship, which with modern eyes seems very small, Molbeck continued to sail for the next forty years. After five voyages as Junior Assistant, he advanced to Assistant in 1776, and after three more voyages a promotion to Supercargo or head of trade followed in 1784. In his last four voyages he occupied this position, although he for some reason decided to stay in Canton in 1793 at his own expense.⁴⁰⁵ He was then appointed supercargo of the next ship and returned home. Very fittingly, his final voyage took place with another ship named the same as his first ship, KONGEN AF DANMARK, from which he returned to Copenhagen in late 1803. During his twelve expeditions Molbeck must have made a considerable amount of money. Unfortunately, the mention of wages is not consistent in the Roll Books, but judging from the normal bonus of a Supercargo of the time, of 2,400 rigsdaler, when added to a monthly wage of normally 24 rigsdaler, Molbeck must have earned tens of thousands of rigsdaler during his career legitimately and then an unknown amount, most likely much higher,

⁴⁰⁵ Svane, "Asiatisk Kompagni 1792-1807," 78.

through smuggling and private ventures without the direct knowledge of the company. He died in 1807.⁴⁰⁶

Alongside Molbeck, Peter Ruch also completed twelve journeys to China in the course of about twenty-six years. According to the Roll Books, Ruch began his career in DAC as the servant of a supercargo in 1758, where he must have been around sixteen years old.⁴⁰⁷ Most of the salaries and bonuses are missing from Ruch's entries, but after his death, which occurred sometime before the summer of 1802, he left 120,000 rigsdaler to the Skt. Hans Hospital, giving a clear indication of his great wealth.⁴⁰⁸

Just below Molbeck and Ruch in number of voyages is Morten Mauritzen who appears eleven times in the Roll Books. Just like Molbeck he worked his way up from Junior Assistant, starting in 1748, and then slowly making his way up to the rank of supercargo in 1757. In his final expeditions Mauritzen received a very high bonus for completion of the journeys, all the way up to 4,500 rigsdaler. Other indications point to the fact that his many voyages, as well as his private business, must have made him very wealthy since he was able to lend money to the DAC in Canton for use in the purchasing the return cargo of tea.⁴⁰⁹

Name	Starting Title	Final Title	Voyages
Molbeck, Peder	Underassistent	Negotiechef	12
Ruch, Peder	Supercargoens Serviteur	Supercargo	12
Mauritzen, Morten	Underassistent	1 st Supercargo	11
Lind, Hans	Underassistent	3 rd Supercargo	10
Runge, Andreas	Underassistent	Supercargo	10
Allewelt, Andreas	Underassistent	3 rd Supercargo	9
Jercke, Johan Christophersen	Supercargoens Serviteur	Assistant	9
Swendsen, Marcus Christian	Underassistent	1 st Supercargo	9
Toyon, Mathieu	Underassistent	2 nd Supercargo	9
Trige, Mathias	Provisionel Underassistent	1 st Supercargo	9
Vogelsang, Frantz Wilhelm Otto	Supercargoens Serviteur	Supercargo	9
Wigant, Lydert Stiefgen	Kiøbmændenes Dreng	Oberassistent	9
Bentley, Richard	2. Volonteur	Negotiechef	8
Dyssel, Elieser	Kiøbmændenes Dreng	3 rd Supercargo	8

⁴⁰⁶ T.E. Bartholin, *Alphabetisk Fortegnelse over anmeldte Dødsfald i Kjøbenhavns Adressecomptoirs Efterretninger fra Aaret 1807, indtil 1824 inclusive* (Copenhagen: trykt hos Boas Brünnich, 1825), 124.

⁴⁰⁷ According to the public census of 1787, Peder Ruch was born in 1742. See <http://www.danishfamilysearch.dk/cid442763> for details, a

⁴⁰⁸ Laurids Fogtman and T. Algreen-Ussing, *Kongelige Rescripter, Resolutioner og Collegialbreve for Danmark og Norge, udtogsviis udgivne i chronologisk Orden*, Part VI, Vol II (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1810), 613.

⁴⁰⁹ J.J. Andersen, *Asiatisk Kompagnis kinahandel 1732-1772*, (MA Thesis, University of Copenhagen, 1978), 35.

Fritz, Fritz Jacobsen	Supercargoens Serviteur	1 st Supercargo	8
Fursman, Niels	Underassistent	1 st Supercargo	8
Holst, Jens	Underassistent	Supercargo	8
Irgens, Ferdinand Anthon	Underassistent	2nd Supercargo	8
Koefoed, Hans Jacob	4. Underassistent	Supercargo	8
Lindberg, Jacob	Oberassistent	1 st Supercargo	8
Warming, Friderich	Volonteur	Negotiechef	8
Westergaard, Hans Jensen	Supercargoens Serviteur	1 st Supercargo	8
Wittrog, Ludvig	Assistant	Supercargo	8

Company traders participating in eight or more expeditions. Source: DAC roll books, National Archive of Denmark

Looking at the list of the company traders who participated in eight or more expeditions to China, which is about one-tenth of the traders, it is clear that for the most experienced people, working their way up and becoming more knowledgeable on the way was the normal. A possible exception is the case of Jacob Lindberg, who began his career as a Senior Assistant in 1740 and already on his next expedition advanced to Provisional Supercargo, meaning he must have had related experience from elsewhere to explain this rapid rise in the ranks. Otherwise, the normal point of entry was either as Junior Assistant or as a merchant's boy or servant.

But for many of the company traders, a single voyage or two was enough before other careers were chosen. For some, the camaraderie of the traders on board, namely the large part of the crew often referred to as the *Navigation* must have been attractive. A well-documented example is the young Joseph Anton Ponsaing, who at age twenty became the Captain's Scribe and servant on board the DAC ship DRONNING SOPHIA MAGDALENA in 1772. The journey to and from Canton totalling 583 days does not seem to have scared him, so four years later, in 1776, he embarked on another voyage with the PRINTZ FRIDERICH, also to Canton. After another 550 days of travel, he must have decided that the trading section of the crew where the captain's scribe belonged was not for him, and he completed a mate's exam, enabling him to work for many years to come as a navigational officer of the DAC.⁴¹⁰

Unfortunately, the transfer of persons from the trading section to the navigation section of the crew complicates a complete tracking of their maritime DAC careers. In this project, more than a thousand person-voyages have been transcribed and entered into a database in order to track the trading officers. A similar database of person-voyages for the entire crew would entail around twenty thousand entries, well beyond the scope of the timeframe of this project. However, a project involving skilled volunteers at the Maritime Museum of Denmark might complete this feat in the years to come, which would provide a useful insight into the careers of the sailors of the DAC as well as making the transitions between the two crew sections visible. Because transitions did happen, which I noticed occasionally coming across names of former company traders in the Navigation-sections of the roll books. This was probably advanced by the recommendation given to

⁴¹⁰ Lottum and Brock, "Evner, stædighed og held," 33.

the captain in his instructions from the company to allow anyone on board the ship to learn about navigation from the mates, if they so wanted it.⁴¹¹

Going into detail with the progression on this large group of the lowest rank, the data from the roll books reveal that out of the 233 people there, 16 or 7 percent would eventually make supercargo, while 34 or 15 percent would rise to be assistants on their final expedition. Out of the 165 who began their careers as assistants, 44 or 27 percent advanced to supercargoes.

Wages and Possibilities of Wealth

In the late 1780s the first American Consul to China, Major Samuel Shaw noted in his diary a description that sums up a narrative that must have been shared by the DAC company traders: “*On the whole, the situation of the Europeans is not enviable ; and, considering the length of time they reside in this country, the restrictions to which they must submit, the great distance they are at from their connections, the want of society, and of almost every amusement, it must be allowed that they dearly earn their money.*”⁴¹² In addition, but not mentioned by Shaw, came the hardships of the long voyages at sea required to reach China and return. Numerous descriptions tell about company traders weakened by disease and asking permission to return to the Oldenburg Monarchy.

Through the DAC Roll Books, a somewhat clearer picture of the official wages can be constructed. The monthly wages are present for the ranks below supercargo from 1733 to 1771 with the wages of the supercargoes also shown from 1747 onwards. After 1771 only the wages for a few are shown until 1795, when a long, unbroken series describe the *Føringspenge*, the lump sum paid to each as a replacement for the previously allowed personal cargo space.

Rank	Monthly pay	<i>Føringspenge</i> (from 1747)	Total pr. voyage ⁴¹³	Av. Daily Wage ⁴¹⁴
1 st Supercargo	24 rd.	4000-7000 rd.	4432-7432 rd	8-14 rd.
2 nd Supercargo	16-24 rd.	1600-5000 rd.	1888-5432 rd.	3.5-10 rd.
3 rd Supercargo and below ⁴¹⁵	12-20 rd.	1200-2000 rd. ⁴¹⁶	1416-2360 rd.	2.6-4.4 rd.
Senior Assistant	6-12 rd. ⁴¹⁷	800-1400 rd.	908-1616 rd,	1.7-3 rd.

⁴¹¹ *Instruction for Capitain ... førende Det Kongelige Octroyerede Danske Asiatiske Compagnies Skib ... destineret til Canton i China*, §33, p. 24, 1789. Old book collection of the Maritime Museum of Denmark.

⁴¹² Samuel Shaw and Josiah Quincy, *The Journals of Major Samuel Shaw, the First American Consul at Canton* (Boston: W. Crosby and H. P. Nichols, 1847), 180.

⁴¹³ Calculated from an average voyage of 18 months, based on data from Gøbel's thesis, 1978.

⁴¹⁴ Considering a standard voyage of 540 days, based on data from Gøbel's thesis from 1978.

⁴¹⁵ On two voyages, FYEN from 1749 and CRON PRINTZEN AF DANNEMARCK from 1752, the rank went as low as 6th Supercargo, but ranks below 3rd Supercargo was in general unusual. RA: DAC Roll Books

⁴¹⁶ A single 4th supercargo, Johan Carl Hølle only received a bonus of 700 and 800 rigsdaler on his voyages from 1770 and 1771, but he seems to have been a senior assistant with an extra title, so he has been left out as an outlier. RA: DAC Roll Books

Assistant	4-8 rd.	400-800 rd.	472-944 rd.	0.9-1.7 rd.
Junior Assistant	4-6 rd.	100-500 rd. ⁴¹⁸	172-608 rd.	0.3-1.1 rd.
Scribes	4-5 rd.	50-200 rd.	124-298 rd.	0.2-0.6 rd.
Boys & servants	1-8 rd.	40-60 rd. ⁴¹⁹	58-204 rd.	0.1-0.4 rd.

Company Trader Wages 1733-1771. Source: DAC Roll Books.

As apparent from the table above, the *Føringspenge* was the most important part of the salary. The monthly wages mattered less, although for many company traders they were necessary during the voyages for buying goods in China or for buying items from fellow sailors auctioned off after their death. The *Føringspenge* would not be issued until after the safe return to Copenhagen.

The column to the far right shows the average daily wage of the company traders. As a comparison, an unskilled labourer in Copenhagen would receive 16 skilling per day around 1750, about 0.2 rigsdaler,⁴²⁰ while a skilled mason would be paid 40 skilling or 0.40 rigsdaler.⁴²¹ Thus, when including the bonuses the lower ranks of the company traders were relatively well paid. For the supercargoes, relevant comparisons could be the price of a medium-sized ship, which could be bought in mid-eighteenth- Copenhagen for 3,000-5,000 rigsdaler and a large house on a prominent street could be bought for 5,000 rigsdaler.⁴²² So the official pay for a supercargo seems to have offered opportunities for a future business for company traders possessing an entrepreneurial spirit.

For the late period from 1795-1834, the wages seem simpler as only the amount of *Føringspenge* has been preserved in the Roll Books. The *Negotiechef*, previously known as supercargo, would receive 2,400 rigsdaler per voyage.⁴²³ The assistant would receive 1,400 rigsdaler, the junior assistant 800-1,000 rigsdaler, and finally the *Volonteur* 400-800 rigsdaler. The reduced salaries for the heads of trade reflects the need for the struggling DAC to lower their high running costs,⁴²⁴ while the increased salaries of the lower rank must be due to the dramatically increased responsibility on board a ship with a *Negotie*-crew of only two to four as compared to up to eighteen in the early days.

⁴¹⁷ A single entry shows Nicolay Fritz, Oberassistent of the DRONNINGEN AF DANNEMARCK from 1750 receiving 20 rigsdaler per month, but he has been disregarded as an outlier. RA: DAC Roll Books

⁴¹⁸ An outlier of 100 rd. has been removed. RA: DAC Roll Books

⁴¹⁹ Outliers of 200 rd. have been removed - apparently the servants onboard the FYEN was paid ten times as much as the regular wages. RA: DAC Roll Books

⁴²⁰ One rigsdaler equals 96 skilling.

⁴²¹ Poul Thestrup, *Mark og skilling, kroner og øre: pengeenheder, priser og lønninger i Danmark i 360 år* (Odense: Statens Arkiver, 1999), 26.

⁴²² Kåre Lauring, "Dansk slavehandel – en underskudsforretning?," *M/S Museet for Søfart, Årbog 69*, 2012, 102.

⁴²³ The single exception is the old and very experienced Friderich Warming, who received 3840 rigsdaler from 1819. Unfortunately, he died on the way home in Cape Town. This particular voyage of CHRISTIANSHAVN seems special, since all salaries have been increased by about 50%. RA: DAC Roll Books & website of the museum "Den gamle By": <http://www.dengambleby.dk/viden/udstillinger-og-samlinger/fajance/det-warmingske-stel/> accessed March 2018

⁴²⁴ As detailed in Deuntzer, "Af det asiatiske Kompagnis Historie. Første Afsnit. 1792-1807."

But another part of the earnings of both sailors and company traders was the profit on Chinese goods, which more or less illicitly would be transported on board the ships. In the early voyages to China, an allotted cargo space for each member of the crew was considered a part of the wages, but was later replaced with a bonus to stop the flourishing private trade. The existence of a printed poster reminding the crewmembers of the rule of only trading for a maximum amount, their oath to obey it, as well as the consequences of disobedience seems to suggest that the DAC saw the private trade as a problem.⁴²⁵ The poster could be seen not only in the company headquarters in Christianshavn, but would also be pinned to the great mast of the ships. However, the recent research of Meike von Brescius seems to suggest that another mechanism might also be at play, quoting the case of the supercargo Charles Irvine, originally from Aberdeen, now in service of the Swedish East India Company.⁴²⁶ Returning from Canton in 1739, he vastly exceeded the amount of cargo he was permitted to carry, but was only punished by the company with a large fine, thus still allowing Irvine a healthy profit on his goods. In this way, the Swedish East India Company would circumvent one of the problems that also plagued the DAC, namely the lack of capital for investment available in both the Swedish and the Oldenburg Monarchy. Von Brescius argues that Irvine's private trade is an example of how the strict boundary between the individual and the company as opposites actually contributed to the success of each other. An analogy from the Oldenburg Monarchy would be supercargo and later director Pieter van Hurk. As described elsewhere, his know-how about the trade in Canton was essential to the success of the first DAC voyages to China. His salary reflected his importance to the company, and his personal networks in the Austrian Netherlands later provided a larger marketplace for the goods imported by the DAC. The Convention of 1778 assumed that the financial benefits of being the primary supercargo staying in China would be so profitable, that he should step down after four years to provide opportunities for the next in line.⁴²⁷ But at the same time, the travelling supercargoes were responsible for the cargo on the return journey – if goods were damaged which could not be proven to be due to conditions at sea, the supercargo was responsible for replacing the loss from their own pockets.

In a few cases, sources have survived that provides an insight into the fortunes made by the company traders. The last supercargo of the DAC Richard Bentley was able to save enough money during his eight voyages to China as a company trader to retire after his last voyage ending in 1834, living off his funds until his death twenty-three years later.⁴²⁸ An early example of success is Christen Jensen Lintrup (1703-1772), who was hired as a junior assistant on the CORN PRINTZ CHRISTIAN in 1730. He quickly advanced to senior assistant on the following voyage from 1733 and to supercargo from 1736. He must have purchased goods from the DAC auctions, since he is

⁴²⁵ Royal Library, Copenhagen: Danske Samlinger, Udtaget småtryk 34:4,-321 2': *Avertissement fra Directionen for det asiatiske Compagnie, indeholdende igjentaget og skærpet Forbud imod utilladelig Handel af dets Officianter.*

⁴²⁶ Brescius, "Worlds Apart?," 171.

⁴²⁷ Feldbæk: *Danske handelskompagnier 1616-1843*, 1986, 201

⁴²⁸ Lehmann, *Til Østen under Sejl*, 181.

mentioned as selling Chinese goods, including live fish (!) from his shop in Copenhagen in 1737.⁴²⁹ In 1738 and 1740 he again travelled to China as supercargo, the last time remaining in Canton and Macao along with the son of DAC director Frederik Holmsted. Back in Copenhagen in late 1742, he married the daughter of Holmsted, cementing the link to the powerful businessman and Copenhagen mayor, who had also entrusted Lintrup with funds for his personal trade in China.⁴³⁰ Upon his return, he purchased three country estates for 60,000 rigsdaler and immediately began the construction of a large mansion in Frederiksstadten, the new part of Copenhagen set to be the centre for nobility and power. Eventually he was ennobled with the name Lindencrone and thus provides a powerful image of the earning potential for the entrepreneurial company traders. Other hints of wealth come from two supercargoes: Elieser Dyssel worked his way up in the ranks on eight voyages from 1740 to the middle of the 1760s, where he stayed in China for a period. He died rather young in Copenhagen, but his family was able to pay 600 rigsdaler for his grave in Helligaandskirken to be maintained forever.⁴³¹ Supercargo Peder Ruch left 123,000 rigsdaler for a Copenhagen hospital, and might have owned much more after his twelve voyages to China from 1758-1785.⁴³²

Requirements for the Top

The data of career progression from the Roll Books allows us to ask a question which can shed light on the skills required to achieve the highest ranks among the company traders: Were new company traders occasionally hired with enough experience from elsewhere to start their career in DAC at the rank of at least 3rd Supercargo? With the first expeditions, the answer is obviously yes, as it was impossible to have previous experience from within the Oldenburg Monarchy. By excluding the 1730s it is possible to achieve a clearer answer, providing insight into what was needed to perform the duties of de facto-independent trade at the other end of the world:

- Johanes van der Burg was hired as 1st Supercargo in 1761 for a voyage with the PRINCESSE LOWISE. His name matches that of a Dutch supercargo present in Canton in the late 1750s, working for the VOC.⁴³³ It seems likely that he would be hired by the DAC due to his existing experience, but the company enjoyed little of since he died only eight days after departure from Copenhagen.⁴³⁴
- Peter Fenger was hired as 1st Supercargo with no prior experience as a DAC company trader for the expedition of DRONNING JULIANA MARIA in 1753. He was previously a whole-sale merchant in Copenhagen, born in 1716 in Lübeck.⁴³⁵ As a young man, he was

⁴²⁹ Henningsen, "Turist i København i 1737."

⁴³⁰ Clemmensen, *Kina og Danmark 1600-1950*.

⁴³¹ *Personalthistorisk Tidsskrift*, 1911, 74 – the grave does not appear to be there anymore, so the church did not keep its promise!

⁴³² *Personalthistorisk Tidsskrift*, 1921, 171

⁴³³ Yong Liu. *The Dutch East India Company's tea trade with China, 1757-1781*, (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007), 25.

⁴³⁴ Cynthia Vialle and Paul A. Van Dyke, *The Canton-Macao Dagregisters 1764* (Macau: Instituto Cultural do Governo da R.A.E. de Macau, 2009), 13.

⁴³⁵ C.F. Bricka, P. Engelstoft, and S. Cedergreen Bech, *Dansk Biografisk Leksikon* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1984).

employed in the trading house of J.F. Wever, one of the most prominent merchants of Copenhagen at the time and director of the DAC. After fourteen years of service, he established his own company in 1752 in Christianshavn and after a successful voyage to China partnered with Peter Borre. Their company Borre & Fenger engaged in the wholesale of many types of goods, including Asiatic and West Indian goods. Personal connections and already established trust seems to have been a key factor in his ability to become employed at the top of the company trader hierarchy.

- Mathias Frigs was employed on a single voyage from 1763 as 2nd Supercargo on the PRINCE FRIDERIK AF DANMARCK. His last name seems to match that of Gregorius Frick, who participated in seven voyages from 1745 to 1758, which might have given him an advantage of familiarity, if a family relation exists.
- Joh. Hen. Godenius was hired as a 1st Supercargo for the CHRISTIANSBORG SLOT in 1744 without prior experience as a DAC company trader. His unusual last name matches the merchant house of Brown & Godenius, which at least was active in 1754,⁴³⁶ as well as the house of Godenius & Fenwick, founded in 1776,⁴³⁷ where both had Carl Heinrich Godenius as a partner. This indicates Joh. Hen. Godenius had previous trading experience from his possible relative.
- Peder Gram appears in the records as Supercargo on DRONNINGEN AF DANEMARCK in 1740 and continued to serve as such in a total of six voyages, ending in 1767. He must be the same as the Peder Gram who worked as junior assistant in 1733 on board the SLESWIG. His sudden promotion might be connected to the election of his uncle, the historian Hans Nielsen Gram, who became director of the DAC in 1738. Several other Grams suggest that the helping hand from the director was extended towards several parts of the family such as the younger Hans Gram, brother of Peter, who sailed to China three times, eventually being lost at sea. A Niels Gram served as the servant of the Supercargo on FYEN in 1745, and the nephew of Peder Gram, Peder Ruch,⁴³⁸ would later enjoy a long and successful career as a company trader, likely aided by his family connections.
- Matthias Hvistendahl was hired as a 3rd Supercargo in 1747 and joined three voyages, eventually advancing to 2nd Supercargo on his last expedition. Born in 1709 and thus aged thirty-eight when joining the DAC,⁴³⁹ he would have had plenty of time to accumulate experience. After his career in the DAC, he opened a shop in Copenhagen with his son-in-law selling Chinese goods.⁴⁴⁰
- In the records Tewis Lawson suddenly seems to appear as Supercargo in 1740 and 1743. But Lawson began his career in the DAC ten years earlier as a Ship's Assistant in 1730 going

⁴³⁶ Glamann, "Studie i Asiatisk Kompagnis," 396.

⁴³⁷ Müller, "Af et helsingorsk Handelshus Historie," 194.

⁴³⁸ *Personahistorisk Tidsskrift* 1921, 171

⁴³⁹ In the public census of 1787, he is listed as being 77 years old. See http://www.ddd.dda.dk/soeg_person_enkel.asp,

⁴⁴⁰ *Personahistorisk Tidsskrift* 1961, 112

to Tranquebar,⁴⁴¹ where he stayed until his return to Copenhagen in 1738, which would explain his entry at the top of the China company traders.

- Johan or Jean Macculloch sailed three times as 2nd Supercargo in 1754, 1758, and 1761 without prior experience as a company trader in China. His name suggests a Scottish origin, but the family might have a long history in the Oldenburg Monarchy.⁴⁴² His mother, Marie van Hemert, belonged to an influential merchant family including two DAC directors and her brother Gysbert van Hemert trained the young Macculloch as a wine merchant. Macculloch was married to Anne Marie Toyon,⁴⁴³ whose father was a highly respected restaurant owner in Copenhagen, seemingly a hub for various influential networks in the city. Macculloch belonged to the Reformed Church as so many influential merchants did, so he possessed both the business and family network needed to start a career in the DAC at a high level.
- Pierre Paul Ferdinand Mourier appears as supercargo on the return voyage on KONGEN AF DANNEMARK in 1779.⁴⁴⁴ Mourier, born in 1746, travelled to Canton and Macao along with his Dutch father-in-law in 1770,⁴⁴⁵ which corresponds with information from the roll books of that voyage where he is listed as a passenger. In China, where his family later joined him, he made a living as a private trader and by later working as a resident supercargo for the DAC. As we will see later in his narrative in chapter IV, Mourier stands out from most other supercargoes at the time as an educated man, trained as an officer, the son of a priest in the French Reformed Church in Copenhagen, and with an interest in language and culture. He seems to have attained his position from both having relevant family connections and, more importantly, being at the right place at the right time, namely in Canton, where he could take over after the death of a company trader.
- Willum Sangster served as 3rd Supercargo on PRINCESSE WELHELMINE CAROLINE from 1753, seemingly without prior experience.
- Finally, Jens Østrup started his career as 3rd Supercargo in 1748 and sailed a total of seven voyages, ending as 2nd Supercargo, hinting that not only was he deemed by the directors of the DAC to have sufficient experience to start at a high level, he must also have been sufficiently capable in order to be hired for so many expeditions. A ten-year gap between his

⁴⁴¹ From the Kurantbank-records of Kamma Struwe. Private collection based on archival material from the National Archive. The private collection will eventually be turned over to the National Archive. Kamma Struwe, *Vore gamle tropekolonier. Bd. 6: Dansk Ostindien 1732-1776: Tranquebar under kompagnistyre* (København: Fremad, 1967).

⁴⁴² He might be related to the merchant Robert Macculloch, who made a will in 1674 and 1686 with witnesses from Copenhagen and Elsinore. (*Personalhistorisk Tidsskrift* 1940, 183 & *Personalhistorisk Tidsskrift* 1925, 203). Robert's daughter married the son of Jean, who is most likely related to or the same as the DAC company trader of that name, who sailed from 1748-1756. (RA: Enesteminiærbog (1685 - 1821), Den Fransk-Reformerte Menighed i København, 315)

⁴⁴³ Christian Gandil, "Matthieu Toyon - den franske kok i Pilestræde." In *Historiske meddelelser om København* (Copenhagen, 1962), 47.

⁴⁴⁴ Despite this, he seemed to have either returned to Canton right away or stayed there, as he appears in several records after his assumed departure. Please see his narrative in the following chapter.

⁴⁴⁵ K. Lundbæk, "Kinesisk con amore. Danskeren P. F. Mouriers sinologiske studier i det 18. aarhundrede," *Fund og forskning i Det kongelige Biblioteks samlinger* 11 (1964), 129.

second and third expedition suggests that his work in the meantime must have been relevant to trade, since he was once again hired as 3rd supercargo. He must have brought his son along as a servant, since a Søren Jensen Østrup appears in expeditions beginning in 1764 and 1766.

To sum up the use of supercargoes without prior DAC China experience, the table below can be consulted.

Name	First seen	# voyages	Type of previous qualifications
Peder Gram	1740	6 or 7	Family network
Tewis Lawson	1740	2	India Trade
Joh. Hen. Godenius	1744	1	Family Trade
Mathias Hvistendahl	1747	3	Unknown
Jens Østrup	1748	7	Unknown
Peter Fenger	1753	1	Own merchant house and director network
Willum Sangster	1753	1	Unknown
Johan Macculloch	1754	3	Network and experience
Johanes van der Burg	1761	1	Foreign company
Mathias Frigs	1763	1	Family
Pierre P.F. Mourier	1779	1	Family and being right place

Source: DAC Roll Books, National Archives of Denmark

Another example of what was required to start at the level of supercargo in the DAC can be found in the case of Frédéric de Coninck (1740-1811). Born in the Netherlands as the son of a merchant working for the VOC in Batavia for twenty years, the young de Coninck received a good education before at the age of sixteen becoming employed by an English merchant house in Amsterdam. After six years in their service, at least according to de Coninck himself of a very satisfactory nature, he left Amsterdam for Copenhagen, apparently driven away by a lost love. With him, he brought letters of recommendation to Count Bernstorff and Count Moltke, *Præsides* of the DAC. At least one of the letters was written by a top civil servant from Den Haag, who apparently was a childhood friend of Bernstorff.⁴⁴⁶ This suggests how much the understanding of networks must have mattered in the Coninck family, being able to convince just the right people to write recommendations. The combination of experience, the letters, and de Coninck's family background with a history in Asia seemingly convinced Moltke to offer him a job as a supercargo in Canton.⁴⁴⁷ De Coninck accepted the offer, but resigned just before departure to join the large Copenhagen merchant house of

⁴⁴⁶ Friis-Hansen and Slente, *Frédéric de Coninck og Dronninggaard*, 9.

⁴⁴⁷ Friis-Hansen and Slente, *Frédéric de Coninck og Dronninggaard*, 85.

Fabricius & Wever, only to resign there as well and become an independent merchant, and later one of the directors of the DAC. Therefore, he is not included in the table above.

Finally, the conventions of the DAC also provide us with some clues of the personal characteristics demanded from company traders. The new Convention of 1778, the result of intense discussion among the stock-owners, clearly state the importance of being “*Duelighed og Beqvembed til Embedets Forretninger*”⁴⁴⁸ – the skill and ability of the company traders to be hired. If this was not possible to ascertain, recommendations of trustworthy men were needed. In addition, all in the service of the DAC must be either native subjects of the king or later naturalised. The Convention of 1787 added that company traders could not be hired if they had been bankrupted or otherwise not able to pay what they owed.⁴⁴⁹

Age

Although data about the individual company traders are scarce, using a prosopographical approach can however tell us a little about the group as a whole. Of the more than 400 company traders, years of birth have been found for about 10 percent of these, as shown below.

Title	#Persons, 1 st exp.	Age range, 1 st exp.	Average age, 1 st exp.	#Persons, last exp.	Age range, last exp.	Average age, last exp.
Supercargoes	6	24-45	37.5	27	30-61	43.3
Assistants	20	18-36	24.7	11	21-36	30.4
Apprentices, servants and volunteers	17	13-32	19.8	5	16-29	21.4

Source: DAC Roll Books, National Archives of Denmark

By dividing the company traders into three groups after their ranks on board, a narrative can be constructed about the ages among the *Negotie* crew on the China expeditions. The supercargoes aged around forty would be accompanied by assistants in their late twenties, with servants being around twenty years of age. The narrative seems plausible, but must be told with some caution. The data from the sources are scarce and most likely skewed, especially for the third group because the data for most actors in this group comes from people who continued working in the DAC. It seems likely that they might be older than the great amount of company traders in the third rank, who only participated in a single voyage. Therefore, I assume that a large number of servants, boys, and apprentices were teenagers on their first voyages.

In conclusion, the main question that arises from the analysis of the data from the DAC roll books is why so many, 55 percent, only participated on a single voyage, despite the pay being acceptable and the trip being a unique experience at the time? Was it the physical conditions on board, the cramped lodging, the bad food, and the boredom of months of the open sea? Or was it the fellow sailors and traders that produced a climate of unfriendliness, irritation, or even abuse, either physical or sexual? Or perhaps, most likely, was it a combination of the two? Few sources describe

⁴⁴⁸ Feldbæk: *Danske handelskompagnier 1616-1843*, 1986, 179

⁴⁴⁹ Feldbæk: *Danske handelskompagnier 1616-1843*, 1986, 221

this, but detailed studies of a significant number of the protocols and journals from the voyages and stays in Canton would most likely provide new insights, although this would require a combined scholarly effort over a longer period.

Potential Experience Transfers

On board the CHRISTIANSHAVN bound for China, November 1819:

*"[...] in the evening at 8 o'clock, I meet with the company traders and the doctor for a tobacco chat. They sit there and tell about difficulties of the past journeys, and we discuss plans for further expeditions [on the way]."*⁴⁵⁰

The young student of theology, Poul Martin Møller, who was the last ship chaplain of the DAC described the daily life on board the ship in a letter to a friend, not long after departure. The sources for the tobacco chats are not plentiful, but it seems reasonable to assume that parts of the extremely long voyages – nine months at sea from Copenhagen to Canton – must have been spent in conversation with other members of the crew. This vast amount of time must have led to experience being transferred to the fellow members of each expedition – not always necessarily in the same amount to each person, but in general and in average. Thus, information, knowledge, and experience gained on one voyage could be transferred to another, if one or more company traders participated in both. This is further supported by the instructions from the company to the captain, ordering that all light had to be put out at nine o'clock at night due to the risk of fire, meaning that the evenings could not be spent reading, at least if the regulation was followed.⁴⁵¹ This points in favour of spending more time talking to each other for amusement rather than reading alone, thus enhancing the possibility of knowledge transfer among the company traders. Other hints point towards the voyages as also being a time of learning. In 1806, a Swedish officer of a chinaman of the Svenska Ostindiska Companie wrote about the help he had received from supercargo Ljungstedt, who taught him English during the expedition and was next going to learn Portuguese.⁴⁵²

⁴⁵⁰ My translation of: "*[...] om Aftenen Kl. 8 samles jeg med Handelsassistenterne og Doctoren til en Tobakspassiar. Der sidde de da og fortælle om Viderværdigheder paa fordums Farter, og vi udkaste allerede Planer til diverse Expeditioner, [senere på rejsen].*" Poul M. Møller, *Poul Martin Møllers Levnet, med Breve fra hans Haand* (Copenhagen: Bianco Lunos Bogtrykkeri, 1843), 42.

⁴⁵¹ *Instruction for Capitain ... förende Det Kongelige Octroyerede Danske Asiatiske Compagnies Skib ... destineret til Canton i China*, 1789, §48, p. 29. Collection of the Maritime Museum of Denmark.

⁴⁵² Hellman, *Navigating the foreign quarters*, 161.

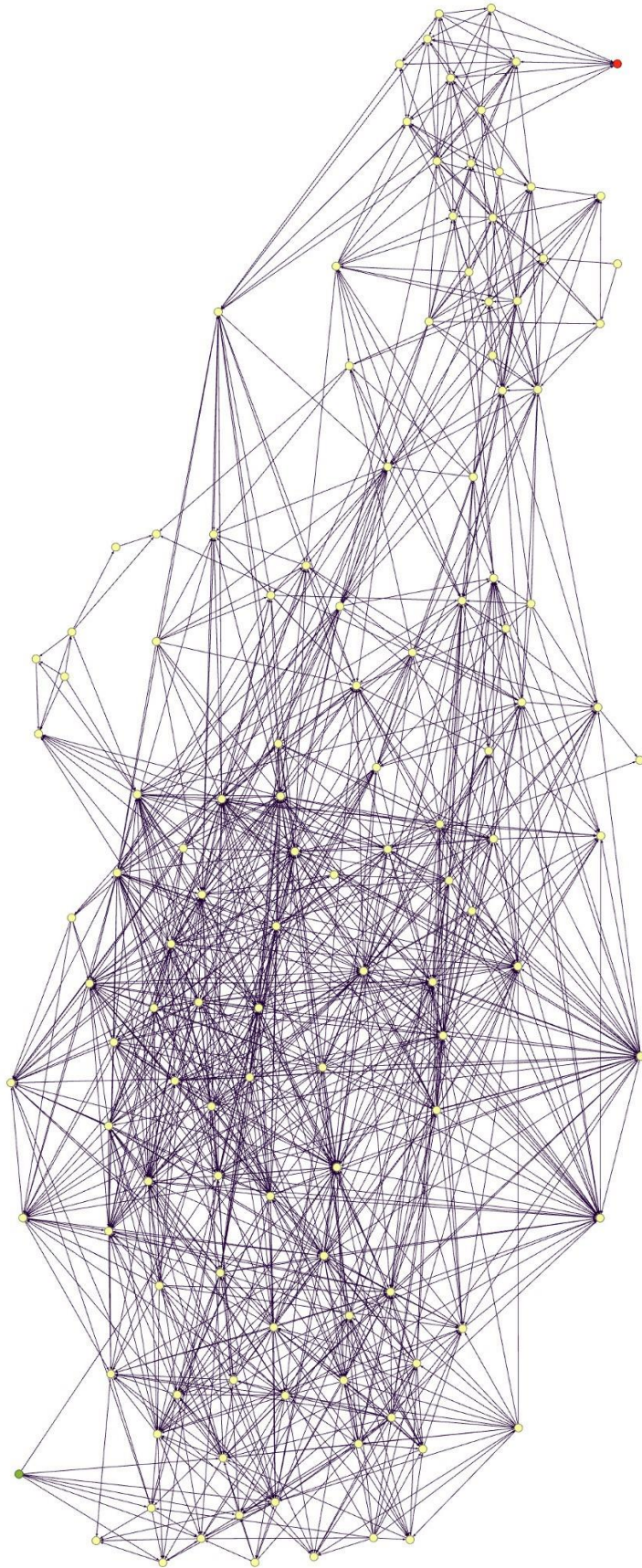


Figure 36 – Voyages of the DAC to China connected by participating company traders. Source: DAC Roll Books, National Archives of Denmark

With the help of Social Network Analysis, this potential transfer of experience among the company traders can be visualised.⁴⁵³ The yellow nodes show the DAC expeditions to China from 1730-1833, while the lines connecting the squares represent one or more company traders participating in the same expeditions. A line between two nodes thus means that one or more company traders took part in both expeditions. At the lower left side, a green node marks the first expedition with CRONPRINTZ CHRISTIAN in 1730, where all know-how came from external sources. The red node to the left marks the last expedition of FREDERIK DEN SIETTE in 1833. Thus, the visualisation of the data allows us a graphical view of the potential flow of experience and know-how on the DAC expeditions to China. In general, the more connections, the more experience is shared among the company traders. However, the network says nothing about sympathy or other feelings among the company traders, since the long confinements on the crowded, small ships must have led not only to friendship or even love, but also to hate and violence. For as the last DAC chaplain noted: “*It is a great disadvantage of the maritime life, that one is not free to choose his own company, but must accept what is provided by fortune.*”⁴⁵⁴

Examining Figure 36, several observations can be made. First, the network generally shows a large degree of connectedness. Most nodes or expeditions are linked to several others, suggesting an efficient use of the experience of the company traders. However, since the chronology of the expeditions is an additional dimension in the graph, the links between the nodes represents both traders having experience from previous expeditions as well as their participation in future expeditions. In other words, experience only has utility in the future, not in the past, effectively halving the number of links when the links are viewed as previous experience.

Another observation is the almost complete lack of isolates, or nodes without links to other nodes. The sole exception here is the voyage of the relatively small ship KIØBENHAVN in 1745 (not shown on the graph) which only brought a single company trader along, namely the junior assistant and captain’s scribe Hans Leon.

But besides this single ship the lack of isolates points towards the fact that no ship left Copenhagen without at least one company trader on board that had experience from a previous voyage, which seems to be one of several explaining factors in the success and profitability of the DAC. However, correctly applying the temporal dimension in Social Network Analysis is a challenge that is still being worked on in the field. Therefore, instead of calculating and visualising the temporal dimension, the 1,030 edges were checked manually via Gephi to make sure that every expedition was connected by at least one company trader to an earlier expedition and not just a later one. This revealed that except for the special KIØBENHAVN expedition, only once in the history of the DAC China trade did a ship set off to Canton without at least one experienced company trader on board, namely the expedition of KONGEN AF DANNEMARK in 1782. That particular year was

⁴⁵³ The graph above is constructed in the program Gephi with data from the DAC Roll Books prepared through Excel. A Two-Mode Network was first constructed showing the relations between company traders and expeditions, which was then transformed in R into a One-Mode Network showing connections between the expeditions. This network could then be visualised as a graph in Gephi after exporting an edge-list in R.

⁴⁵⁴ My translation of “*Det er en stor Mangel ved Solivet, at man aldeles ikke kan vælge sit Selskab, men maa tage det, som Slumpelykken vil give det.*” Møller, *Poul Martin Møllers Levnet*, 53.

one of the most hectic of the DAC, sending three ships to China in addition to the four ships sent out the year before. The following year, four ships were sent to China which must have created a shortage of experienced company traders. In addition, the large number of DAC company traders present in the factory in Canton could possibly support each other, making experience less important for a single ship. This must have convinced the directors to send off the expedition despite the lack of experienced company traders on board.

Looking more closely at the patterns of the graph, the right-centre area of the graph shows several expeditions heavily intertwined, with each node tied to most other nodes. This area consists primarily of the expeditions of the 1740-60s, where many voyages were carried out with a substantial number of company traders on each ship. That so many traders participated in many voyages together suggests that a similarity of their work practices must have emerged.

Another area that seems to share several attributes is seen to the left of the graph, where several expeditions are linked by a similar number of ties and form a distinct group. This group consists of the later expeditions of the DAC from the 1790s as well as the few expeditions after the Napoleonic Wars.

With the data from the DAC Roll Books and by using Historical Network Analysis, it is possible to construct Ego Networks of the individual company traders in relation to their voyages. An ego network consists of an actor in focus, referred to as an Ego, as well as all the nodes connected to the Ego – these are called Alters.⁴⁵⁵ From the total network of company traders individual ego networks can be constructed, but the Ucinet software also allows for calculations done for all ego networks present in the total network. In this case, ego networks represent the total amount of people that the actor sailed with during his career, as seen from the end of the career. Assuming that a tie between the ego and the alter represents one or more long voyages together with the possibility to learn or be influenced by each other, the temporality means that the ego network shows the total bidirectional influence possible during the egos participation in the expeditions.

⁴⁵⁵ Borgatti, Everett, and Johnson, *Analyzing Social Networks*, 262.

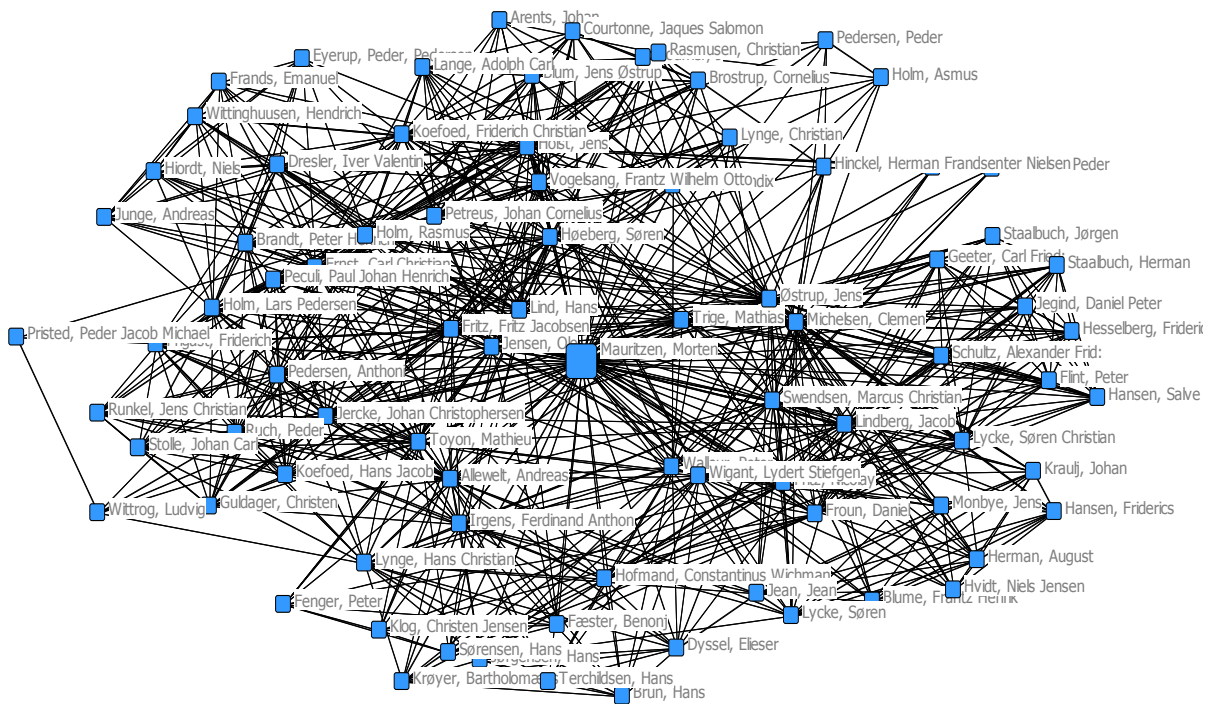


Figure 37 - Ego network of supercargo Morten Mauritzen at the time of the end of his final voyage in 1772. Source: DAC roll books, National Archive of Denmark

Visualising the ego networks of selected company traders provides a valuable insight into the know-how available for company traders in different periods of the China trade. Above is the ego network of supercargo Morten Mauritzen, marked by a large blue square, who participated in a total of eleven expeditions to China from 1749 until his death on his final voyage in 1773. Mauritzen has a total of eighty-three alters, meaning that during his career he sailed with eighty-three other company traders, potentially gaining and exchanging know-how along the on average eighteen-month long voyage. Mauritzen is the company trader with the largest ego network of all the traders, representing the maximum personal influence in the merchant environment as well as the potential greatest opportunity to learn from others. Even though no biography has been written about Mauritzen, it seems likely that he was a key figure in DAC and someone who was listened to due to his great experience and network.

As a contrast to the large and dense network of supercargo Mauritzen, figure 39 shows the network of the last supercargo of DAC, Richard Bentley, who sailed from 1802 till the end of the final journey of FREDERIK DEN SIETTE in 1834. Where Mauritzen participated in eleven voyages in twenty-four years, Bentley went on eight expeditions in thirty-two years. Here, the limitations on the number of company traders around 1772 as seen earlier in figure 34 clearly show – despite sailing about as long as Mauritzen, the ego network of Bentley is much smaller, allowing fewer knowledge resources to draw upon, at least among the company traders. With so few company traders on board each ship, the personal chemistry of the individuals must have played a greater role and contact to other groups of crew must have meant more, perhaps leading to a greater integration between the groups on board.

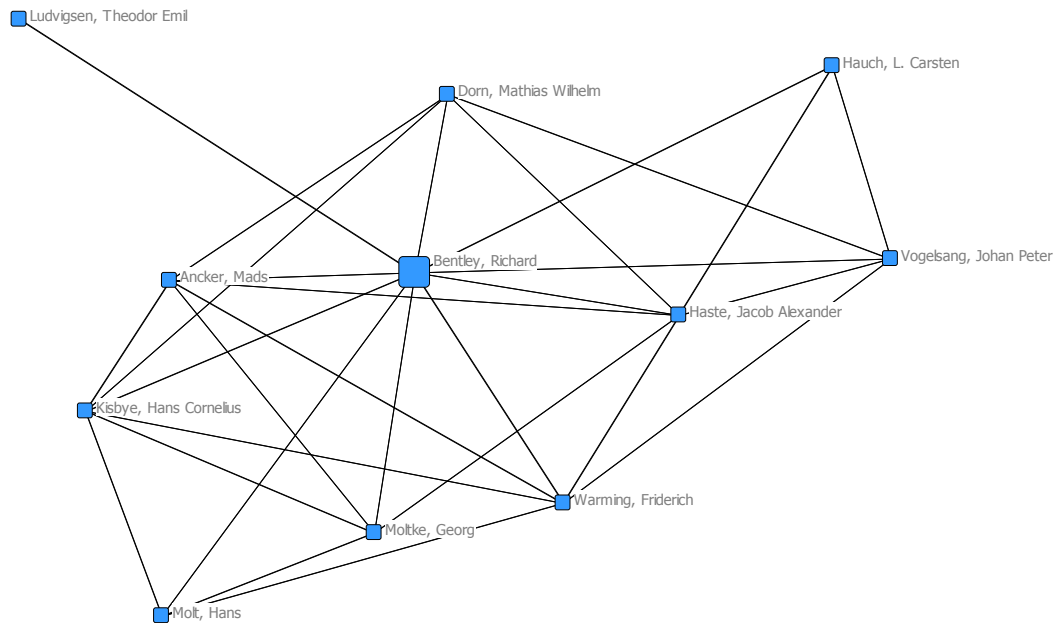


Figure 39 - Ego network of supercargo Richard Bentley at the time of last voyage starting in 1833. Source: DAC roll books, National Archive of Denmark

Again is it important to remember what the ties in the network means, namely a potential for exchange of information and skills, not sym- or antipathies or even ability. Because a large number of voyages for a company trader might mean that he was not resourceful enough to earn a fortune on a few voyages, but had to try again and again.

Reading and Writing

It seems fair to assume that reading must have been a popular pastime on the long voyages, especially for the company traders whose work primarily lay in China and not on the voyage as opposed to the seamen. But even the seamen must have read, as the last chaplain Poul Martin Møller described in a letter to friend in 1819, written on the way to Canton: “*Among the sailors are several rascals with an interest in studying. The other day I saw a true tar-nose lying aft and reading one of the novels of Lafontaine.*”⁴⁵⁶ Several company traders seem to have had an interest in literature, the most significant was the unusual company trader Mourier,⁴⁵⁷ who along with his colleague Vogelsang enjoyed reading English poetry together in Canton.⁴⁵⁸ Shipments of literature for Mourier, who spent the years from 1770-1785 in Asia, were sent to him from Copenhagen, and it seems likely that the new, recently published books would have been shared with the other company traders in the cramped factory area in Canton. Another example is supercargo Warming, whose book collection

⁴⁵⁶ My translation of “*Blandt Matroserne findes adskillige bahstuderede Røvere. Jeg saae forleden Dag en Erke=Beegsnude ligge agter i Læ og læse en af Lafontaines Romaner.*” From Møller, Poul Martin Møllers Levnet, 42.

⁴⁵⁷ See his microhistorical narrative in the following chapter.

⁴⁵⁸ *Søndagen – et Tillægsblad til ”Dagen*, #9, 1837-02-26, fifth column.

was auctioned off after his death in Cape Town in 1819. His collection included a large number of books in both French and English, both fiction and non-fiction.⁴⁵⁹

For a few company traders, reading on the long voyages was supplemented with writing. The most fascinating example is again Mourier, who besides Chinese, wrote a 10,000-word Chinese-Portuguese dictionary during his stay in Canton, thus defying the statement of the historian Kamma Struwe, who claimed that no DAC company trader ever learnt Chinese,⁴⁶⁰ probably due to the official Chinese ban on that type of knowledge transfer. Another writer among the company traders was the supercargo Gregers Jensen Klitgaard (1733-1806),⁴⁶¹ son of a successful merchant in Copenhagen, who was involved in both the Maritime Insurance Company⁴⁶² as well as the Copenhagen Banco.⁴⁶³ Klitgaard participated as company trader in four expeditions to China, in the beginning overlapping with his half-brother Constantinus Wichman Hofmand who worked as a company trader on four expeditions to China in the 1740s and 50s. After a couple of voyages, first as junior assistant, Klitgaard advanced to Ship's Steward but sometime later suffered a personal bankruptcy, seemingly prompting him to return to the DAC as company trader, eventually making supercargo in 1785 and remaining in Canton for a couple of years.⁴⁶⁴ Although he must have earned a substantial amount of money, the wealth did not last, and his last job seems to have been as a scribe at Kronborg castle,⁴⁶⁵ perhaps thinking about his voyages every time a DAC ship passed by the castle and saluted on its way to Asia. On his way home on his last trip in 1787, he completed a booklet about the conditions and trade possibilities of Madagascar, perhaps spurred by the crisis of the company. After describing the island, its people, their language, and the goods to be traded, the experienced supercargo made several recommendations to build up company business there, all for the good of "[...] *the advantage and use of the fatherland.*"⁴⁶⁶ Klitgaard's book is unusual, since most published accounts of an ethnographical nature were written by the chaplains on board,⁴⁶⁷ and thus like Mourier suggests that at least some of the company traders did not live up to the narrative of being greedy hagglers without a concern for the larger world.

⁴⁵⁹ Lone Klem, "En litterær Kinarejse," *Handels- og Søfartsmuseet på Kronborg – Årbog*, (Elsinore, 1956), 44,

⁴⁶⁰ Struwe, *Vore gamle tropekolonier*, 134.

⁴⁶¹ *Personalthistorisk Tidsskrift* 1925, p. 148. [unsure of citation. This is what you have in the Bibliography: Bie, "Johan Leonhard Fix." But it is 1930]

⁴⁶² Christian Thorsen, *Det Kongelig Oktroierede Sø-Assurance-Kompagni 1726-1926: et Bidrag til dansk Søforsikrings Historie* (Copenhagen: Det Kongelig Oktroierede Sø-Assurance-Kompagni, 1926), 523.

⁴⁶³ *Hof & Statskalender* 1740

⁴⁶⁴ RA: DAC rollbooks for relevant years.

⁴⁶⁵ *Personalthistorisk Tidsskrift*, 1925, p. 148.

⁴⁶⁶ My translation of "[...] *til Fædrene=Landets Fordeel og Nytte.*" G.J. Klitgaard, *Til det Kongelige Danske General Land-, Oeconomie- og Commerce-Collegium samt det Kongelige octroyerede Danske Asiatiske Compagnies Direction om Skibet Prindsesse Sophia Magdalena under Cpt. Tonnes Langøes Commando, dets Indsejling til St. Maria ved Maddagaskar, og Indvaanernes Levemaade paa det faste Land og Øerne sammesteds, m. m. 1787* (Copenhagen: trykt hos Paul Herman Höecke, 1788), 31.

⁴⁶⁷ Such as Huusmann 1760, Boye 1745 and Møller, *Poul Martin Møllers Levnet*.

III.3 - Networks of the Merchants

Both directors and company traders of the DAC appeared in numerous networks, some old and well-established and others informal and new.

Religious networks in the merchant communities had played a role for a long time, especially smaller congregations such as the Reformed Church as well the Jewish community seem to have played an important role in the merchant networks, although not directly included in the trade or management. This was recognized by the state administration and in the 1670s Kommercekollegiet even recommended the immigration of minority groups, despite many of them being of a different religion than the official Lutheran Christianity.⁴⁶⁸ Other new networks such as the Freemasons emerged to play a significant role in the establishment of trust among its members. Yet other networks were established by the actors such as Grosserer-Societetet.

As concluded by the historian Francesca Trivellato, individuals of an increasingly interconnected world in the age of mercantilism were able to change religious affiliations, change identities, and be welcomed by potentates as immigrants, expanding their network for the good of trade. Thus, many of the merchants such as the DAC directors and company traders in China would be at what Trivellato calls an intersection of extremes, between “*the omnipresence of cross-cultural contacts [...] and the fairly rigid normative frameworks in which these contacts took place.*”⁴⁶⁹ This term covers the duality of the European merchant well; many travelling intensively in Europe and the primarily company traders even reaching Asia, but at the same time being bound by the norms of their upbringing and training.

All these networks converged in an extraordinary place - Canton in the eighteenth century. It was a tight space with a small number of people, but with networks reaching around the world. As Hellman expresses it: “*Canton became Canton through the specific networks intersecting there, which in turn constructed its specific relations.*”⁴⁷⁰ In the trading quarter outside the city the company traders of the DAC, with their intensive networks in the Oldenburg Monarchy and beyond, would meet colleagues from other European companies with their large networks. Here, all of the travelling traders would interact with Chinese merchants and officials, each with their own mercantile and public networks. Thus, the DAC company traders possessed a vital role as brokers in the terminology of Social Network Analysis, being the bridges between the great merchants in Copenhagen who funded the trade and held a desire for control, but in reality having left it in the hands of the travelling company traders. The traders were in control of information due to their broker role and, being entrusted with the cargoes of the expeditions, were to a large extent responsible for the successful outcome of the voyage, not only toward their official employers, the directors of the DAC, but also toward their networks who helped them achieve their privileged positions within the company.

⁴⁶⁸ Arthur Arnheim, *Truet minoritet søger beskyttelse: jødernes historie i Danmark* (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2015), 82.

⁴⁶⁹ Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers* (Yale University Press, 2009), 271.

⁴⁷⁰ Hellman, *Navigating the foreign quarters*, 144.

As noted by David Dickson, business networks were solutions to problems, namely the challenges of conducting business across oceans, where letters might take years to reach their destinations.⁴⁷¹ But the networks created new managerial problems and required both skills and resources to build and maintain. While describing networks of Scottish and Irish wine merchants in the Atlantic World in the eighteenth century, Dickson brings up a number of generalisations that seems to be applicable to other business networks. The first is that the relationships in a business network were personal in the early modern world. Even though companies and merchant houses existed, the relationships were between individuals and not firms. Furthermore, when an individual selected a new correspondent, meaning a new contact or node in the ego-network, choosing one from a pre-existing network minimised the risk of misjudgment and differing expectations – “*the network informed one whom one could trust.*”⁴⁷² At the same time, a business network provided both rewards and sanctions to its members as new opportunities emerged and the members conforming to the norms of the network would be favoured.

Quoting an eighteenth-century merchant, Dickson highlights another advantage in network building available early in life, as bonds forged through friendship during childhood, and while being educated, seemed to be stronger than other bonds later in life. For instance, attending a public school was a distinct advantage, because it opened the door for potential business contacts later in life, building upon the shared origins. In addition, these networks often became multi-dimensional, stretching from just business into non-commercial life, such as intermarriages among merchant families. But here the danger of the very personal business networks also shows, as according to Dickson, the trust produced by many common factors could mean that if trust was betrayed, a businessman could be cut off from both business, family, and other networks at the same time, making it very hard to start over since reputation was so essential. Had hatred emerged between merchants or families, rivalries could complicate trade for decades, and if the judgment of a network failed, businesses could suffer severely.

To sum up, a business network could be built upon the shared factors of:⁴⁷³

- Friendship
- Upbringing
- Ethnicity
- Kinship
- Patronage
- Faith
- Religious community
- Other networks

⁴⁷¹ D. Dickson, J. Parmentier and J. Ohlmeyer (eds.), *Irish and Scottish mercantile networks in Europe and overseas in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries* (Gent: Academia Press, 2007), 9.

⁴⁷² Dickson, Parmentier and Ohlmeyer, *Irish and Scottish mercantile networks in Europe and overseas*, 15.

⁴⁷³ The first five items are from Dickson, Parmentier and Ohlmeyer, *Irish and Scottish mercantile networks in Europe and overseas*, while the last items are based on the DAC merchants.

In the following discussion a number of the networks of which both the company traders and great merchants were members will be analysed in this light.

The Reformed Church⁴⁷⁴

One of the most quintessential networks of the business life of eighteenth-century Copenhagen in general and for the DAC specifically was the Reformed Church, located in Gothersgade in the western part of Copenhagen. The members of this church were in many cases descendants of refugees of the Huguenots who had fled religious persecutions in seventeenth-century Europe. The Calvinists, as they are also called, arose during the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century, following the teachings of Jean Calvin. A central dogma of Calvinism is the idea of Predestination – the doctrine that the salvation of a human soul has already been decided by God, and no human actions can change that decision. This naturally led to the question for each human being: “Am I among the chosen?” and although Calvin himself denied that there was any way of answering that question, later theologians and daily practice highlighted that the chosen ones were constantly heeding the calling of the glory of God, namely by working hard and being successful in one’s earthly calling.⁴⁷⁵ Thus, while good deeds, working hard, and fulfilling one’s calling does not help towards salvation following the Calvinist dogma, they can be signs of being predestined to salvation. As shown by the famous German sociologist Max Weber, this ethic lent itself excellently to the emerging capitalism, of which the actors of the DAC played a significant role in the Oldenburg Monarchy. Resting, enjoying the fruits of one’s labour, and wasting time were considered sins in the Reformed church – and not wanting to work was a sign of the lack of predestination to grace. Even when exploiting a chance of profit, the Calvinist merchant would see God’s intention in that possibility and work towards it.⁴⁷⁶ It follows that such an ethic is rooted in an independence from other human beings, including feudal lords, since each human being has been chosen or not individually. In seventeenth-century Europe this led to problems if the local lord was Catholic or Lutheran as opposed to Calvinist.⁴⁷⁷

This potential cause for disharmony was apparent in the Oldenburg Monarchy when the later King Christian V in 1667 married Princess Charlotte Amalie of Hessen-Kassel, who had been brought up in the Calvinist faith. Compared to Sweden, for instance, the new Reformed church in Copenhagen would receive several privileges due to this powerful ally of the congregation. She maintained her Reformist faith and even received permission to hold services in a few select chapels in royal castles, among others the Copenhagen Castle. Her personal influence played a significant role in the privileges for citizens of the Reformed faith, which later included many DAC employees and directors. The church became a centre for the business elite of Copenhagen, and their privileges illustrate the need for the state to balance the need for sustaining the official Lutheran faith and not provoke the priesthood unnecessarily on one side, and on the other side recognising the

⁴⁷⁴ Elements of this section has been published in Benjamin Asmussen, “Det Danske Asiatiske Kompagni – en udansk affære?,” *Økonomi & Politik* 2, (2017): 16-25.

⁴⁷⁵ Max Weber, *Den protestantiske etik og kapitalismens ånd* (Copenhagen: Nansensgade Antikvariat, 2009), 72.

⁴⁷⁶ Weber, *Den protestantiske etik og kapitalismens ånd*, 108.

⁴⁷⁷ *Danmarks kirker*. Vol 1. København. 3. bind, 15. hefte. *Reformert Kirke*, 4.

possibilities that merchants with a great network and with lots of capital could create in the Oldenburg State. At the confirmation of their privileges, it is clear that the teachings of Calvin were limited as much as possible – a school was allowed for the segregation, but nothing derogatory about the Lutheran faith must be taught and sermons must only be conducted in French, German, Dutch or English, not in Danish. At the same time, it was deemed acceptable for the church to have a clock, but no bell to summon the faithful to service. But on the other hand, the individual members were awarded a number of advantages such as twenty years exemptions on taxes and tolls.⁴⁷⁸ So while religious hindrances were obvious, favourable conditions were extended for businesses and especially newly-arrived members, which echoes the conditions for the Jewish community. This division can also be found in *Kommercekollegiet*, the organ for regulating business life in the Oldenburg Monarchy. From its establishment in 1672 it advocated for open borders for members of all faiths for reasons of business, which, not surprisingly, was opposed by all bishops of the realm.⁴⁷⁹ But *Kommercekollegiet* seems to have had a point, as businesses among the newly arrived merchants and their descendants flourished in the eighteenth century. One of the most significant, Frédéric de Coninck, arriving from Hague, became a grand merchant, one of the wealthiest in the realm with ships all over the world and was director of the DAC from 1773 to 1776. He, and others like him, possessed a large international network which provided them with ample possibilities for credit, useful for assisting the court in times of need.

As shown in the section on Faith in III.1, the Calvinist presence in the management of the DAC was massive. From the beginning, the *Kinesiske Selskabet* was helped along by Reformist merchants and all the way to the very last director, Wilhelm Friedrich Duntzfelt in 1837, the faith, the ideas, and the ethos was present in the company management. As shown by Max Weber, Calvinism and Capitalism was a very efficient match and the company must have profited. In the case of the company traders, identifying the members of the Reformist Church is more difficult, but many prominent names such as Van Hurk, the Vogelsangs, and Mourier, who will be analysed in the following section stand out, along with people like Hooglant, the Toyon-brothers, Macculloch, Reichardt, Abbestée, Fix, and Jean⁴⁸⁰ who clearly indicate that members of the Reformed Church also were present on the expeditions and in China, meeting fellow Calvinist believers from especially British, Dutch, and French ships on the Pearl River and in Canton.

Det Kongelige Københavnske Skydeselskab

Eighteenth-century Copenhagen was home to old networks such as *Det Kongelige Københavnske Skydeselskab*, which dates to 1334.⁴⁸¹ Here the top tiers of society met along with successful merchants, craftsmen, and others in a social setting. Examining the statistics of the professions of the members of the society, the eighteenth century shows a large rise in the number of merchants

⁴⁷⁸ Landsarkivet for Sjælland mm., Arkivfunktionen for samlinger: Forordninger m.v. for kongeriget (1555-) 10: 1731 6 15 – 1736 12 13: *Confirmation paa de Reformertes Privilegier*, 15. Junij Anno 1731

⁴⁷⁹ *Danmarks kirker*. Vol 1. København. 3. bind, 15. hefte. *Reformert Kirke*, 6

⁴⁸⁰ Please see the wiki for more information about these people, including references.

⁴⁸¹ Aage Langeland-Mathiesen, *Det Kongelige Københavnske Skydeselskab og Danske Broderskab 1334-1934. 1: Selskabets historie* (København: Det Kongelige Københavnske Skydeselskab og Danske Broderskab, 1934).

obtaining membership.⁴⁸²

Types of member of Det kongelige Kjøbenhavnske Skydeselskab	1500-	1600-	1700-	1800-1899
	1599	1699	1799	
Trade, industry, shipping, long-distance trade and finance	33	69	125	350
Other trade	34	27	66	83
Employees of trading companies			16	16
Total	67	96	207	449
Total number of members	704	797	930	1205
Percentage of traders etc.	9,5%	12,0%	22,3%	37,3%

Source: Houmøller 1958

When the number of merchants in a broader sense is compared to the total membership of the elite society through the centuries, the table above clearly shows how the eighteenth century saw a great rise in the number of members dealing with trade and business in their daily lives, rising to almost a quarter of the total number of members. The numbers for the nineteenth century should be used with some caution, since they include the last half of the century, when industrialisation really took off in Denmark. Nonetheless, networks such as *Det Kongelige Kjøbenhavnske Skydeselskab* must have been an important meeting place both for the merchants to meet colleagues and competitors, both also to mingle with central figures in state administration and diplomats as well as both nobility and even royalty. At the same time membership was a status symbol, representing a social escalation, which would provide access to higher circles for the members. A good example of the social mobility provided by the rise of the trade bourgeoisie is supercargo Peder Ruch (1744-1799). As the son of a tobacco worker, Ruch entered the DAC service aged fourteen as the servant of the forty-three-year old supercargo Peder Gram, who was also his uncle.⁴⁸³ Peder Gram's uncle was the DAC director and historian Hans Gram, so the family connections must have been a significant hope of the teenager for advancing his position in society. Either due to personal persistence or perhaps to a feeling of responsibility towards his family, Peder Ruch completed twelve expeditions and sometime after his return to Copenhagen in the mid-1780s he became a member of the prestigious society, likely a result of the great wealth he assembled during his time in the DAC.

Freemasons

⁴⁸² Houmøller, *Det kongelige kjøbenhavnske Skydeselskab og danske Broderskabs Medlemmer gennem 600 Aar*, 6.

⁴⁸³ *Personallistorisk Tidsskrift*, 1921, 171

In the early eighteenth century, societies known as Freemason lodges were established on the British Isles, spreading quickly to both the European continent and North America. The central idea was to continue and complete the creation as begun by God, under influence from philosophers of antiquity such as Pythagoras, builders such as Vitruvius, and monuments such as the Temple of King Salomon and the pyramids. Through personal and moral betterment a New Jerusalem would be constructed.

The first Freemason lodge in the Oldenburg Monarchy was established in Copenhagen in 1743,⁴⁸⁴ recruiting its members from the nobility, civil servants, military officers, and the universities as well as some businessmen.⁴⁸⁵ The first membership protocol of the early lodge of St. Martin in Copenhagen from 1749-1765, shows how the Freemason society in general consisted of younger men. Although their age ranged from nineteen to sixty at the time of joining the order, the average age was 31.7 years, with a lot of members joining in their early twenties.⁴⁸⁶ The Crown Prince Frederik, later King Frederik V, seems to have been a member from some time in the 1740s which led to much greater secrecy within the order.⁴⁸⁷ The St. Martin lodge held meetings from 1744-1765 usually five to ten times a year but on some occasions up to twenty-eight per year. The number of members varied from ten to thirty, most of them nobility, military, or civil servants as well as some merchants.⁴⁸⁸ The number of lodges increased in the following decades from beyond Copenhagen to the Danish provincial towns, to the Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein, as well as to Norway. In the second-most cosmopolitan town in Denmark after the capital, Elsinore, a lodge opened in 1779, but unfortunately no records seem to have been preserved from that lodge, despite as mentioned by the anonymous author of the second volume of the history of freemasonry in Denmark, that the many foreigners in the important port town, home of the Sound Toll, must have provided a lively lodge life.⁴⁸⁹ The lodge in Elsinore seems to have flourished in the late eighteenth century with up to forty-four members, but appears to have closed sometime after the Napoleonic Wars.

According to the first history of the Freemason lodges in Denmark, written in 1765, a lodge was established in Tranquebar, but no further details seem to exist.⁴⁹⁰ Sometime later, Peter Halkier, an

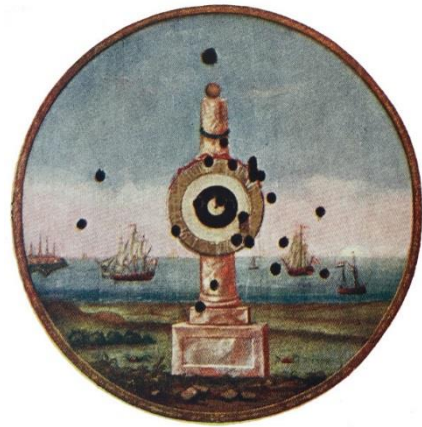


Figure 38 - The target given by supercargo Peder Ruch - one of the few DAC company traders to become a member of the prestigious society. He gave the target around 1791 after twelve successful voyages to China.

⁴⁸⁴ Kraks Tidstavler 1923: *Optegnelser af Kjøbenhavns Historie* (Copenhagen: Krak, 1923), 30.

⁴⁸⁵ *Det danske Frimureries Historie indtil det svenske Systems Indførelse: Udarbejdet efter Den danske store Landsloges Arkiv*. vol. II. 1927, 196

⁴⁸⁶ Bugge, *Det danske Frimureries Historie indtil 1765*, 173-175.

⁴⁸⁷ Bugge, *Det danske Frimureries Historie indtil 1765*, 192.

⁴⁸⁸ Bugge, *Det danske Frimureries Historie indtil 1765*, 209.

⁴⁸⁹ *Det danske Frimureries Historie indtil det svenske Systems Indførelse*, 243.

⁴⁹⁰ Bugge, *Det danske Frimureries Historie indtil 1765*, 165-166.

officer of DAC in Tranquebar, applied for membership of a lodge suggesting that a new lodge was present there, but no further sources seems to confirm this.⁴⁹¹ During the Napoleonic Wars one or two lodges appear to have existed.

Year established	Locality
1743	Copenhagen
1750s and 60s	Danish provincial towns, Norway, Schleswig and Holstein
1762	Batavia (Dutch)
1765	Tranquebar
1772	Cape Town (Dutch)
1776	Danish West Indies (an English lodge already existed here)
1779	Elsinore
1779	Ceylon (Dutch)
1780s	Canton (Swedish, meetings on ships from the 1760s, ambulatory lodge)

[Overview of Freemason Lodges in the Oldenburg Monarchy and relevant places of trade. Sources: see notes in the main text](#)

A Danish lodge appeared on the island of St. Croix in 1776, another on St. Thomas and it seems likely that an English lodge already existed at this time and until 1801.⁴⁹² The lodge on St. Thomas received an application from Jewish residents, who apparently were active in the French and English lodges in the Caribbean, to gain access to the lodge but that was rejected,⁴⁹³ keeping the Christian faith as the sole religion of the lodge.

The new fellowship of the Freemasons grew around the world, with new lodges being established at the central meeting points of European traders. A Dutch Freemason lodge was established in Cape Town in 1772.⁴⁹⁴ Another Dutch lodge was established on Sri Lanka in 1794, where the Danish linguist Rasmus Rask became a member in 1822.⁴⁹⁵ The first lodge in the Dutch colony of Batavia, which became a popular stop for DAC ships on the way to China in the latter half of the company's life, was established in 1762.⁴⁹⁶ In Canton, the tight space permitted for the European traders made a formal lodge hard to establish, but from at least the 1760s, the Swedish company traders held lodge meetings most likely including fellow Freemasons from other European countries.⁴⁹⁷ While relatively open in the beginning, membership later became more restricted, especially from the

⁴⁹¹ *Det danske Frimureries Historie indtil det svenske Systems Indførelse*, 276.

⁴⁹² *Det danske Frimureries Historie indtil det svenske Systems Indførelse*, 251 & 258

⁴⁹³ *Det danske Frimureries Historie indtil det svenske Systems Indførelse*, 261.

⁴⁹⁴ Edgar Collin, *Fremragende danske Frimurere: en Samling Portraiter med Biografier*. Bind 1.(L.A. Jørgensen, 1872), 114.

⁴⁹⁵ Collin, *Fremragende danske Frimurere*, 122.

⁴⁹⁶ Hellman, *Navigating the foreign quarters*, 236.

⁴⁹⁷ Hellman, *Navigating the foreign quarters*, 129.

1780s when the new lodge Elisabeth opened in Canton.⁴⁹⁸ The Swedish Freemasons also on occasion held their lodge meetings on board their ships, as late as 1785.⁴⁹⁹

The German philosopher and writer Gotthold Lessing (1729-1781), who became a member of a lodge in Hamburg in the last decade of his life, wrote about the qualities of the masonic orders. Lessing was a clear representative for the Enlightenment, and his ideas of the purpose of the orders reflected this view. According to Lessing, states unite people in a pursuit for happiness, but they also separate men from each other in different classes and nations. Therefore, he wrote, it was “[...] *desirable, if there in every state were men above the prejudices of the crowd and exactly knew when patriotism stopped being a virtue,*” referring to the Freemason order.⁵⁰⁰ The universal ideals of the order must have been a great advantage to the traveller, who could identify himself to other brothers of the order and thus begin their interactions at a much higher level of trust, knowing that the stranger had been accepted into a group sharing the same ideals as oneself. As mentioned by Collin in 1872, a fellow Freemason would be received anywhere on the globe: “*not as a stranger, but as a dear friend, whom they would assist not only in words, by also by deeds,*”⁵⁰¹ meaning being received not as a stranger but as a dear friend willing to help not only with words, but also by actions. An example of this is the case of the Norwegian DAC Captain Jens Werner Ackeleye, who fell ill during his stay in Canton in the 1740s. During his illness, he received help from a fellow Freemason, the British William Elliot.

On Ackeleye’s return to Copenhagen, he requested his lodge, Zorobabel, should send an official note of thanks to Elliot, which was accepted.⁵⁰² Ackeleye later became director of the DAC, which raises the interesting question of how a company led by a Freemason would fulfill its obligation towards other brothers of the order on a global scale, potentially serving in competitor companies. Unfortunately, no sources have been found so far to describe this.

Known Freemasons employed at the DAC⁵⁰³

Name	Latest year Mason	DAC position
Lycke, Søren	1743	Supercargo
Toyon, Etienne	1747	Supercargo
Vassmer, Johan Henrich	1751	Supercargo
Reichardt, Daniel Friedrich	1754	Supercargo
Dyssel, Elieser	1763	Supercargo
Fritz, Fritz Jacobsen	1766	Supercargo
Toyon, Mathieu	1766	Supercargo

⁴⁹⁸ Hellman, *Navigating the foreign quarters*, 187.

⁴⁹⁹ Hellman, *Navigating the foreign quarters*, 136.

⁵⁰⁰ My translation of Lessing as quoted in Collin, *Fremragende danske Frimurere*, 113.

⁵⁰¹ My translation of “*ikke som en Fremmed, men som en kjær Ven, hvem de ville staa bi ikke alene i Ord, men i Gjærning,*” Collin, *Fremragende danske Frimurere*, 114.

⁵⁰² Bugge, *Det danske Frimureriers Historie indtil 1765*, 153.

⁵⁰³ The sources are the various published lists of Freemasons as well as individual sources for some of the members. For specific references, please see the individual pages at the *Business Wiki of the Oldenburg Monarchy* at <http://oldenburgbusiness.net>

Westergaard, Hans Jensen	1766	Supercargo
Haste, Jacob Alexander	1806	Supercargo
Agerbach, Otto Diderich Lützen	1781	Styrmand
Ponsaing, Joseph Anton	1784	Styrmand
Holthe, Johannes	1800	Styrmand
Randulff, Herman	1806	Styrmand
Mandix, Hans Henrich	?	Styrmand
Ølgod, Frederik	?	Merchant
Møller, Niels Christian	1801	Fuldmægtig & Assistent
Lindam, Peter Holger	1751	Factor
Linderup, Andreas	1789	Employee
Fabritius, Gotthilf Just	1751	Director
Krog, Hans Georg	1753	Director
Scheel, Jørgen Erich	1762	Director
Erich Erichsen	1778	Director
Duntzfelt, Christian Wilhelm	1794	Director
Fabricius, Conrad Alexander	?	Director
Hooglant, Simon	?	Director
Ackeleye, Jens Werner	1748	Captain & director
Svane, Lars	1766	Captain
Hielte, Ole	1809	Bookkeeper
Bornowsky, Ioan	?	Bookkeeper
Graae, Michel	1751	Assistent
Hinckel, Herman Frandsen	1751	Assistent
Fischer, Christian	1753	Assistent
Hansen, Hans Peter	1797	Assistent
Schwabe, Friederich Christian	1797	Assistent
Høvinghoff, Johan Michael	1810	Assistent
Anchersen, Jens	?	Assistent

But both DAC directors and company traders became represented in the new network of Freemasons in the eighteenth century, as can be seen in the table above. One of the very earliest DAC directors was Conrad Fabritius de Tegnagel (1731-1805), son of the great merchant Michael Fabritius, who was one of the initiators of the China trade of the Oldenburg Monarchy around the time of the birth of his son. It is unknown, when Fabritius de Tegnagel became a member of the main lodge *Zorobabel til Nordstjernen*, but he is listed as member no. XIII in the internal member list published by the lodge in 1782, placing his membership close to the date of joining several lodges in 1769. Several other directors were members, but another trend visible in the table above is how the company traders become members very quickly, most likely because it conferred direct benefits when trading with China.

Other types of ties between the Freemasons and the DAC seem to have existed as well, since the prefecture of the lodge *Zorobabel til Nordstjernen* sold four stocks in DAC to fund the furnishing of their new rooms in Copenhagen.⁵⁰⁴

Towards the end of the eighteenth century a shift occurred in the types of members in the lodges in the Oldenburg Monarchy. While all kinds of civil servants and nobility previously had been the majority of the brothers in the lodges, the number of private citizens now increased.⁵⁰⁵ The surge of popularity in the second half of the eighteenth century, where especially young men joined the Freemason guild, corresponds to the change in societal status of merchants. Previously they were looked down upon, but by the mid-1700s their status was on the rise, even on the way to surpassing the nobility of old. This change led to a greater political influence, as described by Khan in his concept of “new men.”⁵⁰⁶

From the perspective of network theory, Freemasonry bestows immense benefits offering to bridge structural holes in the network of its members. At the same time, the structure of the guild and its meetings allow new relations to form, allowing for the “small world” effect as mentioned by Burt.⁵⁰⁷ A Freemason guild can be seen as a network with a very high density, since all of its members are connected to each other, leading to a greater spread of information and norms. Another advantage, according to Granovetter, is the multitude of new weak ties emerging for the businessman joining the guild, providing new channels for information and knowledge.⁵⁰⁸ Therefore it seems that the many DAC employees entering the still-small Freemason guild potentially reaped great benefits from their memberships.

⁵⁰⁴ *Det danske Frimureries Historie indtil det svenske Systems Indførelse*, 314.

⁵⁰⁵ *Det danske Frimureries Historie indtil det svenske Systems Indførelse*, 306.

⁵⁰⁶ Shamus R. Khan, “The Sociology of Elites,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 38 (2012), 366.

⁵⁰⁷ Burt, *Brokerage and closure*, 13.

⁵⁰⁸ Granovetter, “The Strength of Weak Ties.”

Grosserer-Societet

“*The prosperity and benefit of trade and shipping are the most distinguished means for the emergence of all cities.*”⁵⁰⁹

Thus wrote a large number of whole-sale merchants to the king in 1752, requesting further privileges. But already in the 1730s, discussions arose among the Copenhagen city administration, the new Kommerce-Kollegium, and the grand merchants of Copenhagen about the advantages of uniting the whole-sale merchants of the city in a society or even a trading company. The discussion began in 1738 with a request from the city administration to Kommerce-Kollegiet of improving the conditions for trade and merchants in the city. Kommerce-Kollegiet passed the question on to a group of seventeen selected grand merchants, most of them with links to the DAC and other trading companies.⁵¹⁰ After months of pondering and discussion, a reply containing three different scenarios for tying the whole-sale merchants together and providing them with privileges for the betterment of the trade was returned the following year.⁵¹¹ Commerce-Collegiet then made a proposal based on the three scenarios, aimed to enhance the conditions of the whole-sale traders as opposed to the smaller traders and shop owners. This proposal led to heated discussions and split the group of seventeen grand merchants into two. Nothing happened until one of the groups in 1741 made a new proposal on how to found a society of merchants. In 1742 *Grosserer-Societetet* was founded by law, dividing merchants into whole-sale and shop merchants, each with their rights. The ones with a citizenship as merchants could become members of the new society and elect two elders and a chairman. However, many merchants were not particularly interested in the new organisation, and finding a chairman was a challenge.⁵¹² The first chairman, Burmester, who was elected without consulting him first, died shortly after his election and the work of the organisation was hindered by a lack of response from the authorities. But in 1746, a new management was elected with previous DAC director Klaumann as the chairman. Following this, applications to become certified members of *Grosserer-Societetet* required proof of owning parts of a ship, keeping an office, being trained as a merchant, as well as keeping international correspondence.⁵¹³

By 1762, the lack of interest had culminated with the chairman and one of the two Elders dead, but the remaining Elder managed to attract merchants Niels Ryberg and Peter Fenger to the management, breathing some more life into the organisation.⁵¹⁴ The most prominent project the organisation became involved in was the plans for a new free harbour in Copenhagen, where goods could be unloaded, stored, and reloaded with significantly lower taxes unless they were brought into the city proper. At a meeting in *Grosserer-Societetet* in March 1771, all the present members were

⁵⁰⁹ My translation of “*Handelens og Skibsfartens Flor og Velstand er de fornemste Midler til alle Stæders Opkomst.*” Schovelin, *Fra den danske handels empire*, II, 182.

⁵¹⁰ See the section on Interlocking Directorates above – the network of actors that was involved in the Copenhagen administration, Kommerce=Kollegiet and the DAC was quite dense and several actors belonged to more than one institution.

⁵¹¹ Lorenzen, *Grosserer-Societetet 1742-1942*, 44.

⁵¹² C.R. Jansen, *Grosserer-Societetets arkiv: en registratur* (Aarhus: Erhvervsarkivet, Universitetsforlaget i Aarhus, 1983), 14.

⁵¹³ Schovelin, *Fra den danske handels empire*, II, 176.

⁵¹⁴ Rasch, *Ryberg 1725-1804*, 249.

in favour and agreed to buy stocks in the project, and most of these at some point in time had been DAC directors, namely Behagen, Peter van Hemert, Brown, Skibsted, Zinn, Fabritius & Wever, de Coninck, Ryberg, and Tutein.⁵¹⁵ Due to changing import laws and an economic crisis later in 1771, the project was however never realised. Another low point came in 1786, when the chairman Christian Hansen was the sole member and when he finally summoned other merchants to a meeting, he was just encouraged to continue alone!⁵¹⁶

In 1790, the society of merchants was consolidated by the formation of a tighter organisation within the larger society, namely the *Groshandlernes nøjere Forening* – the closer union of whole-sale merchants.⁵¹⁷ The revision of the organisation continued in 1817, when Grosserer-Societetets Komité was founded and access to the merchant's guilds restricted by an exam. Furthermore, having citizenship was now needed in order to trade.⁵¹⁸

In the membership protocols of Grosserer-Societetet most DAC directors and some company traders can be found, providing an overview of the importance of this network for the China trade, as well as the development of the DAC actors in regard to the whole-sale trade of Copenhagen.

Member Name	Citizenship Year ⁵¹⁹	DAC affiliation ⁵²⁰
Gregorius Klaumann	Ab. 1711	Director 1732-1739
Oluf Blach	1727	Director 1753-1767
Joost van Hemert	1727	Director 1744-1752
Herman Lengerken Kløcker	1730	Director 1747-50
Michael Fabritius	1732	Director 1740-1944
Jens Petersen Tybjerg	1736	Junior assistent 1745
Just Fabritius	1740	Director 1755-1766
Johan Friderich Wever	1740	Director 1753-1759
Frantz Rausch	1740	Junior assistant 1745
Abraham Falck	1742	Director 1763-1770
Frederik Holmsted	1742	Director 1730-1743
Jacob Gregorius Graah	1751	Junior Ass. 1739, Ass. 1741
Niels Ryberg	1753	Director 1773-1775
John Brown	1755	Director 1771-1775

⁵¹⁵ Schovelin, *Fra den danske handels empire*, II, 106-107.

⁵¹⁶ Lorenzen, *Grosserer-Societetet 1742-1942*, 144.

⁵¹⁷ Jansen, *Grosserer-Societetets arkiv*, 14.

⁵¹⁸ *Det danske Frimureriers Historie indtil det svenske Systems Indførelse*, 40

⁵¹⁹ The year the member achieved his citizenship as a whole-sale merchant in Copenhagen. Until 1811, this was not a requirement.

⁵²⁰ Data for the directors are from *Hof- og Statskalender* for relevant years, while data for the company traders are from the DAC Roll Books. The years listed for company traders is when the roll books were completed just before the beginning of the voyage. Please see the wiki for additional details about other involvements in the DAC, such as being *Hovedparticipant*, renting cargo space to the company, buying goods at auctions etc.

Peter Fenger	1755	Supercargo 1753
Conrad Fabritius	1760	Director 1772-1775 & 1780-178
Gysbert Behagen	1760	Director 1769-1772
Johan Ludvig Zinn	1765	Director 1784-1790
Peter van Hemert	1765	Director 1777-1783
Frédéric de Coninck	1765	Director 1773-1776
Christen Scharup Black	1775	Director 1776-1779
Laurentius Johannes Cramer	1775	Director 1784-1796
Søren Lycke	1775	Sen. ass. 1743, superc. 1747, 1748 & 1751
Rasmus Sternberg Selmer	1780	Director 1807-1833
Erich Erichsen	1786	Director 1783-1792
Christian Wilhelm Duntzfelt	1795	Director 1797
Peter Poul Ferdinand	-	Supercargo approx. 1770-1785 ⁵²¹
Marcus Stampe	1803	Volonteur 1781, 1782 & 1784
Herman Christian	1806	Director 1834-1840
Niels Saabye	1809	Vol. 1781, Ass. 1784

DAC directors and employees members of Grosserer-Societetet. Data from RA: Grosserer-Societetet: *Medlemsfortegnelse (1742-1982) 2: 1724,1900 and Schovelin 1900, vol II, 174*

Sixteen directors of the DAC were until 1783 also members of Grosserer-Societetet, most of these members of the utmost merchant elite in Copenhagen. After the peak of the DAC in 1783, six additional directors were members of the organisation during the decline. As the DAC directors also being active in Grosserer-Societetet is hardly surprising, the eight company traders that at some time also were members are more interesting and will be analysed in greater detail below.

Tybjerg & Rausch

The first two company traders in Grosserer-Societetet, Jens Petersen Tybjerg and Frantz Rausch both possessed citizenship as whole-sale merchants before starting their career in the China trade, which opens up questions about their situation. Were they experiencing financial difficulties, so that the DAC employment was a matter of need? Or was it a way of learning a new business and perhaps even more importantly, of establishing a new network of fellow merchants? The primary supercargo on their shared voyage of the DRONNINGEN AF DANMARK in 1745 was Hendrik Hooglant, likely the son of the Dutch merchant Diederich Hooglant living in Copenhagen at least since the 1720s. Although few sources describe him, Diederich Hooglant must have held a central position of the business network of Copenhagen because the inaugural meeting in The Maritime Insurance Company was conducted in his house on Gammel Strand in 1726.⁵²² Hendrik's brother or nephew would then be Simon Hooglant, at that time a young officer in the Navy, but hastily rising through the ranks, making admiral in 1782 as well as being DAC director from 1776-1785. The Hooglant family might already at this early time be attractive to include in one's business network. Another option would be the provisional supercargo & senior assistant Octavius Cretzmer on the same voyage, who very likely is related to the whole-sale merchant Johan Jacob Cretzmer, who received his citizenship in 1741, just after the two other company traders. A final possible

⁵²¹ See his microhistorical narrative in the following chapter.

⁵²² Thorsen, *Det Kongelig Oktroierede Sø-Assurance-Kompagni 1726-1926*, 491.

reason for one of the whole-sale merchants to embark on the long voyage might be the assistant Otto Allewelt Hansen with powerful connections to captains and supercargoes of the DAC.⁵²³ In total, the eighteen-man *Negotie*-crew of the DRONNINGEN AF DANMARK in 1745 seems to have consisted of very well-connected company traders, suggesting that the wish of network expansion might be behind the decisions of Tyberg and Rausch⁵²⁴ to join the expedition.

Fenger

In some ways, Peter Fenger shares characteristics with Tybjerg and Rausch in already possessing citizenship as whole-sale merchant before his single expedition to China in 1753 on board DRONNING JULIANA MARIA. But the sources flow richer in the case of Fenger, allowing us a glimpse at a company trader. Fenger was born in Lübeck in 1719 as the son of a captain. He spent much of his youth in the service of Johann Friederich Wever as a clerk, training for fourteen years to be a merchant.⁵²⁵ In 1752 he received his citizenship in Copenhagen, but already set off to China in the following year, perhaps like the traders above to gain a network, although his training with Wever would have provided entry into and knowledge of the top of the merchant elite. Wever, also originating from present-day Germany, became director of the DAC in the same year as Fenger set off, so it seems likely that his old boss and mentor provided him with the opportunity for establishing a fortune of his own. It seemed to work, as after returning to Copenhagen after a successful voyage, he partnered with another merchant to found the house of Borre & Fenger around 1757.⁵²⁶ Marrying the daughter of the Copenhagen merchant Niels Brock in 1758, his network must have flourished as did his business, where among other things he dealt in Asian goods, loans, and a large range of goods. A sign of his success came in 1762, when he was chosen as one of the Elders of Grosserer-Societetet,⁵²⁷ and had he lived long enough, he might have sensed the circularness of history as one of his daughters married a DAC captain in 1779,⁵²⁸ five years after his death.

Lycke

The career of Supercargo Søren Lycke differs from the above as he began with a number of voyages⁵²⁹ to China as a company trader, before obtaining a citizenship as a whole-sale merchant in 1775. He must have begun trading earlier than that, since he was described as a merchant and wine-

⁵²³ See the section *Family and Friends* below for an analysis of the extended Allewelt family.

⁵²⁴ Rausch appears again later, as his daughter Susanna Rausch married DAC supercargo Frantz Otto Wilhelm Vogelsang in 1784. See his narrative in Chapter IV.

⁵²⁵ Conrad M. Bruun, *Kjøbenhavn*. III (Copenhagen: Philipsens forlag, 1887), 50.

⁵²⁶ Borre was the son of Oluf Blach's sister. Lorenzen, *Grosserer-Societetet 1742-1942*, 141.

⁵²⁷ Biografisk Leksikon I

⁵²⁸ Poul B. Grandjean, *Slægtbog over Familien With fra Romø* (Copenhagen: Tillæg, 1906), 24-26.

⁵²⁹ Both a Søren Lycke with four expeditions to China and a Søren Christian Lycke with six different voyages appear in the DAC Roll Books from 1738-1751, and it might be the same person. If that were the case however, the voyages seem to overlap too much, so it is probably to persons of almost the same name, although that is quite rare on the China expeditions. The risk of both fusion and fission of actors is high in this case.

trader already around about 1743, when he entered the freemason order in Scotland.⁵³⁰ The utility of being a freemason must have held value to Lycke, as he advanced to 1st Principal of the Copenhagen lodge *Zorobabel* in 1763, where he would meet several DAC directors.⁵³¹

Mourier & Saabye

The last two company traders listed as members of *Grosserer-Societetet* seem to be special cases. Peter Poul Ferdinand Mourier was a member of the organisation without being in possession of a citizenship as a whole-sale merchant, although ownership of at least part of a ship and have a trading office was still required.⁵³² He thus represents a type of merchant that would be excluded from the evolving organisation from 1817. Mourier is analysed in detail in section IV.3 and will not be treated further here.

Niels Saabye sailed twice to China as first a *Volonteur* in 1781 and then as an assistant in 1784, before receiving his citizenship as whole-sale merchant in 1809. He must be related, perhaps as a younger brother to the merchant Hans Rudolph Saabye, born in 1751, and his father who was also named Niels Saabye. Hans Rudolph joined the house of Niels Ryberg,⁵³³ top merchant and DAC director in 1789 and received citizenship the year after, already being one of the Elders of *Grosserer-Societetet*.⁵³⁴ Hans Rudolph Saaby also married the niece of Niels Ryberg, cementing the relationship between the two. These family connections must have paved the way for the young Niels Saabye, although no further records of his business have been found.

In conclusion, while one could expect that company traders would begin their careers with the uncomfortable long journeys to China to build up a fortune, then become large merchants and join *Grosserer-Societetet*, only two out of the company traders apparently lived up to this, namely Søren Lycke and perhaps Niels Saabye. The others used the expeditions to gather capital, build networks, or for other unknown reasons. While the organisation does not seem to have played a significant role in the Copenhagen business life in most of its history, especially the 1770s and 1780s, it was still a meeting place for the grand merchants involved in the DAC. Of the eleven chairmen from the start in 1742 and a hundred years later when the company was dissolved, seven were at some point DAC directors.⁵³⁵ In the early period of the 1740s and 1750s the same group of elite merchants described in Section III.1 in the discussion on interlocking directorates, were very much present in the organisation, which must have held some prestige or utility for them to be present – most likely through the hope of influence on policy making by answering queries from the state.

⁵³⁰ Bugge, *Det danske Frimureriers Historie indtil 1765*, 144.

⁵³¹ See the table of DAC freemasons in the section above.

⁵³² Schovelin, *Fra den danske handels empire*, II, 173.

⁵³³ Niels Ryberg became one of the Elders of *Grosserer-Societetet* in 1762

⁵³⁴ Holmgaard, “Aa. Rasch: Niels Ryberg. 1725-1804,” 86.

⁵³⁵ Lorenzen, *Grosserer-Societetet 1742-1942*.

Family and Friends

When studying the DAC company traders and directors in detail, family clusters around them show up continuously. In the following, a few of those who are not described in the chapter of microhistorical narratives will be explored.

An early example of family clusters within the DAC could take its departure in Andreas Allewelt (1729/1739-1770),⁵³⁶ who sailed nine times to China as a company trader.⁵³⁷ On his first voyage on board the PRINCESSE LOUISE, which saluted castle Kronborg on the very last day of 1751, he served as a junior assistant. In the following years he advanced to be assistant in 1758, senior assistant in 1760, and finally 3rd supercargo on his final voyage in 1770. He never returned from this voyage, and today his tombstone can be seen on the former French Island on the Pearl River. Andreas Allewelt came from a family with many links to the long-distance trade. His father, Zacharias Allewelt (1682-1744) from Arendal in Norway, had a past as an officer in the slave trade companies of the Oldenburg Monarchy and later became first mate of the SLESWIG, which left for China in 1733. In four following expeditions, he served as captain which must have provided him with an intensive network and great influence.



Figure 39 - Statuette of Captain Zacharias Allewelt, made in Canton in the 1730s. Photo: Aust-Agder Museum

When the young Andreas Allewelt left for his first journey, perhaps only twelve years old, he might have enjoyed some patronage from the captain, Jesper Pedersen With, who was married to the cousin of Andreas. The son of Captain With, Mouritz With, later entered the service of the DAC as a scribe and servant on the PRINCESSE LOVISÆ from 1759 and later became an officer and captain.⁵³⁸ Like Zacharias, Allewelt most likely indirectly helped his son enter the service of the prestigious company, and the same must have been the case for his nephew Otto Hansen Allewelt,⁵³⁹ who sailed at least twice to China, first as junior assistant in 1743 and later as assistant in 1745.

Various family positions provide indications of the strength of the ties. It seems obvious that the strongest possible family tie would be between a parent and a child,⁵⁴⁰ but other ties might provide

⁵³⁶ His preserved gravestone near Canton, which seem original, provides 1739 as his year of birth, while a private genealogy site suggests that he was born in 1729:

http://www.fardi.dk/aner/familytree/languages/da/persons/Person_I452.html 1729 seems most likely, otherwise he would only be eleven years old on his first assignment of junior assistant – not impossible though, especially considering his family.

⁵³⁷ All data of positions on voyages from relevant DAC Roll Books.

⁵³⁸ Erik Gøbel, “En dansk kinakaptajn,” *Siden Saxo* 2, no. 2 (1985), 16.

⁵³⁹ Skiftet efter Obertoldbetjent Otto Alewelt, *Skifteavskrifter for Bergen 1675-1852, fra Sollied*. <http://da2.uib.no/cgi-win/WebBok.exe?slag=lesside&bokid=solliedskift&sideid=1448&innhaldid=1&storleik=>. Accessed March 24, 2018.

⁵⁴⁰ As described by Wetherell in his 1998 foundational article. Charles Wetherell, “Historical Social Network Analysis,” *International Review of Social History* 43, no. S6 (1998), 131.

other benefits. Research by Gunner Lind indicates that sons-in-law might be an even stronger tie in a business social network, for as Lind quotes a seventeenth-century source: “*A father has greater use of his son-in-law than of his son, since one cannot choose one’s own son!*”⁵⁴¹ This seems to fit the directors, where an in-law relationship occurred frequently as noted in the section on *Inheritance* in III.1.

As shown above, family networks were a much-used way of entering the service of the DAC, providing opportunities for enrichment and social escalation. Supercargo Mourier describes the need for connections in a letter in 1777 about the career troubles of a friend and former army comrade, Christian König, in Canton: “[...] *but if he just had friends at home, who by recommendations in the right places could get him just the position of junior mate, I think I could then enable him to earn a little [...]*”⁵⁴² Mourier later describes that he has written to several people, including DAC directors, recommending König for a higher position.

Several examples point towards the utility of a family involved in private trade and having relatives in the DAC. Due to the scarcity of sources, however, often only fragments point towards connections otherwise lost. Such an example can be glimpsed during the expedition of CHRISTIANSHAVN 1819-1821. Arriving in Batavia, the ship chaplain was received by another Dane, K.L. Haste, who was the head of a large merchant house⁵⁴³ in the Dutch trading centre.⁵⁴⁴ But on board the ship was also a company trader with the same, unusual name, namely senior assistant Jacob Alexander Haste,⁵⁴⁵ son⁵⁴⁶ of Johan Henrik Haste, *Ekvipagemester* or quartermaster of the DAC from 1785-1795.⁵⁴⁷ A connection seems very likely, which must have benefited the family. Numerous other examples show up constantly when working with the varied sources to the actors and their business lives.

III.4 - Related groups

Around the company traders and directors were a number of related groups, which will be explored in the following.

The “Navigation Crew” of the Chinamen

Related to the merchants and company traders are the sailors of the great ships that transported goods and passengers between Copenhagen and Canton. Traces of conflict between the two groups of the crew can be seen for instance in the company instructions to the captains in 1789, where it is

⁵⁴¹ My translation of: ”*En fader har større nytte af sin svigersøn end sin søn, eftersom man ikke kan vælge sin egen søn!*” from Lind, “Svigersønner,” 99.

⁵⁴² My translation from “[...] *men havde han [matros Christian König, tidligere soldaterkammerat] nogle Venner hjemme, som kunne ved Recommendationer paa rette Stede faae ham til yngste Fjerdevagt bare, saa tror jeg nok at kunde forskaffe ham Leylighed til at fortiene lidet [...]*”. Letter from P.P.F. Mourier to army captain H.V. von Warnstedt, Canton 1777-1-15. In private ownership.

⁵⁴³ This must have been the Van der Kaa, Haste & Co, which was active at least in 1815, as seen in the list of *Mercantile and Agency Houses* in *The Java Half-Yearly Almanac and Directory for 1815*

⁵⁴⁴ Møller, *Poul Martin Møllers Levnet*, 48.

⁵⁴⁵ RA: DAC Roll Book for that journey.

⁵⁴⁶ Public Census 1787

⁵⁴⁷ Klem, *Skibsbyggeriet i Danmark og hertugdømmerne i 1700-årene*, vol I, 66.

expressly prohibited for captains and navigation officers to withhold letters for the *Negotie*-crew, the supercargoes, and the assistants, which must previously have been a problem or at least perceived as such.⁵⁴⁸

The large crew of the DAC ships consisted of sailors especially from the two kingdoms of the Oldenburg Monarchy, with the Norwegian sailors being the largest group, making up at least a quarter and probably up to a third of the crew.⁵⁴⁹ However, the average sailor did not see much of the mythical China. European ships were restricted to Whampoa, a long island on the Pearl River. One of many islands near Canton, this island became a meeting place between European and later American sailors, as well as to enterprising Chinese attempting to profit from the trade by providing a wide range of services to the sailors after their many months at sea. A select, trusted group of sailors were chosen, however, to man and guard the many boats travelling between Whampoa and Canton, providing an insight into the rich river culture of the delta.

Nevertheless, on the return to the Oldenburg State the sailors from the large crews of the Chinamen were much sought-after due to the stories they could tell of foreign lands. The fascination showed in the musical *Chinafarerne*, shown at the Royal Theater in Copenhagen in 1792, written by P.A. Heiberg.

The division between two locations of Canton and Whampoa is similar to the division between the company traders and the sailors of the ships that we find in the DAC roll books. The *Negotie* crew is listed separately from the *Navigation* crew, since their tasks during the expedition were fundamentally different, and this is curiously reflected in the geographical division in China. The Chinese desire for control of the foreigners meant that the crews of the ships were only allowed to go ashore at Whampoa and at the nearby Dane's Island and French Island, where also the dead could be buried. For this reason, several sailors did not take much note of their experiences in Whampoa, as for instance in the case of the able sailor Hans Storm who came to China on board the FREDERIK VI in late 1829. Despite spending months at the anchorage, hardly a single word to describe the place was noted by the sailor.⁵⁵⁰ The same seems to hold true for other sailors, as formulated by Lampe: “[...] *Whampoa was not a location to observe and document but merely a workplace.*”⁵⁵¹ On the other hand, even though sailors were not permitted to be near the factories but to remain at Whampoa, regulations suggest that larger numbers of the Navigation-crew visited both the factory and the Comprador.⁵⁵²

⁵⁴⁸ *Instruction for Capitain ... förende Det Kongelige Octroyerede Danske Asiatiske Compagnies Skib ... destineret til Canton i China*, 1789, §63, p. 40. Old book collection of the Maritime Museum of Denmark.

⁵⁴⁹ Erik Gøbel, “Skibe på langfart: sejlads fra København til Asien, Afrika og Amerika i 1600- og 1700-tallet,” in *Historiske meddelelser om København 2014*, Copenhagen: 2014, 56

⁵⁵⁰ *Hans Storm - Dagbog fra en kinafart 1829-30*, http://tuxen.info/kinafarer/hans_storm_dagbog.htm

⁵⁵¹ Evan Lampe, “‘The Most Miserable Hole in the Whole World:’ Western Sailors and the Whampoa Anchorage, 1770-1850,” *International Journal of Maritime History* 22, no. 1 (2010), 21.

⁵⁵² *Instruction for Capitain ... förende Det Kongelige Octroyerede Danske Asiatiske Compagnies Skib ... destineret til Canton i China*, 1789, §70, p. 43. Old book collection of the Maritime Museum of Denmark. Here the captain is instructed to make sure that the number of officers visiting the factory is not too large and that their presence to not hinder the work of the company traders.

The crews on board the large Chinamen suffered a lower mortality rate than on other long-distance trading expeditions. About 10 percent of the crew would perish during the year and a half-long voyage. The part of the journey in the cold northern waters was especially dangerous and many died from accidents on board.⁵⁵³ The longest part of the journey was in open waters, where no diseases from land would reach. But approaching the Chinese coast, the mortality rate rose again where especially malaria and dysentery took its toll on the sailors. On the return voyage, the last leg of the journey was the most dangerous, not only because of the difficulty in entering Danish waters, but also because of the drunkenness of the sailors, knowing that home was close now.

Chinese Sailors

While the topic of this thesis is primarily the actors of the Oldenburg Monarchy and their interest in China, the discovery of an interest going the opposite way deserves mention in this context.

Several Chinese, who had been hired on the long voyages, made it to Copenhagen as well.⁵⁵⁴ The ship CHARLOTTE AMALIE lost fifty-six sailors on the way to Canton and had to hire Chinese sailors, which was technically forbidden.⁵⁵⁵ Because of the ban, the sailors would not enter the ship from Whampoa, but rather further down the Pearl River at the departure of the ship. In order to support the families of the sailors, they received six months' pay in advance⁵⁵⁶ which led to the problem of the Chinese sailors arriving in Copenhagen penniless, as the voyage usually lasted around that amount of time. This led to the necessity of providing the Chinese sailors with employment in Copenhagen until they could return on another ship bound for China. The sailors thus received board and lodging until a ship returned to China. Until departure, they would work at the company headquarters in Christianshavn.⁵⁵⁷ It was vital that the returning Chinese would not speak ill of their employment at the DAC or their stay in



Figure 40 - A portrait of a Chinese junior mate in Copenhagen, painted by the famous Jens Juel in 1786. The paintings and the story behind it raises a number of fascinating questions for future research. Where did the Mandarin uniform come from? It seems unlikely that the sailor brought it along in his small sea chest, so perhaps it was borrowed from someone in Copenhagen? Who? And where is it now? Photo: University of Göttingen.

⁵⁵³ Feldbæk, *Dansk søfarts historie*, III, 178.

⁵⁵⁴ Feldbæk, *Dansk søfarts historie*, III, 169.

⁵⁵⁵ Rasch and Sveistrup, *Asiatisk Kompagni i den florissante Periode*, 224.

⁵⁵⁶ RA: Asiatisk Kompagni, Afdelingen i København: Indkomne breve fra faktoriet i Canton (1773-1791) 234 - 237A, letter #236 from 1783-1-29

⁵⁵⁷ Lehmann, *Til Østen under Sejl*, 93.

Copenhagen, as it could prohibit others from entering the service.⁵⁵⁸

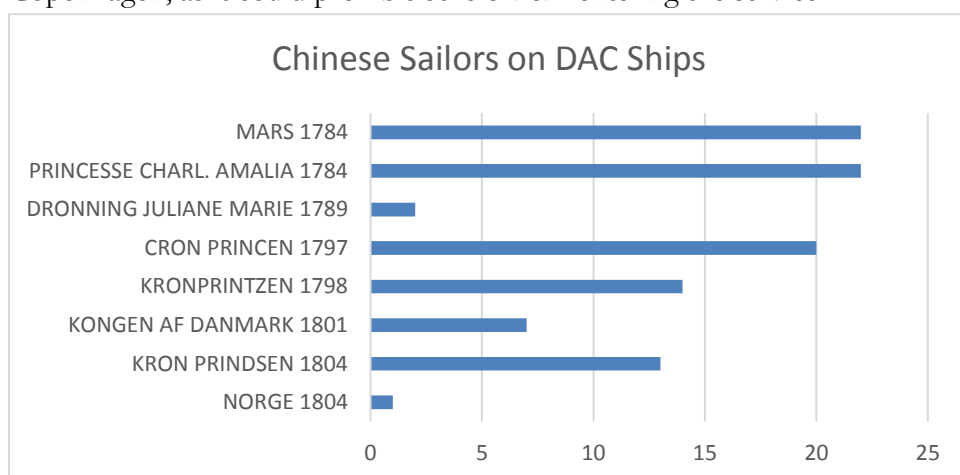


Figure 41 - Source: DAC Roll Books for the relevant years

As seen in Figure 42, the practice of employing Chinese sailors as replacement for dead or deserted crewmembers was short lived. It began at the height of the DAC China trade and stopped shortly before the involvement of the Oldenburg Monarchy in the Napoleonic Wars, with groups of fifteen to twenty sailors being the norm.

These sailors on board the DAC ships might have been the first Chinese in Scandinavia, although another candidate is the friend of the Swedish supercargo Lindahl, Afock, who left China with him in 1785.⁵⁵⁹ Lindahl and Afock became popular guests in many upper-class Swedish homes, reflecting the popularity of all things Chinese in the period.

After a stay in Copenhagen the Chinese sailors would return home, for instance on the CRONPRINZ which left Copenhagen in November 1797 with twenty Chinese sailors on board. Right at the start of this voyage, a Chinese sailor was involved in violence, threatening another with a knife and was put in chains. As the expedition had only reached Elsinore, the captain wrote a letter to the directors to put the arrested Chinese sailor ashore, as he would otherwise spend the entire trip in chains. It seems clear that he was not only a sailor, but also a passenger returning to China. After a few days, the entire Chinese crew approached the first mate begging for the release of their countryman, which was then granted.⁵⁶⁰

This particular Chinese crew had been hired in Batavia and was later set ashore in Macao with wages for the last seven months, as they were afraid of entering the Pearl River on board the DAC ship.⁵⁶¹ Among them were a Bandor, a foreman, and the Chinese were “Chin-Churer,” apparently a people not favoured by the mandarins. Their treatment on board must have been narrated as

⁵⁵⁸ RA: Asiatisk Kompagni, Afdelingen i København: Indkomne breve fra faktoriet i Canton (1773-1791) 234 - 237A, letter #236 from 1783-1-29

⁵⁵⁹ Hellman, *Navigating the foreign quarters*, 188.

⁵⁶⁰ Lehmann, *Til Osten under Sejl*, 64.

⁵⁶¹ Lehmann, *Til Osten under Sejl*, 83.

satisfactory by the returning Chinese, however, for when a ship left for Copenhagen some months later, nineteen new Chinese sailors were on board – each to be paid seven piastre per month.

An interesting detail about these Chinese sailors, who most likely were the first Chinese to visit the Oldenburg Monarchy, is their seemingly complete omission from the source material. Their presence in Copenhagen and their work in the company headquarters seem to have left few marks behind except for a notice in a city newspaper from the DAC, urging people not to provide credit for the Chinese sailors as they would be paid upon their return to China. An exception to this is the famous portrait painter Jens Juel, who painted much of the elite of the Oldenburg Monarchy in the period. In his estate after his death in 1802, two paintings of Chinese sailors were sold off. One of them, of a Chinese able seaman is today in private ownership, while the other, as seen above in Figure 44, is in the collection of the University of Göttingen. The existence of these paintings show that not only were the Chinese sailors present, but they also inspired artists like Juel to preserve the impression they made. The painting above raises new questions, for the junior mate portrayed is wearing the dress of a mandarin – a Chinese official. Did he bring that on board the DAC ship, or did he borrow it from a local collector, and in that case who? Or did Jens Juel use another image for inspiration for the dress?

While the topic of Chinese sailors on European ships in the eighteenth century has recently been explored by Paul van Dyke,⁵⁶² future research will hopefully provide more details about these first Chinese in Copenhagen, their experiences, and how they were perceived by the locals.

The Jewish Community⁵⁶³

A key player in the trade of the Oldenburg Monarchy with China was the Jewish merchants of Copenhagen and the Duchies. The first Jews in the Oldenburg State were refugees from the persecutions on the Iberian Peninsula and in the Spanish Netherlands who arrived coincidentally at about the same time as the first long-distance trading company, the Ostindisk Compagnie, was established in 1616. The so-called Sephardic Jews were part of a global network that was established during the Spanish and Portuguese colonisation of parts of North and South America, Africa, and Asia. This network and its ability to acquire silver from South America made the group valuable to local potentates, who would attempt to use it for their own purposes, which to a certain extent would balance the strong anti-Semitic feelings of citizens and clergy in many parts of Europe, including the Oldenburg State. Here, King Christian IV was ready to provide security for a group of Sephardic Jews suffering under strict regulations in the free city of Hamburg, on the border with the king's Duchy of Holstein. The Jewish Community wanted stability to enable trade as well as permission to establish a synagogue and a funeral ground, in return for becoming subjects of the king, obtaining a large degree of self-governance, and drawing trade to the new town of Glückstadt on the Elbe, that was intended as a competitor to Hamburg. In a European continent of persecution, bans, and anti-Semitism, Glückstadt became a haven of liberty for many Sephardic Jews, who in the following years moved to the growing town from not only Hamburg, but also

⁵⁶² Paul A. Van Dyke, "A ship full of Chinese passengers. Princess Amelia's voyage from London to China in 1816-17," in *Early Modern East Asia: War, Commerce, and Cultural Exchange*, Chapter 8 (London: Routledge, 2017).

⁵⁶³ Parts of this section has also been published in Asmussen, "Det Danske Asiatiske Kompagni."

from Amsterdam, Portugal, and Spain.⁵⁶⁴ In the seventeenth century, the town came to house a mint, a salt factory, a sugar refinery, a soap factory, ceramic workshops, merchants and their shipping businesses, as well as being surrounded by new and modern fortifications. The residents of Glückstadt were also given rights to trade throughout the entire Oldenburg State, although especially in the Duchies.

Another development took place a bit later in nearby Altona, just outside Hamburg. Altona was a part of the county of Schaumburg, taken over by the Danish king in 1640. A year later, King Christian IV granted the community of Ashkenazi Jews in the town several new privileges, including the right to a synagogue and a cemetery, but also extending the right to newcomers of the settlement. These privileges led to a rise in the number of inhabitants and more importantly seen from the point of view of the king, a rise in trade and crafts. Another advantage of the Jewish traders and craftsmen, as noted by Arnheim, was their mobility both geographically but also in terms of profession and trade specialties and even in their way of using new markets and ways of communication.⁵⁶⁵

When a new king ascended the throne, the privileges for Jews had to be renewed, and a tradition emerged in Altona's community to award the king a gift of a three thousand rigsdaler after the confirmation and the king was celebrated in the synagogue, as seen in 1767 after the ascent of King Christian VII. In the eighteenth century, the beneficial conditions for the Jewish communities had resulted in a thriving society and the existence of several wealthy traders with networks across Europe and beyond.

In 1684 a new Jewish community in Copenhagen with roots in the Duchies was officially approved.⁵⁶⁶ Jewish merchants had visited and resided in the capital earlier, but this was the first official permit. Compared to similar cities in England, the Netherlands, and as with Hamburg, very few Jewish businessmen operated in Copenhagen partly due to a split between the city and the state. While the state was in favour of inviting wealthy Jews to the business centre of the monarchy, the city magistrate was opposed.⁵⁶⁷

During the eighteenth century, the growing Jewish community in Copenhagen was allowed an increasing amount of freedom among other things leading to the opening of the first synagogue in 1743.⁵⁶⁸ In 1788 Jews were admitted to the city guilds.⁵⁶⁹ In general, the privileges granted to the Jewish community in Copenhagen were fewer and stricter than the privileges granted in the Duchies. The anti-Semitism encountered among the Jewish people of the city was harsher than what was suffered in the settlements of the Duchies, and numerous official demands humiliated the Jewish community such as the forced burials of Christian heretics at the Jewish cemetery in

⁵⁶⁴ Arnheim, *Truet minoritet søger beskyttelse*, 8, 22.

⁵⁶⁵ Arnheim, *Truet minoritet søger beskyttelse*, 55.

⁵⁶⁶ Arnheim, *Truet minoritet søger beskyttelse*, 57.

⁵⁶⁷ Louis E. Grandjean, "Dansk søforsikrings fædre fra 1726. Personligheder og milieu," 82.

⁵⁶⁸ *Kraks Tidstavler 1923*, 30

⁵⁶⁹ *Kraks Tidstavler 1923*, 35

Copenhagen and the requirements of the early eighteenth century for Jews to attend Christian mass with the purpose of religious conversion.⁵⁷⁰ Despite this, the number of Jews in the capital grew from about 350 in 1728, to 650 in 1760, and 1,500 in 1790. Many Jewish merchants specialised in trading the goods imported by the DAC, especially tea and silk as well as the more traditional goods of chocolate, coffee, gold, silver, and diamonds, all characterised by being of high value and low volume, making them easy to transport for the often wandering merchants.⁵⁷¹ Shops were set up in Copenhagen where Jewish merchants would sell Chinese goods, which to a large extent could be traded outside the traditional guilds that regulated most businesses in the period.

But the main influence of the Jewish merchant community in Copenhagen upon the DAC was in the procurement of the large amount of silver to be shipped to China. While DAC directors such as Holmsted, Fabricius & Wever, van Hemert, Iselin, Kløcker, Soelberg, Ackeleye, Fischer, Falch, Ryberg, and Black earned a profit by supplying a majority of the silver, assisted by employees of the company such as the bookkeeper Fæddersen and cashier Daldorf, Jewish merchants were also active.⁵⁷² The Jewish merchant houses of Unna and Samuel & Kantor supplied more than a fifth of the silver in the middle of the eighteenth century.

Just like the views of merchants were changing in the eighteenth century, so were the views of the Jews. An interesting source to this is the musical *Chinafarerne* from 1792, written by the progressive Danish-Norwegian writer Peter Andreas Heiberg. The musical was shown numerous times at the Royal Theater in Copenhagen in the following decades, and is a romantic comedy set among DAC employees returning from China, their girlfriends, and a Jewish merchant named Moses. While some of the songs display a joy of profit of both the DAC and the Jewish merchants lending money to sailors and traders, the play ends on a remarkable tolerant note. For Moses offers to help one of the couples out of their financial troubles, and one of the leading females utters: “*There are yet good men in all religions.*”⁵⁷³

III.5 - Summary – A Network of Networks

As shown in this chapter, the merchants and company traders were tied together by many different bonds. Given the relatively small size of the business community of Copenhagen in the eighteenth century, this might not be surprising, but as this study shows, the number of network and family relationships seems greater than what might be expected.

For the management of DAC, a narrative emerges telling about an initial period with a gradual change of directors among a densely connected network of especially elite merchants. As shown in the section about interlocking directorates, especially the merchants among the directors were the most central in their time, participating in numerous businesses and contributing to the public administration. A middle period sees disputes among the management of the DAC as to which direction to go – primarily how much should the individual directors be allowed to enrich

⁵⁷⁰ Arnheim, *Truet minoritet søger beskyttelse*, 86.

⁵⁷¹ Annette Hoff, *Den danske chokoladehistorie* (Wormianum: Den Gamle By, 2016), 21.

⁵⁷² Glamann, “The Danish Asiatic Company,” 118.

⁵⁷³ Heiberg, *Chinafarerne*.

themselves? Quarrels emerged among the management and several chose to leave the company and instead prioritise their individual merchant houses and even their private trade to China, sometimes on the wrong side of the law. For several, the networks created during their time in the DAC was utilised for new business opportunities abroad. It is also at this time that the first “home-grown” directors are elected, people that have worked for the company in other positions before becoming directors, such as Elphinston, Krog, Abbestée, Vogelsang, and perhaps Duntzfelt to a lesser degree. Internal knowledge of the usual ways of practicing the global trade in the company must have peaked in this period – an advantage for the company at the moment, but perhaps leading to practices based on traditions and conservatism rather than innovation and exploration.

In the early period the composition of the directors was varied. Civil servants, officers, and noblemen participated in managing the company – but this was dominated by the most influential merchants of the Oldenburg Monarchy, many of them trading all over the globe and providing the network of the DAC with an influx of ideas and skills. The company was successful and in decades of growth, merchants managed to secure positions for their heirs thus creating dynasties of merchants engaged in the company.

The dominance of the members of the Reformed Church in Copenhagen sheds light on how dense networks such as this provided a foundation of trust of members within the group, lowering the business transaction costs. The members of the Reformed Church, just like the Jewish community, suffered various restrictions from society. The Jewish community was severely restricted in their choice of businesses, being excluded from most of the guilds which were the foundation of the city’s business life in the eighteenth century. Other restrictions included not being allowed to marry outside the group, restrictions of residence, as well as being regarded with general scepticism from the surrounding society. As troublesome as these restrictions were, they seem to have provided deeper bonds within the groups, enabling greater trust more easily.

Finally, in the late period, the group of directors seems less competitive, older, more local, less active, and with less trading experience. The diversity of occupations as well as other attributes also diminishes. Whether the downturn of the company was caused by the directors possessing lesser skills and personal networks or if the downturn meant that the elite merchants chose to stay away is still an open question, although a combination of the two seems likely, furthering the crisis of the late DAC.

The analysis of the company traders points towards a narrative of change for this group in the period of the DAC China expeditions. In the 1730s and the following couple of decades, large trading crews joined the ship on the expeditions. Up to eighteen people participated, almost resembling a small court, with the primary supercargo on top of the hierarchy equal only to the captain. Other supercargoes were part of the nobility on board, while a large group of assistants were the middle class, served like the supercargoes by younger servants, scribes, and apprentices eager to advance. In the later period this structure changed into a smaller and tighter team of often two company traders who had to perform the work of the previous large crews, but this change points to a maturity of the trade-- of structures and routines being ingrained in both Copenhagen, on board the ships, and in Canton.

As shown in the examples of ego networks from Mauritzen and Bentley, this change had more profound effects than merely dividing the work load onto fewer shoulders. For the change led to a shrinking of the knowledge base and fewer potential colleagues for discussion and learning during the long trips. Thus, the personal characteristics of each company trader were even more important than before. For as shown in the network analysis of potential knowledge transfer, the management of the DAC seemed well aware of the necessity of employing trustworthy and skilled people in this particular type of trade which required the greatest independence in handling the largest values of goods over the longest distances of any merchant operation of the Oldenburg Monarchy.

A final important part of the trader narrative is how the majority of the company traders only participated in a single journey, never to return – a testament to the hardships of the voyage of in terms of temperature, food, boredom, and crampedness. At the same time, however, for some, this became a way of life, as they continued to ply the seas between Copenhagen and Canton for decades before retiring, using their networks to utilise their experience and wealth from the expeditions.

IV - Pas de quatre – From Data to Narratives

After the overture, setting the scene, and presenting the cast, it is now time for a dance of four chosen actors, a *pas de quatre*. In classical ballet, this type of dance usually contains no plot, fitting for an analysis of the lives and networks of four different actors, where the plot is placed upon the actors from a later time.

Based on the previous sections on the history of the DAC and the chapter on the directors and company traders as seen through a lens of prosopography, this chapter uses microhistory to see the world of the DAC actors. For this, four actors have been selected, one from the early history of the China trade, two from the high point of the trade in the 1770s and 1780s, as well as one from the final and often overlooked period of the DAC; the long decline after the Napoleonic Wars. These are studied for answering the second research question: *From the perspective of microhistory, what role did networks play for selected individual company traders?*

As mentioned previously, the sources concerning most of the actors of the DAC are scarce. But by combining the prosopographical approach with genealogy, onomastics, and Social Network Analysis, it becomes possible as a historian to construct a narrative about the traders, directors, and others, or, in the words of the Danish historian Inga Floto, who synthesises Erik Arup's thoughts about the historian as a poet in the idea of “*recreating the past with a scientifically trained imagination.*”⁵⁷⁴

With inspiration from Mordhorst,⁵⁷⁵ after each main narrative follows a summarisation of the story told into a short narrative, set into perspective by varying number of counternarratives. Thus, increasing the awareness of both the historian and the reader that the narratives are different from the past - they are created by the historian- and that others are possible. Second, their creation opens the mind of both reader and writer to other interpretations, possibly leading to new understandings. Third, it helps prevent the notion of determinism, that events were bound to happen instead of random occurrences, irrational notions, natural phenomena, and many other things causing events to happen.

Another inspiration, as previously mentioned, is *The Cheese and the Worms* by Ginzburg, where paragraphs describe the narrative of the sixteenth-century miller Menocchio, alternating between the personal voice of the historian and a historical narrative as direct quotes from sources, providing a good example of how the microhistorical narrative is also the analysis. Similar inspiration is found in *The Return of Martin Guerre*, which also alternates between various types of storytelling. Here Davis describes her aim of “*using every scrap of paper left me by the past*”⁵⁷⁶ in order to tell the story of the extraordinary peasant Martin Guerre and learn new insights about sixteenth-century rural society, which has also been the somewhat unrealistic goal of the narratives below. As noted elsewhere by Ginzburg, part of the approach of microhistory is to include the “[...] *hypotheses, doubt and uncertainty as a part of the narrative; the research of the truth became a part of the story of*

⁵⁷⁴ “*genskabe fortiden med videnskabeligt skolet fantasi?*” (Floto 1978, p. 478).

⁵⁷⁵ Mads Mordhorst, “From Counterfactual History to Counter-Narrative History,” *Management & Organizational History* 3, no. 1 (2008): 5-26.

⁵⁷⁶ Natalie Zemon Davis, *The return of Martin Guerre*, IX

the found (and therefore incomplete) truth.”⁵⁷⁷ Thus, the process of the historian becomes part of the narrative and invites the reader to contemplate alternative, possible interpretations of the sources. The boundaries of understanding are thus included in the story and transformed into an element of the narrative. Another claim by Ginzburg, that “[...] in a modest individual who is himself lacking in significance and for this very reason representative, it is still possible to trace, as in a microcosm, the characteristics of an entire social stratum in a specific historical period [...]”⁵⁷⁸ provides a fascinating point of departure for the following personal narratives, and enables us to ask just what a “modest individual, lacking in significance” is, and if such a creature does at all exist? And if he does, is it at all possible to create a narrative from a lack of sources? As Ginzburg noted elsewhere, microhistory has advanced the hypothesis that the most unlikely sources contain the richest material, thus being able to describe the normal in the unusual.⁵⁷⁹

According to legend,⁵⁸⁰ the famous and now late Danish business historian and professor Ole Lange kept a sign on his desk defining his approach to working with history: *If in doubt, leave out!* In the following analysis, the motto, inspired by Lange has rather been: *If in doubt, include – along with the doubt!* For every work of history is not an end, rather a continued beginning, paving the way for later historians to be inspired and to seek out new sources. Therefore, sources with doubts, uncertainty, and vagueness have been included in the narratives because they point towards avenues of further exploration for historians of the future, including myself, rather than not using them. But in order to produce a coherent narrative, I have attempted to place the many words of scholarly uncertainty such as perhaps, possibly, most likely, etc. into the footnotes. To enjoy a coherent narrative, I recommend reading the main text first, and then going back, reading both notes with their discussions of sources and interpretations as well as the main text.

In the narratives, notes will point to some of the connections tying these company traders together over the century their narratives span. This will lead to an understanding of the connectedness of this network, that would be helpful visualised, but that is hindered by the nature of this dissertation being printed on paper.⁵⁸¹ The *Business Wiki of Oldenburg Monarchy* is an attempt to keep record of this vast network that not only stretches among thousands of people and across continents, but also in time, complicating the understanding.

⁵⁷⁷ My translation of “[...] hypoteserne, tvivlen og usikkerheden en del af fortællingen; udforskningen af sandheden blev en del af selve fremstillingen af den opnåede (og nødvendigvis ufuldstændige) sandhed.” From Carlo Ginzburg, *Spor: om historie og historisk metode* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum, 1999), 204.

⁵⁷⁸ Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms*, xxvii.

⁵⁷⁹ Ginzburg, *Spor: om historie og historisk metode*, 212.

⁵⁸⁰ As told by my primary supervisor Martin Jes Iversen, a former colleague of Lange at the Copenhagen Business School.

⁵⁸¹ Attempts on using SNA for creating large multiplex networks (with several types of ties in the same network), capturing both family, business, education, financial and other types of ties between the actors, was abandoned after many experiments, due to both lack of support in software and due to the complexity of visualising the data. I also made several experiments in visualising networks using animations, and although some were quite promising, it was skipped due to the difficulties in using them in a dissertation in a format in many ways unchanged since the first universities of the Middle Age!

IV.1 – Teaching and Learning: Van Hurk

The early period of the DAC is particularly fascinating as it is here we see the first experiences take place, the shaping of a practice that, once perfected, would be utilised until the return of the last Chinaman of the company in 1834. Several actors stand out in his period, among others Frederik Holmsted who was one of the most industrious entrepreneurs of the early century, active in both establishing and running several companies and factories, including the DAC. Another interesting actor is Michael Fabritius, a merchant belonging to the Reformed Church in Copenhagen and from the very beginning active in the China trade as well as in the establishment of the first bank in the Oldenburg Monarchy – Kurantbanken. Michael Fabritius and his large family show up constantly when going into detail with the actors of the past.

But in the following narrative light will shine upon two actors more directly involved in the China trade. The first is Pieter van Hurk, whose knowledge and network was crucial for the establishment and success of the early DAC. The other, Christen Jensen Lintrup or as he was later known Christian de Lindencrone, is a good example of the social opportunities offered by the China trade to especially the DAC company traders.

Purchasing Knowledge and Networks – the Narrative of Pieter van Hurk

The timing was perfect when an anonymous letter from Amsterdam arrived in Copenhagen in 1730, destined for the directors of the newly formed Danish Asiatic Company.⁵⁸² After the final demise of the old Ostindisk Kompagni the year before, several Copenhagen merchants created two trading societies, one for the Indian trade and another for the new and promising China trade. On the 20th of April 1730, the two societies were joined, creating the DAC. But while the merchants, officers, and sailors possessed plenty of experience in the Indian trade and sailing routes, none of them had visited China – the tempting new market, of which other Europeans merchants were already making fortunes trading the tea, porcelain, and other exotic goods. The new company thus faced a problem caused by a lack of knowledge of a very different market.

But in the anonymous letter, arriving just at the right moment, a man offered his service as supercargo for the new company. Through a secret address in Antwerp, the DAC director Frederik Holmsted inquired further as to whether he had traded in China before, which languages he spoke, if he could assist in the hiring of navigators, and finally what he expected as his salary. After some negotiations, the directors gained quite a positive impression of the man, who was revealed to be Pieter van Hurk. Holmsted was looking for know-how of the China trade and van Hurk must have known he could provide it.

Pieter van Hurk was born in Amsterdam in 1697. Not much is known about his early life in the Netherlands. But van Hurk's career in the China trade began in 1720, when he left for Canton on board the SINT FRANCISCUS XAVIERUS as the chief surgeon, quickly followed by another trip on board the SINT JOSEPH in 1723, both in service of the Oostende Company.⁵⁸³ After serving as the ship's doctor, the mercantile component of the expeditions must have enticed the young van Hurk, now aged twenty-eight, to join a third expedition to China as the Third Supercargo on board

⁵⁸² Struwe, *Vore gamle tropekolonier*, 22.

⁵⁸³ Parmentier, “*Søfolk og supercargøer fra Oostende i Danske Asiatisk Kompagnis tjeneste 1730-1747*,” 167.

the KEYZERINNE in 1725. His fourth and final trip for the Oostende Company would be on the MARQUIS DE PRIE in 1727 as Second Supercargo, where he would be trusted with the private purchases of two of the directors of the Oostende Company, Soenens and de Pret.⁵⁸⁴ It was thus an experienced company trader who offered his assistance to the new Danish Asiatic Company not long after his last return from China. The offer was accepted, and van Hurk immediately began assisting the preparations for the voyage from Amsterdam. While Holmsted attempted to gain information from the British East India Company about the best goods to sell in Canton, van Hurk advised a cargo consisting primarily of silver and lead.

In late September 1730, van Hurk arrived in Copenhagen along with Guilielmo de Brouwer, who was to be Second Captain on the coming voyage. Like van Hurk, de Brouwer had previous experience from the Oostende Company, having served as Second Captain in 1725 and Captain in 1727, both on expeditions to Canton. The ship for the first expedition, CRONPRINTZ CHRISTIAN, had been prepared a few days earlier, ready for inspection by the then single only China-experienced company trader in the Oldenburg Monarchy.

In late October, van Hurk and the first direct expedition to China of the Oldenburg Monarchy left Copenhagen. Along with the experienced thirty-five-year old Dutchman, fifteen other members of the *Negotie* crew participated to make the voyage a success. Second in command to van Hurk was Peter Muhle, aged thirty-seven and forty-two-year old Jochim Severin Bonsach, who was experienced as a trader and senior assistant in Asia at the now closed *Ostindisk Compagni*, where Bonsach's father had also served. Originally from Kongsberg in Norway,⁵⁸⁵ he had since his last expedition in 1727 been a partner in a dye factory in Copenhagen.⁵⁸⁶ Two senior assistants, four junior assistants, four apprentices, and three servants for the supercargoes rounded out the trading crew, providing a large number of DAC company traders with the opportunity to learn from van Hurk.

The old ship however slowed the expedition down, and a stop at the Faroe Islands in the ice-cold North Atlantic was necessary to repair a leak in the hull. Another stop took place in January 1731 at the Canary Islands, but after that the journey continued all the way to the Sunda Strait between Sumatra and Java in late June, where fresh supplies were taken aboard.⁵⁸⁷ On the way, the Second Captain de Brouwer, hired by van Hurk, must have proven his value by showing his colleagues of navigation from the Oldenburg Monarchy one of the most important points in finding the way to China. After leaving the Cape of Good Hope behind in May, CRONPRINTZ CHRISTIAN sailed due east until spotting the two tiny, but navigationally important islands of Amsterdam and St. Paul. After reaching the vicinity of these islands, the ship turned to a northeasterly course, directly towards the Sunda Strait. As noted by the ship's chaplain Huusmann,⁵⁸⁸ the appearance of these islands was long awaited, and perhaps a bit of doubt had appeared in the minds of de Brouwer, van

⁵⁸⁴ Parmentier, "*Søfolk og supercargøer fra Oostende i Dansk Asiatiske Kompagnis tjeneste 1730-1747*," 143.

⁵⁸⁵ Thomle, E.A. & Finne-Grønn, S.H., *Norsk Tidsskrift for Genealogi, Personalhistorie, Biografi og Litteraturhistorie*, vol. 2, 308

⁵⁸⁶ *Kjøbenhavns Diplomatarium*, vol. VIII, p. 720

⁵⁸⁷ Clemmensen, *Kina og Danmark 1600-1950*, 112.

⁵⁸⁸ Huusmann, *En kort Beskrivelse over Skibets Cron-Printz Christians lykkelige gjorde Reyse baade til og fra China*, B2.

Hurk, and others during the many long days on the open sea whether this crucial point in the expedition would be successful. Complaints on board about the slow progress of the journey must have added to their feelings of doubt.⁵⁸⁹

A month later the first sight of the Chinese coast appeared. Shortly thereafter, on the 26th of June 1731, a Chinese pilot came on board and van Hurk led the supercargoes to Macao to visit the Portuguese governor. After a meeting with the council of the city, van Hurk and the supercargoes proceeded on the 27th with a Chinese vessel up the Pearl River into Canton to apply for permission to send CRONPRINTZ CHRISTIAN up the river for trade. Formally, van Hurk requested for an audience with the Hoppo – the customs superintendent - in Canton.⁵⁹⁰ Once granted, a meeting took place where the conditions of trade were agreed upon by the two parties – one of which would be for the European traders to be able to select which Chinese merchants to do business with, a choice where experience like that of van Hurk from recent previous journeys was essential.

Four days later, the permission to enter the river reached the ship, and CRONPRINTZ CHRISTIAN set sails the next morning, leaving the other European ships behind. The British and Dutch ships waiting for permission to continue failed to greet the Danish ship with their flags,⁵⁹¹ which was otherwise customary at the time, most likely a sign of contempt at another European nation appearing in China to increase the competition.

On the way to the anchorage of Whampoa, the formalities of the Chinese trade continued. First, the officers of the Hoppo came on board, noted the crew, guns, ammunition, and goods of the ship and later a Mandarin from the forts and custom station of Bocca Tigris at the entrance to the Pearl River noted the same things. Two officers of the Hoppo were assigned to the ship and had to be near the vessel during its stay in China, making notes of all goods loaded into and unloaded from the ship. After four days of negotiations and slowly sailing up the river with Chinese pilots, CRONPRINTZ CHRISTIAN finally cast its anchor at Whampoa, coming as close to Canton as possible as the first European ship of the season.⁵⁹² Here, the Hoppo himself came aboard with presents for the ship and to measure the ship's volume and claim toll. Just before, van Hurk and the other supercargoes came back to the ship from the factory.⁵⁹³

⁵⁸⁹ Huusmann, *En kort Beskrivelse over Skibets Cron-Printz Christians lykkelige gjorde Reyse baade til og fra China*, p. B4, mentions that after their arrival in Cabberitte Bay near Macao, the complaints of the crew about the slow journey are brought to shame, since the delay made them arrive just after three large hurricanes had passed, severely damaging other European ships, praising their divine fortitude.

⁵⁹⁰ Paul A. Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade: Life and Enterprise on the China Coast, 1700-1845* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), 20.

⁵⁹¹ G.L. Grove, "En Dagbog, ført paa en Kinafarer 1730-32 af Kadet Tobias Wigandt," *Tidskrift for Søvesen* 35 (1900), 199.

⁵⁹² Huusmann, *En kort Beskrivelse over Skibets Cron-Printz Christians lykkelige gjorde Reyse baade til og fra China*, B5.

⁵⁹³ Grove, "En Dagbog," 201.

Some days later, on the 14th of August, the Woy – a high-level official from Canton – visited all the trading ships at Whampoa, carrying presents and was received with salutes from the captain and supercargoes. In all these interactions, all eyes must have been on van Hurk, who as the only member of the trading crew possessed previous experiences and likewise van Hurk must have felt the eyes of all his colleagues upon him.

Thus arrived and taxed, the *Negotie* crew led by van Hurk rented a Chinese factory outside of Canton proper to commence trading. In the following months, van Hurk and the rest of the trading crew exchanged the silver carried from Europe for more than a thousand crates of tea, 305 stacks of porcelain, 274 pieces of tuttenage metal, and many other items⁵⁹⁴ including a single crate of dragon’s blood⁵⁹⁵! In addition came the 101 crates carried as part of the salary for the *Negotie* crew, the captain, and the mates. While captain Tønder was allowed three crates of personal trading goods, which would secure a handsome profit for him on the return to the Oldenburg Monarchy, van Hurk was allowed sixteen, emphasizing his value to the DAC. In comparison, de Brouwer brought six crates home.

While in Canton van Hurk visited a Chinese face-maker, which was an artist and craftsman skilled in making busts or statuettes of customers. Along with Captain Tønder, second supercargo Mule, third supercargo Bonsach, senior assistant Ølgod, and the third mate Zimmer, he modelled for a statuette of himself, sitting in a typical Chinese chair from the early Qing-dynasty. The face-maker most likely stayed in an upper-floor workshop in one of the streets behind the factories⁵⁹⁶ where several porcelain shops were located.⁵⁹⁷ While the other five mentioned colleagues of van Hurk chose to be modelled in their business attire, the statuette of van Hurk shows him in what Henningsen describes as *en familie*,⁵⁹⁸ in his comfortable clothes that he would have worn on the ship or alone in his room in the factory, namely wearing a robe, a sleeping cap, and slippers. This might have been van Hurk’s attempt to present himself as an erudite man of the world, distinguished from his companions.⁵⁹⁹ The group from CRONPRINTZ CHRISTIAN might have



Figure 42 - Statuette of Pieter van Hurk, most likely crafted at his last visit to Canton with the CRONPRINTZ CHRISTIAN in 1731. Photo: Maritime Museum of Denmark

⁵⁹⁴ Grove, “En Dagbog,” 208-209.

⁵⁹⁵ Also known as borax or sodium borate, used in the production of colors, glass and ceramics.

⁵⁹⁶ Mentioned by the Swedish chaplain Pehr Osbeck, via Henningsen, “Kinesiske ’Ansigtmagere’ og deres figurer,” 142.

⁵⁹⁷ Paul Van Dyke and Maria Kar-wing Mok, *Images of the Canton Factories 1760-1822: Reading History in Art*, 93.

⁵⁹⁸ Henningsen, “Kinesiske ’Ansigtmagere’ og deres figurer,” 138.

⁵⁹⁹ Susan Broomhall describes the robe as a *banyan*, which became fashionable in Europe from the late 17th century. Susan Broomhall, “Face-Making - Emotional and Gendered Meanings in Chinese Clay Portraits of Danish Asiatic Company Men,” *Scandinavian Journal of History* 41, no. 3 (2016)

heard about the face-maker figures from the second captain de Brouwer, who had had a statuette made for him during a previous visit in 1727.⁶⁰⁰

In October 1731, the stowing of the ship began of both cargo and provisions and on the 15th of December, CRONPRINTZ CHRISTIAN left the anchorage of Whampoa. The first part of the journey was very quick, reaching the Cape of Good Hope after only three weeks where fresh provisions were taken on board. On the 25th of June 1732, the ship saluted for Kronborg in Elsinore, signaling its return. Reaching Copenhagen, the crew of the first direct voyage to China celebrated the return with heavy drinking to a degree that personnel from the DAC headquarters had to bring them safely into the company harbour.⁶⁰¹

For van Hurk, the expedition had been a professional and a financial success. The voyage and trade proved the feasibility of the long-distance China trade in the Oldenburg Monarchy, and the profits of the first voyage boosted the reputation of the newly established DAC. The cargo of tea and silk, 90 percent of the goods carried, were sold with profits of 115 percent and 71 percent. The personal profits of van Hurk is unknown, but has been estimated by the historian Parmentier to be at least 46,000 rigsdaler, a sizeable fortune in a country suffering from a lack of capital.⁶⁰² For van Hurk, the newly-won fortune and reputation became a point of entry into the business elite of Copenhagen. Much of his wealth was invested in stocks of the DAC, making him one of the largest investors of the company and named *Hovedparticipant*, a title he kept until 1745.

The year after his return, in 1733, he purchased the title of *Kommerveraad*, thus entering the very hierarchical system of titles of the Oldenburg Monarchy. According to the new royal Decree of Ranks of 1730, van Hurk was now placed in the 6th Class, 6th Rank, in the vicinity of ranks such as provincial judges, army majors, or naval commanders.

Soon after his return from China, van Hurk began to act as commissioner for several merchants in the southern Netherlands.⁶⁰³ One of them was James Dormer, a catholic Englishman residing in Antwerp, trading in a variety of goods, and later developing a focus on diamonds and textiles.⁶⁰⁴ Dormer was part of a large network of traders around the world and across religions, kept active by his writing of more than 500 letters a year.

Another investment of van Hurk's Chinese income was at least ten stocks in the new *Den Kiøbenhavnske Assiguation-, Vexel og Laanebank*, later known as Kurantbanken but usually referred to as the Copenhagen Bank in the eighteenth century.⁶⁰⁵ At the founding of the bank in 1736, he

⁶⁰⁰ Broomhall, "Face-Making." Broomhall also discusses whether the statuettes were all made at the same time, or if the lower ranking members of the group had their figure made at a later visit to Canton. However, the question remains open due to the lack of sources.

⁶⁰¹ Grove, "En Dagbog."

⁶⁰² Parmentier, "Søfolk og supercargoer fra Oostende i Dansk Asiatisk Kompagnis tjeneste 1730-1747," 147.

⁶⁰³ Parmentier, "Søfolk og supercargoer fra Oostende i Dansk Asiatisk Kompagnis tjeneste 1730-1747," 169.

⁶⁰⁴ Tijn Vanneste, *Global Trade and Commercial Networks: Eighteenth-Century Diamond Merchants*. (London: Routledge: 2011).

⁶⁰⁵ Rasmussen, "Kurantbankens oprettelse," 11.

participated in the election as one of the five merchant commissioners of the bank, but only received the seventh most number of votes, most likely due to agreements among the Copenhagen merchant elite about who should claim the influential positions. The five elected commissioners were the grand merchants of Soelberg, Klaumann, van Hemert, and the two Fabritius-brothers, who were all either presently directors of the DAC or destined to become directors in the following years.

Perhaps out of love, perhaps as a strategic network move, or a combination of both, Pieter van Hurk in 1744 married the then forty-year old Maria Barbara Fabritius in the Reformed Church in Copenhagen. While Copenhagen's business elite was with very few exceptions dominated by males, Maria Barbara was one of the best-connected women in this network. She was the daughter of the wine merchant Herman Fabritius (1667-1729), who had immigrated to Copenhagen from Cleve. Her mother was Elisabeth Marie de Abbestée (1677-1752) of an influential merchant family – her father a previous director of Ostindisk Companie and several members of her family at the time and later played an influential role in the DAC and in the colony of Tranquebar in India. At the time of Maria Barbara's marriage to van Hurk, she had been a widow for about two years. At the age of nineteen in 1723, Maria Barbara had married her uncle the twenty-six-year old wine merchant Helvig Abbestée, who had trained as a merchant in Amsterdam with her brother Michael.⁶⁰⁶ Their marriage resulted in five children before the early death of Helvig in 1742.

By marrying Maria Barbara, van Hurk became closely connected to the absolute top of the Copenhagen merchant elite. One brother-in-law, Michael Fabritius (1697-1746), was director of the DAC in the 1730s, commissioner at the Copenhagen Bank from its founding, and co-founder of the wealthy and powerful merchant house Fabritius & Wever from around 1740.⁶⁰⁷ Michael Fabritius was also elder of the Reformed Church in Copenhagen, provided loans for the state, and supplied the state with crucial goods such as saltpeter to produce gunpowder.⁶⁰⁸ Another brother-in-law would be Just Fabricius, grand merchant and director of the DAC in the 1750s and 60s.⁶⁰⁹ Similar to his brother, he was also one of the first commissioners of the Copenhagen Bank and also served as one of the directors of the African Company from 1755. In addition, he supplied the state with numerous goods as well as loans, and was involved in cotton-printing and much more.⁶¹⁰ Another sign of the now close connection is the baptism of Johann Wever's daughter Friderica in Christianshavn in April 1750, where van Hurk was one of the godfathers.⁶¹¹

The new and closer connections to the merchant elite seems to have paid off for van Hurk, since in 1745, a year after his marriage to Maria Barbara, his involvement in the DAC increased even further

⁶⁰⁶ *Personallistorisk Tidsskrift*, 1899, 2, 57

⁶⁰⁷ Biografisk Leksikon I

⁶⁰⁸ Biografisk Leksikon III

⁶⁰⁹ *Hof- og Statskalender* for the relevant years.

⁶¹⁰ Biografisk Leksikon III

⁶¹¹ Vor Frelser's Sogns Kirkebog, Sokkelund Herred, Københavns Amt, 1732-1762, opslag 176. Arkivalieronline.

with his election as one of the directors of the company.⁶¹² In 1749 van Hurk achieved or most likely purchased the title of *Agent* with rank of *Justitsraad*, elevating him to the 5th Class, 9th Rank, among the company of officials of the Supreme Court and high ranking officials at the court.⁶¹³ Van Hurk's final title within the ranking system of the Oldenburg Monarchy was reached in 1753, namely *Etatsraad*, bringing him into the 4th Class, 5th Rank.⁶¹⁴ The same year he again utilised his knowledge of goods with a Chinese origin, taking over *Den kongelige Silkefabrik*, the royal silk factory. For the factory, he constructed a large building in Norgesgade⁶¹⁵ in Copenhagen with space for a hundred weavers in the rear buildings and a house for himself in the primary building facing the street.⁶¹⁶ Two years later, in 1755, van Hurk expanded his business by purchasing the clothing manufactory Rosenvænget, just north of the Copenhagen city walls. The seller was the widow of Pierre Gandil, who was of French origin and shared the Reformed faith of van Hurk. Gandil shared other traits⁶¹⁷ with van Hurk, since he too had been invited to Copenhagen in the 1730s for his knowledge of producing cloth, linen and tapestries, coming from a family of weaver-owners in Magdeburg.⁶¹⁸

Late in life, after selling his estate *Sneglebakken* in 1760, he purchased *Rustenborg*, also in Lyngby north of Copenhagen from the grand merchant Desmercières in 1768.⁶¹⁹ In the fall of 1775, the now seventy-nine-year-old Pieter van Hurk had concluded his last deal and died, leaving part of his fortune to be shared among the poor of both the Catholic, Lutheran and Reformed faith.⁶²⁰ He was buried in the chapel of Holmens Kirke in the centre of Copenhagen, among grand merchants and naval heroes.

Analysis of van Hurk

In van Hurk's career at the DAC, there seems to have been two major moments of examination, the first after arriving in China, where the eyes of the crew must have been resting upon him – did he really know what he was doing, or was he just a clever imposer, like the first Dutch entrepreneur, who had approached the DAC before they hired van Hurk? The other examination must have occurred during the auction of the Chinese goods in the DAC warehouse at the very end of the

⁶¹² *Hof- og Statskalender*, 1746

⁶¹³ Biografisk Leksikon III

⁶¹⁴ Parmentier, "Søfolk og supercargoer fra Oostende i Dansk Asiatisk Kompagnis tjeneste 1730-1747," 169.

⁶¹⁵ Later renamed Bredgade.

⁶¹⁶ Danish Agency for Culture and Palaces. *Den kongelige silkefabrik*, <http://slks.dk/kommuner-plan-arkitektur/kommune-og-turisme/industrikultur/industrihistoriens-danmarkskort/den-kongelige-silkefabrik/> Accessed July 2017

⁶¹⁷ The son of Gandil married the sister of Matthieu Toyon, who served as *Oberassistent* on the first voyage of Vogelsang, see his narrative from page 116. Their daughter later married Rasmus Sternberg Selmer, one of the last directors of the DAC, while their son was trained in the merchant house of de Coninck & Reiersen, the first being a former director of the DAC. Gandil, "Nogle Meddelelser om Slægten Gandil."

⁶¹⁸ Gandil, "Nogle Meddelelser om Slægten Gandil," 138.

⁶¹⁹ Biografisk Leksikon III

⁶²⁰ Biografisk Leksikon I

expedition. Had he fulfilled his obligation as a well-paid company trader, thus making sense of the whole expedition and company, or would it all just appear as bad business? It seems like van Hurk passed the exams splendidly, considering his later career stemming from this his only expedition for the DAC.

Another interesting indication of the position of van Hurk in the network of the Copenhagen merchant elite can be derived from the elections of commissioners of the Copenhagen Bank in 1736. In principle, the election was open and democratic – the number of votes per shareholder only being determined by the number of stocks owned, even with restrictions in place to prevent the largest stock owners from gaining an easy majority. But nonetheless the elections seem to have been fixed beforehand, with the five grand merchants of Soelberg, Klaumann, van Hemert, and the two Fabritius brothers, who all participated in the early discussions about the structure of the bank, gaining a clear majority of the votes. This was due to the old patron-client system still being in effect, thus providing the grand merchants and the government officials who also held positions in the company to completely dominate the vote, illustrated by the five merchants mentioned above each gaining 300-400 votes, greatly distancing them from the sixth candidate, the merchant Daniel Lindeman, who only received 112 votes and the seventh, van Hurk, receiving 72 votes. This seems to indicate that while van Hurk had risen quickly in the rank of the merchants he still suffered from what Johanson & Vahlne would call the liability of outsider ship.⁶²¹ Most likely he did not suffer from the liability of foreignness in the cosmopolitan merchant elite of Copenhagen at the time, where many originated from the German area, the Netherlands, France, or Switzerland, but he was still a newcomer to the older business networks of the emerging entrepôt. With his marriage to Maria Barbara Fabritius he entered the very core of the elite merchants of Copenhagen and the Oldenburg Monarchy, and combining this new status with his network in the Netherlands seems to have provided a wealth of business opportunities, all initially set in motion by him participating in the expeditions to China with first the Oostende Company and then with the DAC.

IV.2 – Servant, Supercargo, and Director – the Narrative of Frantz Wilhelm Otto Vogelsang

One of the most interesting narratives that can be constructed from small fragments of the past is the story of Frantz Wilhelm Otto Vogelsang. I first encountered him when transcribing the DAC Rolls Books from the China expeditions and was fascinated about the vast number of voyages he undertook in his lifetime. Later, when I discovered that he also stayed in China for several years and even brought his wife along, combined with his later election to director of the DAC in Copenhagen and the fact that no biography of him seemed to exist, enticed me to seek out fragments of his life from as many diverse sources as possible. The story could be told like this:

⁶²¹ Jan Johanson and Jan-Erik Vahlne, “The Uppsala Internationalization Process Model Revisited: From Liability of Foreignness to Liability of Outsidership,” *Journal of International Business Studies* 40, no. 9 (2009): 1411-1431.

A Narrative of Vogelsang

The chilly winter gale blew from the south,⁶²² as the frigate PRINCESSE LOWISÆ saluted in the Sound off Elsinore and waited for the nearby castle Kronborg to return the salute of nine shots, signaling the beginning of a grand voyage. The year was 1759, and today, the early morning of February 17th, was the first time the young Frantz Wilhelm Otto Vogelsang⁶²³ passed this central point of the Oldenburg Monarchy on such a huge vessel, bound for China. Vogelsang had passed the castle that guarded the entrance to Øresund and Copenhagen before, when his family had left Norway and returned to Copenhagen. His father, Albrecht Vogelsang,⁶²⁴ had worked for the Kongsberg Silverwork for seventeen years as first *Skiktmester* with the administrative responsibility of a mine, and later as *Bergsekretar*, a higher ranking administrative post. The young Vogelsang thus grew up in an environment influenced by mining specialists with a German background.

Vogelsang's godfather and maternal grandfather, Otto Mordian Issert came, as many others in Kongsberg from Clausthal in Saxony⁶²⁵ and the everyday life must have been bilingual with both Norwegian/Danish and German being spoken in different spheres.



Figure 43 - Fredrica and Albrecht Vogelsang, the parents of Frantz Wilhelm Otto Vogelsang. Painter is unknown. No depiction of their son seems to exist. Photo: Auction house of Bruun Rasmussen, sold in August 2010.

⁶²² RA: Asiatisk Kompagni, Afdelingen i København: Skibsjournal for skibe til Kina (1733-1830) 1030 - 1031: "Prinsesse Lowisæ" 1758 december 12 - 1760 juli 12 mm.

⁶²³ Vogelsang appears for the first time on the *Negotien* section of the Roll Books of a chinaman in late 1758. Data on the ship and voyage comes from Gøbel's thesis from 1978).

⁶²⁴ Statsarkivet i Kongsberg, Kongsberg kirkebøger, F/Fa/L0002: Ministerialbok nr. I 2, 1721-1743, p. 394-395

⁶²⁵ H. Hillegeist, "Auswanderungen Oberharzer Bergleute nach Kongsberg/Norwegen im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert," in *Technologietransfer und Auswanderungen im Umfeld des Harzger Montanwesens* (Berlin: Lukas Verlag, 2001), 30.

But Vogelsang and his family returned to Copenhagen, where his father had been baptised in 1711, in Reformert Kirke in Gothersgade. The family was tied to the church in several ways, and the returning Vogelsang-family must have been greeted by their relative Frantz-Jockel Vogelsang, the primary minister of the German congregation of the Reformert Kirke. Frantz-Jockel was born in the County of Lippe⁶²⁶ in 1692 and became a priest of the church in 1721.⁶²⁷ This church was a central meeting point of the Copenhagen business elite – the descendants of the many Huguenots who had fled religious persecution a generation or two before.

Sometime around his nineteenth birthday in 1758, the young Vogelsang became employed by the Danish Asiatic Company in Copenhagen. Perhaps his father or a clerical relative provided access to the prestigious company, recommending him to their network of members of the DAC management. At that time, the DAC directors and great merchants Johann Friederich Wever and Just Fabritius belonged to the Reformed Church, and other links between the family and the company exist. When young Vogelsang's brother Henric Christian was baptised in 1742, one of his godfathers was the merchant Helvig Abbestée,⁶²⁸ whose family was closely connected to the powerful merchant family Fabritius with its major influence in the DAC.⁶²⁹

At the family dinners of the Vogelsang family, the priest Frantz-Jockel would probably have talked about the church and the many influential businessmen attending it. He would most likely also have told the story about how his house burned down in the great fire of Copenhagen in 1728, and how he was offered to stay at the home of the wealthy merchant Johan Wasserfall, another sign of the closeness between the Reformed church and the merchant elite. Shortly after the fire, work on a new residence for the priest of the Reformed Church began, and around 1730 pastor Vogelsang moved into the new house on Gothersgade.⁶³⁰

Despite his family connections to the management of the DAC, Vogelsang began his career on the lowest possible step, namely as *Supercargoens Serviteur*, the servant of the supercargo. The supercargo oversaw the trade of the cargo in China, and often two or three accompanied the ship. On board the PRINCESSE LOWISÆ, the young Vogelsang would have to attend the needs of secondary

⁶²⁶ In present day Nordrhein-Westphalen in Germany.

⁶²⁷ Frantz-Jockel Vogelsang is mentioned in *Danmarks kirker. Bind 1. København. 3. bind, 15. hefte. Reformert Kirke.*, 48-49. The assumption of him being related to the Vogelsang-family returning from Norway comes from their shared name and faith, as well as the very close similarity in the naming of their children, suggesting a shared origin. It is further reinforced by the later Frantz Wilhelm Vogelsang (1790-?), Frantz-Jockels grandson, who named his sons Otto and Joachim (Jockel is shorthand for Joachim), most likely after his grandfather and relative Franz Wilhelm Otto Vogelsang. Further references in <http://oldenburgbusiness.net/> under each person.

⁶²⁸ Statsarkivet i Kongsberg, Kongsberg kirkebøger, F/Fa/L0002: Ministerialbok nr. I 2, 1721-1743, p. 428-429. Helvig Abbestée is also mentioned in the narrative of Pieter van Hurk above.

⁶²⁹ Michael Fabritius (1697-1746) was one of the initial investors of DAC, having participated in the Kinesiske Societet, who sent the first expedition to China in 1730. He was *Hovedparticipant* in DAC at least from 1734-35 and director from 1740-44. His brother Just Fabritius (1703-1766) was DAC director from 1755 to 1766. Both brothers were also involved in the first bank in the Oldenburg Monarchy, Kurantbanken. Another Abbestée, their nephew, later became governor of the colony in Trankebar and director of DAC.

⁶³⁰ *Danmarks kirker. Bind 1. København. 3. bind, 15. hefte. Reformert Kirke.*, 48-49.

supercargo Jean Macculloch, previously a wine merchant in Christianshavn in Copenhagen.⁶³¹ A kind of familiarity might have existed between the nineteen-year old Vogelsang and the fifty-eight-year old Macculloch, who belonged to the same reformed faith and in addition Vogelsang's clerical relative had administered the marriage between Macculloch and his bride Anne Marie seventeen years earlier as a priest in Reformert Kirke.⁶³² But Macculloch, who originated from a group of Scottish merchants in Elsinore,⁶³³ had more than one reason⁶³⁴ to feel connected with the company and this particular expedition. Just below him in rank in the trading section of the ship's crew was *Oberassistent* Mathieu Toyon, brother to his wife Anne Marie. Toyon, around twenty-eight years of age and newlywed in the Reformed Church only a few months before,⁶³⁵ was on his fourth journey to China. Perhaps the situation of the subordinate Toyon being more experienced in the specialties of the China trade than the older and superior Macculloch created tensions on board that even the green Vogelsang would notice? Potential conflicts had plenty of time to unfold during the 194 days of travel from the ice-cold Scandinavia waters into the warmer Atlantic Sea and further onto the Pearl River in China. Their ship, the PRINCESSE LOWISÆ was named after the youngest daughter of King Frederik V of Denmark-Norway, aged ten at their departure. It was built in Sweden under the name PRINS CARL, but was purchased by the DAC in 1751 and immediately sent to China.⁶³⁶ This first voyage of Vogelsang would be the fourth of the aging ship; the long voyages, intense winds, and hungry critters of the southern seas taking a toll on the vessel.⁶³⁷

The cannons of the ships roared many times on the way from the headquarters of the Asiatic Company. The young Vogelsang must have heard them the first time, when the company directors Wever, Black, Fabritius, and Ackeleye⁶³⁸ mustered the crew in Copenhagen, just before Christmas 1758.⁶³⁹ Eighteen shots saluted the directors when they left the ship after inspection and lunch on board, resounding among the houses, the stock exchange, as well as the royal castle in Copenhagen,

⁶³¹ Onboard the ship were two supercargoes, Hans Bruun as the first, Jean Macculloch as the second. On the Roll Books, the crew is generally listed by rank, and since FWO is listed after another servant to the supercargo, it seems likely that he served the secondary supercargo.

⁶³² Frantz-Jockel Vogelsand was the primary priest of the German Reformed congregation at this time, so it was most likely him performing the marriage. *Danmarks kirker. Bind 1. København. 3. bind, 15. hefte. Reformert Kirke.*, 48-49.

⁶³³ Jean MacCullochs last name, very rare in the Oldenburg Monarchy, matches that of Robert MacCulloch, who in his will in 1674 listed a tax master of Elsinore as one of his witnesses. (*Personallistorisk Tidsskrift*, 1940, 183)

⁶³⁴ Unknown to MacCulloch on this voyage was that his mother's brother, Gysbert van Hemert, a year would later become *Hovedparticipant* in DAC and later director from 1769-1772. (Hof&Stat) Completing the circle, Gysbert van Hemert was already married to a daughter of the previously mentioned Johan Heinrich Wasserfall, who offered shelter to FWOV's relative after the fire in 1728. (Biografisk Leksikon II)

⁶³⁵ Gandil, "Matthieu Toyon."

⁶³⁶ Klem, *Skibsbyggeriet i Danmark og bertugdommerne i 1700-årene*, Vol I, 226.

⁶³⁷ On its following voyage, it was described in Cadiz by Swedish merchants as in such a bad state, that it would be unable to continue its voyage. (Dyke 2006, 12)

⁶³⁸ As noted in the relevant years of *Hof & Statskalenderen*.

⁶³⁹ RA: Asiatisk Kompagni, Afdelingen i København: Skibsjournal for skibe til Kina (1733-1830) 1030 - 1031: "Prinsesse Lowisæ" 1758 december 12 - 1760 juli 12 mm

clearly signaling to the citizens of the capital that a voyage of great economic importance was about to begin.

On the fifth day of the New Year, PRINCESSE LOWISÆ left Copenhagen for Elsinore with another salute of nine shots and after three hours in the winter gale, the voyagers arrived at Elsinore, saluting a nearby navy vessel with another nine shots. The following month, Vogelsang and the other 137 members of the crew waited on the ice-cold ship for the right wind to move from the Sound and into Kattegat and finally, very early in the morning on the 17th of February, another salute for castle Kronborg signaled the start of their journey. While Vogelsang would probably have been used to the roar of the guns they might still have frightened his youngest colleague, Mouritz With. Aged eleven at the time of departure, he served as the captain's scribe and assisted the company traders, thus being on a similar place in the hierarchy on board the ship, although little Mouritz might have been favoured by his father being the captain of the ship.⁶⁴⁰

During the voyage, a large number of crewmen fell ill due to was described as an “*anstikkende syge*”⁶⁴¹ an infectious disease and several died but the youngest members of *Negotien* survived the long sea voyage. Vogelsang and the rest of the crew must have thought about the importance of the journey and how far away from home they were while lying anchored close to Java. Here, a request from the king of Bantam to visit the ship was answered on a positive note. However, the king changed his mind, did not board the ship, but instead sailed around the PRINCESSE LOWISÆ for about an hour and a half.⁶⁴²

Arriving at the anchorage in Whampoa in China in late August 1759, Vogelsang would have accompanied Macculloch further up the river into the special place just outside the city walls of Canton, where the rented European factories or trading stations were located. Safely anchored in Whampoa provided a new visible division between the *Negotie* and the *Navigation* parts of the crew. On September 2nd, 1759, two captains of the other DAC ships present would come on board to greet their colleagues and congratulate them on a safe journey. At the same time the company traders boarded a Chinese sampan⁶⁴³ and set off for Canton, while another salute of nine shots filled the warm and humid southern Chinese air.

Here, the eight company traders of the PRINCESSE LOWISÆ would meet the company traders of two other DAC ships, namely CRON PRINCEN AF DANNEMARK and KONGEN AF DANNEMARCK, which had arrived about a month earlier. The second ship had spent almost a year and a half travelling and trading in Asia before arriving in Canton, and the young Vogelsang must have heard many stories of the sea, trade, and foreign harbours, enhanced by the generous quantities of wine carried by the ships for supplying the traders in the factories. Vogelsang might have bemused himself with the names of ships being the king, his son the crown prince, and the little sister of the crown prince, essentially much of the royal family having journeyed to Canton to

⁶⁴⁰ Gøbel, “En dansk kinakaptajn,” 15.

⁶⁴¹ Gøbel, “En dansk kinakaptajn,” 16.

⁶⁴² Grandjean, *Slægtbog over Familien With fra Romo*, 12.

⁶⁴³ RA: Asiatisk Kompagni, Afdelingen i København: Skibsjournal for skibe til Kina (1733-1830) 1030 - 1031: "Prinsesse Lowisæ" 1758 december 12 - 1760 juli 12 mm

buy tea! Perhaps it was on this his first voyage that Vogelsang made the friendship of the twenty-one-year old Fritz Jacobsen Fritz, junior assistant on CRON PRINCEN AF DANNEMARK. Fritz had previously sailed on Vogelsang's ship, even in the same position as a servant, so it seems likely that the two young men had more than enough to talk about and perhaps here the friendship began, that would eventually lead to the marriage of their children many years in the future.⁶⁴⁴ Around this time, Fritz would become a member of the order of Freemasons,⁶⁴⁵ attending meetings in the Swedish lodge in Canton, and that network and its information would benefit his friend Vogelsang as well.

The Danish factory in Canton, rented from the Chinese Hong merchant brothers of the Yan family, had been the regular home of the Oldenburg merchants for almost a decade, ever since the building was constructed after one of the great fires.⁶⁴⁶ The factory was for unknown reasons known in Chinese as the Yellow Flag Hong. From this base, the DAC employees would trade with the Chinese Hong merchants, exchanging the silver in the ship's cargo with a new cargo of tea, porcelain, and silk from among others the two Yan brothers, Ingsia and Swetia, from whom they had rented the factory. Ingsia was able to supply a broad variety of products, not only tea, porcelain, and silk, but also rhubarb, borax, sago, and much more. The Yan family was among the favourite Hong merchants of the DAC, trading with each other for forty-five years!⁶⁴⁷ The young Vogelsang must have accompanied his master, supercargo Macculloch during business negotiations with Swetia of the Yan family on more than one occasion, leading to the purchase of Bohee, Congo, Bing, Songlo, Heysen, and Ziou Zioun tea and porcelain for a total value of more than 50,000 Taels.⁶⁴⁸ Vogelsang must also have witnessed the trade between the DAC supercargoes and the Hong merchant Awue, a younger brother to Ingsia and Swetia, who supplied 44,000 Taels worth of the lowest-quality teas Bohee and Congo, making up the bulk of the cargo. The Yan brothers had thus supplied the PRINCESSE LOWISÆ on all of its four visits to Canton.

Another type of transaction that must have been witnessed by the young Vogelsang was the negotiations with merchants of other European nations to secure additional capital for the purchase of goods. £3,450 was borrowed from a Mr. George Smith in December 1759 with letters in English being sent home to the directors of the DAC for them to repay the loan via London after the safe return of the ship.⁶⁴⁹ Another loan of £3,000 was obtained from a Captain William Roberts, also to be repaid via London with £3,900. A loan of £559 from a Monsieur Morrogh required a letter to be sent in French, a further £1,000 was borrowed from George Smith, while £1,300 was borrowed

⁶⁴⁴ *Personallistorisk Tidskrift*, 1899, 2, 55

⁶⁴⁵ Nordiska Museet, Godegårdsarkivet, Ostindiska kompaniet, Dokument 4, "Compte de La Reception de la Loge" - Räkenskaper, allmänt; Akt: 4, Frimureri i Kanton och Macao. Logen St Elisabeth. Räkningar 1766; Volym: 13, Ostindiska affärer efter J. A. Grills hemkomst

⁶⁴⁶ Van Dyke, "The Hume Scroll of 1772," 73.

⁶⁴⁷ Van Dyke, "The Danish Asiatic Company"

⁶⁴⁸ Van Dyke, *Merchants of Canton and Macao*, Appendix 9I, 370.

⁶⁴⁹ RA: Asiatisk Kompagni, Afdelingen i København: 1144: Negotieprotokol for "Prinsesse Lowisæ" 1758-1760, p. 117. The following loans are also noted here up to page 141.

from a Captain Christian Hagerop⁶⁵⁰ in the service of the Dutch VOC, requiring a letter in the Dutch language. Finally £1,000 was borrowed from a Mr. Thomas Lockhart and £600 from a Mr. Frantsico Namtala Stamma. Even though various linguists were available in Canton, knowledge of as many languages as possible, especially English, must have been essential for Vogelsang and his colleagues.

During their time in Canton, the company traders would also make sure to trade for themselves for personal profit and buy souvenirs in the small shops surrounding the European factories. After 136 days in China, the ship loaded with supplies and new cargo left the Pearl River again with the help of pilots from Macau and began the long journey back to the Oldenburg Monarchy. Exactly 180 days later, on July 12th 1760, Vogelsang felt the salute from nine guns for Kronborg again, symbolising the completion of the journey stretching over more than one and a half years.⁶⁵¹ After the salute, the supercargoes as well as Vogelsang boarded a boat in the Sound⁶⁵² and sailed into Elsinore for the paperwork, before PRINCESSE LOWISÆ could continue into the safe harbour of the Danish Asiatic Company in Copenhagen.

Every month, the young servant was paid 1.5 rigsdaler and a bonus of 50 rigsdaler at the end of the voyage, making his total wage for his first trip to China 75.5 rigsdaler, a seemingly handsome sum for a young man. But compared to the wages of an unskilled worker in Copenhagen at the same time, his wages for the duration of the expedition were significantly lower. While an unskilled labourer would have made 22-24 skilling a day and a skilled worker such as a mason 32-40 skilling a day,⁶⁵³ Vogelsang's wages were only 14 skilling a day. But in addition to this came the profits from what he might have carried personally from China, perhaps totalling a similar amount or more. Nonetheless, Vogelsang might have seen the low wages as an opportunity cost, knowing that higher wages were not long off in the horizon.

For some of Vogelsang's company trader colleagues, a single voyage was more than enough. They had earned a good sum, opening up possibilities for them to establish themselves, and the cramped conditions on board combined with the low-quality food must have convinced several to thank their maker for a safe return and never to sail around the world again. But for others, like Frantz Wilhelm Otto Vogelsang, the life of a trader in foreign lands must have held some form of attraction, for in July 1761, he signed up for service again on board the DAC ship KONGEN AF DANNEMARK, this time as an *Underassistent*, or Junior Assistant. With this significant increase in rank came a similar increase in his wages, which were now 4 rigsdaler per month and a bonus of 250 rigsdaler.⁶⁵⁴ Now his average daily wage was 54 skilling, significantly more than a worker in Copenhagen. On this voyage, he would once again sail with Mathieu Toyon as well as eight other

⁶⁵⁰ Most likely a Danish name. Several Danes went into the service of the VOC, see the coming PhD-dissertation of the historian Asger Nørlund Christensen from the University of Southern Denmark.

⁶⁵¹ All data on the voyage comes from the master thesis of Gøbel 1978.

⁶⁵² RA: Asiatisk Kompagni, Afdelingen i København: Skibsjournal for skibe til Kina (1733-1830) 1030 - 1031: "Prinsesse Lowisæ" 1758 december 12 - 1760 juli 12 mm.

⁶⁵³ Thestrup, *Mark og skilling*, 30.

⁶⁵⁴ All data on wages comes the relevant DAC Roll Books, RA.

company traders. Shortly after this expedition, Vogelsang as Junior Assistant would join Fritz Jacobsen Fritz as Senior Assistant for another trip, this time with the DRONNING JULIANE MARIA from late 1764 to the summer of 1766.

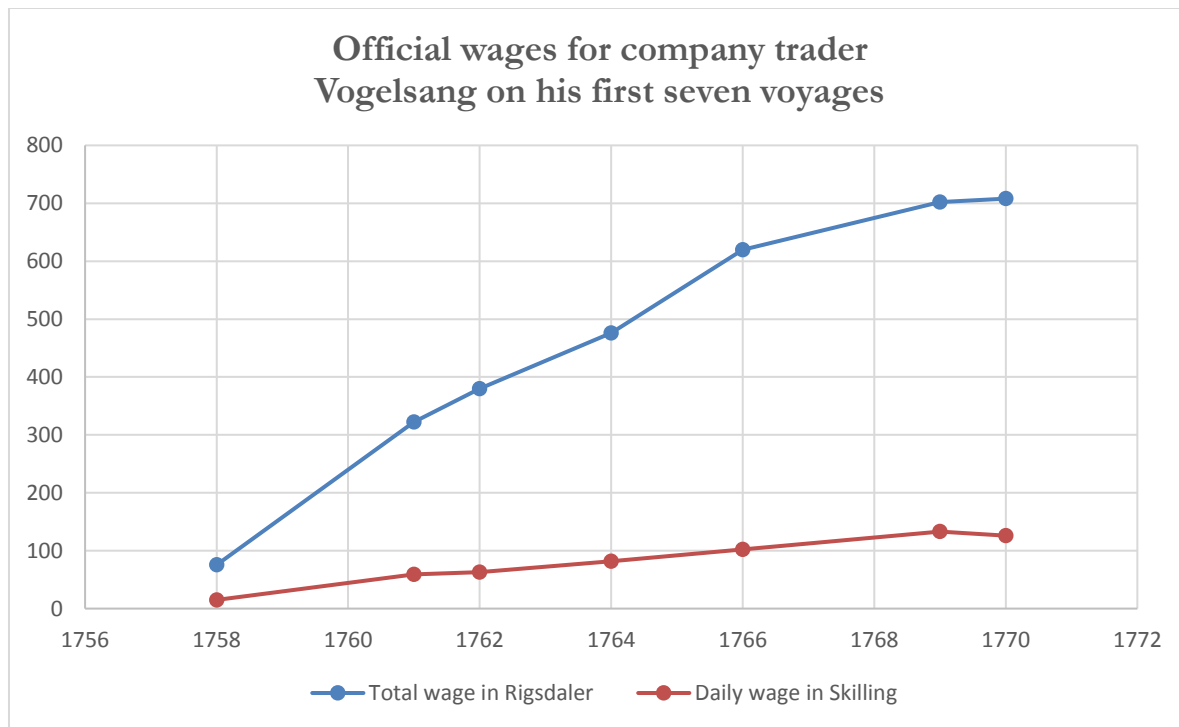


Figure 44 - Source: RA: DAC Roll Books for the relevant years

In the years to come, Vogelsang would again and again set off from Copenhagen towards China, over the years rising from Junior Assistant to Assistant and the wages following along. As seen in Figure 44, his wages quickly reached a point of being double or even triple that of a skilled craftsman in Copenhagen. Again, the amount smuggled is not included, but most likely constituted a significant amount.

During his voyages, Vogelsang must have come closer to other company traders, creating contacts that would impact his later life and that of his family. An example is supercargo Carl Christian Ernst, with whom Vogelsang interacted in Canton in the late 1760s.⁶⁵⁵ At the same time, Vogelsang's brother Henrich, who had just received his citizenship as an *Urtekerammer*,⁶⁵⁶ was able to make his goods available at the House of Ernst in Copenhagen⁶⁵⁷ probably as a result of his brother's network.

⁶⁵⁵ RA: Asiatisk Kompagni, Afdelingen i København: Ask 1165, *Negotie Protocol holden med Skibet Dr: Sophia Magdalena til og fra Canton A. 1769 & 1770*, p. 44 & 47

⁶⁵⁶ Copenhagen City Archive, *Borgerskabsregister*, 1769-4-10

⁶⁵⁷ *Københavns Kongelig alene privilegerede Adresse-Contoirs Efterretninger*, 1769-5-5

Midway on his eighth voyage, which began in early 1773 on board the DRONNING SOPHIA MAGDALENA, he stayed in Canton instead of returning home on the same ship.⁶⁵⁸ Vogelsang's first seven voyages had been without major incidents, each voyage taking eighteen and a half months on average, very close to the average China expedition time for the DAC.⁶⁵⁹ But now his presence was needed on a steadier basis. The life Vogelsang now enjoyed in southern China was quite different from the life on board a travelling merchant ship. For someone like him, who had spent more time on moving ships than on land for the last fifteen years, his new life in Asia would feel quite different. As most foreign merchants in the Pearl River Delta, he would spend between seven and nine months a year in Canton, preparing trade and cargoes for the arriving DAC ships.⁶⁶⁰ For the remaining three to five months each year, he would move with the other European traders down the river to the Portuguese colony of Macao, the only place permitted for them to stay by the Chinese authorities. His change of residence is described by the Swedish historian Lisa Hellman as moving from the primarily male environment in the trading quarter outside the city walls of Canton to the more female place of Macao. While only the male company traders were allowed in the outskirts of Canton, wives and family could stay in Macao, and on the streets of the small city, prostitutes as well as Catholic nuns could be encountered.⁶⁶¹ The months in Macao, where the duties of the company traders such as Vogelsang must have been very limited was among other things used for social gatherings. Although the sources are scarce, hints can be gleaned from sources such as the last letter Vogelsang signed with his colleagues before returning to Copenhagen in 1783. Here, the company trader's reply to a complaint from the DAC that the spending in Macao had been excessive was the response that, "*the stay in Macao requires quite a bit of social participation, which unfortunately cannot be refused.*"⁶⁶² The company was aware of this and



Figure 45 - Catharina Elisabeth Rausch, mother-in-law and aunt to Vogelsang. On her lap is the young Catherine, Vogelsang's only child. They were painted by the famous Jens Juel, and the portrait was completed in 1785, while Vogelsang and family were on their way to Canton. The painting is in unknown private ownership, reproduced from Poulsen, *Jens Juel*, vol. 2, 206.

⁶⁵⁸ After the voyage in 1773, his name does not appear on the Roll Books until 1784, but instead his signature is present on the letters sent by the Supercargoes to the DAC HQ in Copenhagen from 1774 and until February 1783. (RA: Asiatisk Kompagni, Afdelingen i København: Indkomne breve fra faktoriet i Canton (1773-1791) 234 - 237A: 1773 februar 13 1 - 1777 december 22 1 mm. and 1781 1 17 3 - 1783 12 24 3)

⁶⁵⁹ Göbel, E. 1978, *Asiatisk Kompagnis kinafart 1732-1833 - besejling og bemanding*, Copenhagen

⁶⁶⁰ Hellman, *Navigating the foreign quarters*, 130.

⁶⁶¹ Hellman, *Navigating the foreign quarters*, 132.

⁶⁶² My translation of: "*Opholdet i Macao kræver en del Selskabelighed som man desværre ikke kan undslaa sig for at deltage i?*" - RA: Asiatisk Kompagni, Afdelingen i København: Indkomne breve fra faktoriet i Canton (1773-1791) 234 - 237A: 1781 1 17 3 - 1783 12 24 3

assigned 2,000 rigsdaler a year to the company traders in China for living expenses, travels on the Pearl River, servants, and rent. In addition, every year more 2,000 bottles of different wines as well as sixteen barrels of butter were delivered to the resident company traders, but this was apparently not enough.⁶⁶³

On Vogelsang's journey back to Copenhagen, he had the opportunity to acquaint himself with a new group of colleagues, namely around thirty-five to forty Chinese sailors.⁶⁶⁴ The DAC ship CHARLOTTE AMALIE was in dire need of crewmembers, so despite it being forbidden by the Chinese authorities, local sailors boarded the ship in Macao. Vogelsang and his colleagues, perhaps most importantly the resident supercargo Mourier, who as one of very few DAC employees had learned Chinese,⁶⁶⁵ showed great foresight in their letter to the company in stressing that it was essential for the Chinese sailors to be treated well, lest they scare their countrymen away from DAC ships upon their return. This was the first time the DAC employed Chinese sailors, but the experiment seems to have been successful since Chinese were hence employed up until the Oldenburg Monarchy's involvement in the Napoleonic Wars.⁶⁶⁶

Vogelsang's return to Copenhagen was followed by his entry into a new status as that of a married man. In January 1784, he married his cousin Susanna Constantia Rausch.⁶⁶⁷ Vogelsang was forty-three years old and his bride was thirty-seven at the time of their marriage, so it was a match between mature partners--Vogelsang with an intensive knowledge of life and trade in China and Susanna with experience of being a part of a family of merchants and Asian travellers.⁶⁶⁸ The union between the two quickly resulted in the small family increasing to three, when a girl was born almost exactly nine months after the wedding, and in September 1784 given the name Catherine Frederikke Vogelsang at her baptism in Reformert Kirke in Copenhagen.⁶⁶⁹ After a summer in

⁶⁶³ *Det Kongelige Octroyerede Danske Asiatiske Compagnies Convention, vedtaget i Generalforsamlingen den 21 November 1787*, Copenhagen, chapter V, §14

⁶⁶⁴ Mentioned in a letter from the supercargoes to the directors in Copenhagen. I have been unable to track which ship Vogelsang used for his return to Copenhagen, but the CHARLOTTE AMALIE sailed at the right time for him to be back in Copenhagen for his coming wedding. RA: Asiatisk Kompagni, Afdelingen i København: Indkomne breve fra faktoriet i Canton (1773-1791) 234 - 237A: 1781 1 17 3 - 1783 12 24 3, #236

⁶⁶⁵ Lundbæk, "Kinesisk con amore," 129.

⁶⁶⁶ A total of 102 Chinese names are present in the DAC Roll Books as returning from Copenhagen in 1784, 1797, 1798, 1801 and 1804.

⁶⁶⁷ Known from a wedding poem published on the front page of the newspaper *Kjøbenhavns Kongelig alene privilegerede Adresse-Contoirs Efterretninger*, 1784-1-16, Statsbiblioteket.

⁶⁶⁸ Susanna Rausch' family is unknown except for her mother Cathrina Elisabeth Frandsen, who was a sister to Vogelsang's father. But another Rausch participated in the expedition of DRONNINGEN AF DANMARCK to China in 1745 as Underassistent (RA: DAC Roll Books), and likely the same as the Frantz Rausch who received citizenship as a *Groshandler* in Copenhagen in December 1740 (RA: Grosserer-Societetet: Medlemsfortegnelse (1742-1982) 2: 1724,1900). He was most likely her father.

⁶⁶⁹ FamilySearch, "Denmark Baptisms, 1618-1923," (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XYDL-MLS : 6 December 2014>). Frantz Wilhelm Vogelsang in entry for Cathrine Friderike Frandsen, 15 Sep 1784; citing Den Tyske Reformerte Menighed, Kobenhavn, Kobenhavn, Denmark; Fhl microfilm 44,587.

Copenhagen with Susanna pregnant and after some months of being the parents of little Catherine, the family prepared for a long voyage to China.

Knowing that the family would be away for so long, Vogelsang's mother-in-law and Aunt Catharina Elisabeth Rausch commissioned a portrait of her and her little grandchild by the illustrious painter Jens Juel, one of the most sought-after portrait painters in the Oldenburg Monarchy. Shortly before the family left for China, Jens Juel must have made sketches to the painting, which he completed the year after, in 1785.⁶⁷⁰ The seventy-eight-year old Catharina Elisabeth must have thought that it would not be very likely that she would ever see her granddaughter again when ordering the painting. If so, she was correct, for she died in 1787, while her daughter, son-in-law and nephew as well as her granddaughter were far away in southern China.

Shortly thereafter, the Vogelsang family would board the DAC frigate CRON PRINCEN, bound for China. In early December 1784, the now forty-four-year old Vogelsang once again heard the salute for castle Kronborg as the voyage began, and his thoughts must have wandered back to his first passing of the point in the service of the DAC a quarter of a century ago. From being once merely a servant of a supercargo to his status now as the head of trade on the expedition, provided both a great responsibility and ample opportunities for personal gain. For the first time, Vogelsang had his own company servant, Christian Peter Mathiesen, taking care of him on the ship. Mathiesen had been to China once before, also as a servant.⁶⁷¹ Perhaps Vogelsang provided his new servant with a gift when he at the beginning of the voyages purchased three prayer-books, two for him and Susanna and one for Mathiesen?⁶⁷² Perhaps his new wife or the birth of his young daughter moved Vogelsang in a more devout direction than he seemed to have been earlier, never participating in the communion of Reformert Kirke.⁶⁷³

For the newly-wed and new mother Susanna, life in this small, tightly governed and predominantly male environment on board must have been a challenge. Fortunately, she was joined by the wife of Captain Emmanuel Junge as well as a third woman, enabling the three women to enjoy the company of each other and perhaps assist Susanna in taking care of the baby.⁶⁷⁴ The voyage was relatively short compared to many other expeditions, so already in late August 1785, Susanna, Frantz, and Catherine Vogelsang found a new home in Macao. Not long after, Vogelsang left his

⁶⁷⁰ Poulsen, *Jens Juel*, vol. 1, 112.

⁶⁷¹ RA: DAC Roll Books, 1782 & 1784.

⁶⁷² RA: Asiatisk Kompagni, Afdelingen i København: Skibsprotokol for skibe til Kina (1738-1834) 958 - 960: "Cron Princen" 1784 november 4 - 1786 juli 28 mm.

⁶⁷³ In the Reformed Church, members of the congregation had to apply the presbyterium for permission to join the communion. Vogelsang's name do not appear in the preserved lists of applicants, although several of his family members do. RA: Tysk-reformerte Menighed i København: Attester om kommunion (tyske) (1735-1802) B.3-1: mm

⁶⁷⁴ RA: DAC Roll Books. Few expeditions to China brought passengers along and even rarer were female travellers, seen on just 5-6 ships in the Roll Books. The only instances of babies onboard found so far beyond this is the voyage of JULIANE MARIE in 1780, where Elisabeth Cornelia Courtonne, wife of the supercargo Pierre Paul Ferdinand Mourier, apparently gave birth about half way between Canton and Copenhagen. (Hauch-Fausbøll, 1918, 138) This, however seems to conflict with other sources – see Mourier's narrative in the following section.

wife and baby girl behind to travel to the Danish factory.⁶⁷⁵ For Vogelsang, the arrival in Canton must have felt like coming home in the sense of returning to the fellowship of other European company traders. The factories outside of Canton were home to about fifty of these men at this time, and dinners as well as other social events brought the men together across national and political boundaries.⁶⁷⁶

The family stayed in the Pearl River delta for more than three years, before in January 1789 boarding the DAC ship CHARLOTTE AMALIE for the voyage home,⁶⁷⁷ obeying the company rule that supercargoes could not stay in Canton for more than four years in a row.⁶⁷⁸ In the time leading up to their departure, Vogelsang must carefully have selected the trading goods he could fit into a chest of 157x76x76 centimeters, the maximum allotted for a captain or supercargo for their personal trading goods.⁶⁷⁹ Being the seasoned company trader with decades of experience in Canton, he would have selected fine silk cloths and excellent teas to sell or enjoy back in Copenhagen. In his personal belongings, he would probably have a personalised set of porcelain carrying his family name or crest, and possibly one or more export paintings showing the Canton factories, the Whampoa anchorage, or Macao of the type that is now so common in museums around the world. Due to his status as a returning supercargo with family, he was most likely allowed some space on board for the personal belongings of the family, including not only smaller souvenirs but also a few pieces of furniture and art objects.

After 205 days at sea, they were safely back in Copenhagen, but after that, the now forty-nine year old Vogelsang seems to disappear from the sources. Perhaps he lived off the wealth gained on his travels and in his long time in China, enjoying a home with his family with many reminders of his career dealing with the Chinese.

Perhaps the money ran out, or perhaps he continued in service of the company, for in 1794 he was elected as one of the *Revisores* of the DAC,⁶⁸⁰ responsible for keeping the books in order. This lasted until at least 1797, and for this work Vogelsang received 500 rigsdaler a year and was required to own at least three stocks in the company.

But in 1796 he participated in the DAC debate on whether to maintain the trading stations in India or replace them with travelling supercargoes instead, as it was partly done in the China trade. Based

⁶⁷⁵ As European women were not allowed in Canton by the Chinese authorities, it seems reasonable that Susanna would have stayed in Macao, while the duties of Vogelsang as supercargo necessitated his presence in Canton. Breaking the Chinese rules of no foreign women in Canton became more common after the turn of the century but seems to have been quite rare before. Hellman, *Navigating the foreign quarters*, 116.

⁶⁷⁶ Hellman, *Navigating the foreign quarters*, 127.

⁶⁷⁷ RA: Asiatisk Kompagni, Afdelingen i København: Indkomne breve fra faktoriet i Canton (1773-1791) 237B - 238: 1788 januar 4 5 - 1790 december 31 5 mm.

⁶⁷⁸ *Det Kongelige Octroyerede Danske Asiatiske Compagnies Convention, vedtaget i Generalforsamlingen den 21 November 1787*, Copenhagen, chapter IV, §19

⁶⁷⁹ *Det Kongelige Octroyerede Danske Asiatiske Compagnies Convention, vedtaget i Generalforsamlingen den 21 November 1787*, Copenhagen, chapter IV, §17

⁶⁸⁰ Noted in *Hof & Statskalender* for the relevant years.

on his long experience as both a travelling and stationary company trader, he spoke in favour of maintaining the trading stations in India.⁶⁸¹ Sometime later, his long career in the Danish Asiatic Company culminated, as he was elected as one of the directors of the company in 1799. As a Merchant Director with a yearly salary of 1,000 rigsdaler, his responsibilities included handling correspondence, creating trading plans and securing payment for goods, as well as negotiating prices for provisions for the company.⁶⁸² However, the company was now but a shadow of its former self in the flowering period in the 1770s and 80s and Vogelsang would be one of the people dealing with the company to see it most clearly, having spent more than forty years in its service. Nevertheless, the old supercargo, now in his sixties, remained in the service of the company for the rest of his life.⁶⁸³ Vogelsang served as director of the company for an unusually large number of years, and his fellow directors at the time held their positions for a similar long number of years, despite having to be reelected every three years.⁶⁸⁴ Johan Leonhard Fix, director from 1792 to 1806, also held the job for fourteen years, and just like Vogelsang he possessed plenty of experience from trading in Asia, which was quite rare among the directors. Perhaps their shared experience as well as their shared participation in the German Reformed church made the cooperation between the two men easier, although Fix was known to be a challenge to work with as proved by his court trials against the previous director Duntzfelt, which had ended in physical violence.⁶⁸⁵ Another fellow director at the same time as Vogelsang was Carsten Tank Anker, who served from 1793 to 1812. A few years younger than Vogelsang, they enjoyed a similar background of growing up in Norwegian industrial environments, Vogelsang in a silverworks in Kongsberg and Anker in a timber and iron business in Moss,⁶⁸⁶ less than a hundred kilometers from each other. Carsten Tank Anker was a part of the highly influential Anker family that dominated the timber trade in Christiania and possessed an impressive network.⁶⁸⁷ Finally, Vogelsang spent many years working with Povel Friderich Skibsted, who functioned as director from 1789 until 1812. Although educated as a lawyer and as such with an intensive network among both nobility and trading houses, he came from a family of merchants such as his father who was both brewer and *Grosserer*.⁶⁸⁸ At the same time as being

⁶⁸¹ *Forskjællige Betænkninger, betræffende Factoriernes Afskaffelse eller Vedblivelse, foranledigede ved Udarbeidelsen af det Asiatiske Compagnies Conventions 5. Capitel, og ved Trykken bekendtgjorde i Følge Interessenternes Beslutning i General-Forsamlingen, holden den 18. Febr. 1796*, Copenhagen

⁶⁸² *Det Kongelige Octroyerede Danske Asiatiske Compagnies Convention, vedtaget i Generalforsamlingen den 21 November 1787*, Copenhagen, §18 & §19

⁶⁸³ The best overview of the DAC directors is available in *Hof & Statskalender*, which was published every year from 1734 and among other things contained a list of senior employees of the royally privileged trading companies. The complete database of the directors, which is the foundation for much of this section, can be found in the Maritime Museum of Denmark, “*Business Wiki of the Oldenburg*,” under the “DAC Director” category.

⁶⁸⁴ *Det Kongelige Octroyerede Danske Asiatiske Compagnies Convention, vedtaget i Generalforsamlingen den 21 November 1787*, København, §23

⁶⁸⁵ Bie, “Johan Leonhard Fix. En Skikkelse i dansk-ostindisk Kolonihistorie,” 19.

⁶⁸⁶ Biografisk Leksikon II

⁶⁸⁷ As described in Collett and Frydenlund, *Christianias handelspatrisiat*, especially in Frydenlund’s chapter from page 60.

⁶⁸⁸ Biografisk Leksikon III

elected as DAC director, Skibsted also took up the position of *Generalfiskal*, the senior public prosecutor of the state.

Just as his own entry into the company had been assisted by the network of his family, the old Vogelsang was now in a position to do the same for the next generation. In 1801, his nephew Johan Peter Vogelsang was assigned as *Negotiechefens Haandskriver*, the scribe of the head of trade, earlier known as 1st Supercargo, on the DAC ship KRONPRINDSEN. Johan Peter was the son of Vogelsang's brother Henrich, who had found employment with the English merchant Applebye, first in Copenhagen and since as the bookkeeper and later *Inspecteur* of his sugar refinery in Odense.⁶⁸⁹ Young Johan Peter had probably assisted his father in the administration of the sugar refinery, providing him with the knowledge to serve the supercargo of the voyage to China. Just like his uncle, Johan Peter continued to participate in the DAC expeditions to China for a long time, in his case in 1804-1806, 1819-1821, 1822-1823, and 1826-1827, slowly advancing through the ranks. Johan Peter's career also describes the financial troubles of the company in its later years. Instead of just being a company trader like his uncle, Johan Peter also served as *Skibsassistent*, the ship's steward, at the same time,⁶⁹⁰ a demanding job that would previously have been fulfilled by a separate member of the crew. On the journey back from Canton in 1827 Johan Peter Vogelsang died, presumably ending the involvement of the Vogelsang family with the DAC. However, his widow Cecilie Diedrikke soon after married the last company trader of the DAC, Theodor Emil Ludvigsen,⁶⁹¹ providing a link between old Vogelsang's first expedition in 1759 and the final voyage of the DAC to China in 1833.

Near the end of his life Vogelsang passed on some of his knowledge to one of the last and longest serving directors of DAC, namely Rasmus Sternberg Selmer who achieved the rank of director in the fateful year of 1807, when the Oldenburg Monarchy became involved in the Napoleonic Wars against Great Britain, which meant the loss of the Navy, the kingdom of Norway, and an almost complete halt to international shipping and trade. Now the work of the directors changed from preparing expeditions to Asia to keeping the company alive, selling the stock of surplus Asian goods at the best possible times and waiting for the war to end.

While working as a director, Vogelsang also had to prepare his only daughter's wedding. In the summer of 1805, the now twenty-year old Catherine Frederikke Vogelsang married the thirty-two-year old Johan Jacob de Lilliendahl, son of the Fritz, whom Vogelsang had first met in the trading station in Canton more than forty-five years earlier. The young Lilliendahl was a merchant and carried the title of Imperial Austrian General Consul in Elsinore, where he owned the manor of Dalsborg in the countryside.⁶⁹² Fritz had done well after his eight voyages to Canton, ending around

⁶⁸⁹ Mentioned in the local newspapers *Kongelig privilegerede Odense Adresse-Contoires Efterretninger*, 1773-10-29 and in *Fyens Stifts Kongelig allene privilegerede Adresse-Avis og Avertissements-Tidende*, 1806-9-17

⁶⁹⁰ RA: DAC Roll Books 1819 & 1822

⁶⁹¹ From the entry of the artist Christian Rudolph Vogelsang, son of Johan Peter. Philip Weilbach, *Dansk Kunstnerlexikon* (Copenhagen, 1877). See Ludvigsen's narrative in the following section.

⁶⁹² Kjeld Damgaard, "Dalsborg og Lokkerup," Municipality of Tikøb, Denmark
<http://www.tikobkommune.dk/dalsborg.html>

1771. It is a sign of the wealth he must have earned both legitimately and illegitimately on the expeditions, that he could purchase the noble name of de Lilliendahl in 1774 for 36,000 rigsdaler,⁶⁹³ providing us with an indication of Vogelsang's possible fortune. After the wedding, Catherine Frederikke would have moved from her parents, who lived in Nørre Kvarter in Copenhagen with their manservant, maid, cook, and even a milking maid!⁶⁹⁴ Her new home would be the manor of Dalsborg, far north of Copenhagen, where a bright future might await the new couple with the blessings and wealth of their fathers. Unfortunately, Johan Jacob passed away in 1808, just three years after the marriage, leaving Vogelsang's daughter of only twenty-three as a childless widow. But sometime later, just before Christmas in 1812, Vogelsang gave his daughter away a second time when she married Lauritz Berth. The couple would be blessed with nine children, but although the old Vogelsang of now seventy-two years was present for the marriage, he did not live long enough to witness the birth of his first grandchild in 1813.

For in the summer of 1813, perhaps in his home at Larsbjørnsstræde in Copenhagen, the old supercargo and director drew his final, troubled breath, suffering from *Asthma*.⁶⁹⁵ Three days later he was buried at the church of his family, the Reformert Kirke.

Analysis of Vogelsang

The narrative is an example of a piece of microhistory made possible by connecting a large number of sources from a number of different locations. However, almost none of the sources are from Frantz Wilhelm Otto's own hand, providing us with very little insight into his thoughts, his character, and his ideas about the world. The sources tell us how, but not why.

This leaves a large room of interpretation for the historian. The above narrative attempts to form a cohesive and realistic story of the life and career of Vogelsang using the available sources, but what other stories could be envisioned using the exact same sources? Above I assume that Vogelsang joined the DAC with help from his family and their network, but in reality he might have joined the company on his own accord, perhaps even against the will of his family. The same could also be the case of Vogelsang's nephew, Johan Peter. I also assume that Vogelsang and Fritz become friends when meeting in Canton, leading to the union of their children much later. But perhaps they hated each other from the start, making the marriage of the children a story similar to the warring families of Romeo and Juliet?

Another alternative worth considering is what happened after Vogelsang's first voyage. Was he offered a new position on the next voyage due to his skills and promising potential? Or was he rather one of the few who volunteered to go, or did he even have to beg to join the next expedition despite his not-too-promising potential? This question remains open, but its answer could severely affect the narrative after this event.

⁶⁹³ Mentioned in *Personallistorisk Tidsskrift*, 1899, 2, 55 as well as in Damgaard, "Dalsborg og Lokkerup."

⁶⁹⁴ Public Census from 1801 - Data obtained from Danish Demographic Database Ref. DDA-2759, Kipno. A5031. Parish: Nørre Kvarter. Hundred: København (Staden). County: København. Record no. 722 of 7051.

⁶⁹⁵ RA: Den Tysk-Reformerte Menighed i København, Kontraminsterialbog 1835-1878, Døde kvinder 1806 - Døde kvinder 1817 (sic!), 3

Vogelsang's narrative suggests a rather different character than that of van Hurk and Mourier (below). While several DAC company traders created great fortunes for themselves in China, Vogelsang seems to come from more modest means, working himself up the company hierarchy as to a lesser extent, the general social ladder. Despite his more than fifty years in service of the DAC, the scarce sources do not point towards Vogelsang possessing a great wealth, despite his nine expeditions to China with many more or less legal opportunities for amassing a fortune. Nor do the sources point toward him functioning as a broker, as was the case of his friend and colleague Mourier, who will be detailed below. In short, Vogelsang seems to have been a company man simply doing his job and in old age being rewarded with first a job at the company headquarters, and later with the position of director.

IV.3 – Officers, Kings, Monks and Hongs – the narrative of Pierre Paul Ferdinand Mourier

One of the most unusual DAC company traders was Pierre Paul Ferdinand Mourier or as the sources in Danish call him, Peter Poul Ferdinand. Seen from a distance, he appears as a scholar-warrior-adventurer-merchant with a most interesting life, and especially his early life as a soldier and companion to the king, as well as his interest in sinology seems to set him apart from many of the contemporaries in the DAC. His story could be told like this:

A Narrative of Mourier

Latin and math filled the days of young Pierre in 1766. Twenty years of age, he had just arrived at the university in Göttingen in pursuit of these fields. The studies here were a somewhat different life than his previous years training as an infantry officer in the army of the Oldenburg Monarchy. But Pierre Paul Ferdinand Mourier was a man of many skills, and was selected among the few officers who were to travel abroad, financed by the Crown, for a scientific education. But the future had much more in store for Mourier, and in 1768 he accompanied the young King Christian VII on a journey to England and France.

In June 1768, a party of fifty-five people accompanied Christian VII, the then nineteen-year old king of Denmark, Norway, and much more, across the border in Holstein towards the first leg of the voyage through various German states towards Amsterdam.⁶⁹⁶ For the twenty-two-year old Mourier, the voyage must have offered plenty of opportunities to network, not only with the dignitaries encountered during the trip, but also with the high-ranking civil servants of the assembly such as Moltke, von Bülow, and Schimmelmann as well as the king's new personal physician, Struensee. Perhaps he bonded with the young Frederik Carl von Warnstedt, aged eighteen, a favourite at the court and serving as Kammerpage, who was a younger brother to Hans Vilhelm von Warnstedt, educated with and friend of Mourier in *Landcadetacademiet*.⁶⁹⁷ After travelling around the Netherlands, the party sailed off for England to meet the new family-in-law of the king, who had married his cousin, the British princess Caroline Mathilde, only two years earlier. In Britain, Mourier must have enjoyed his share of the hectic programmes that awaited the young king – first

⁶⁹⁶ Ulrik L. Langen, *Den afmagtige: en biografi om Christian 7* (Copenhagen: Jyllands-Posten, 2009), 252.

⁶⁹⁷ Mourier sent at least two letters to Hans Vilhelm von Warnstedt from Canton, now in private ownership, where Warnstedt is called first “*Min kiære gode Ven,*” and secondly, “*Min meget kiære gode Ven.*”

plays in the theatres, royal visits, fireworks, concerts, meeting celebrities in private, gardens, churches and much more in the London area. Then the journey led to the old universities of Cambridge and Oxford, where all high-ranking members of the party were awarded honorary doctoral degrees, followed by visits to factories, mines, clothing mills, and markets in Northern England. After celebrations, dances and other awards to mark the very successful visit, Christian VII and his party continued to Paris, arriving in October 1768. Here, a likewise hectic programme awaited the king. Besides meeting a vast number of European royals and nobles, Christian VII met with several influential philosophers, visited the Sorbonne University and the three French academies, meeting scholars eager to influence the young king in the ideas of the Enlightenment. Perhaps these influences also reached Mourier? In December, the king and his party left Paris and the court of Louis XV, arriving in Copenhagen in the middle of January 1769 being met with parades, salutes, and music in the streets.⁶⁹⁸

After the voyage with the king, Mourier returned to Göttingen and completed his studies. Returning to Copenhagen later in 1769, he had thus more or less completed what the contemporary Danish intellectual and Professor Jens Schielderup Sneedorff described as a proper educational journey for a young man: Three years of study in Göttingen, a year in Geneva to learn French and the sciences, and finally visiting the major cities of Europe to know the world.⁶⁹⁹

At some point either on his journeys or back in Copenhagen, Mourier became acquainted with the Dutch merchant Jaques Salomon Courtonne, which would lead him to new skills, voyages, and even love.⁷⁰⁰ In 1770, Mourier married the oldest daughter of Courtonne, Elisabeth Cornelia, in the church of his late father, Jean Ferdinand Mourier.

Mourier's father, Jean Ferdinand was born in Switzerland in 1692 as the son of a French lord, forced to flee after the Edict of Nantes.⁷⁰¹ Jean Ferdinand was initiated as a priest in Lausanne in 1717, and came to the Reformed Church in Copenhagen four years later. Not long after, he married a woman of the congregation, Anna Henriette Mazar de la Garde, who was the daughter of a language teacher. She gave birth to their eleven children, of which Pierre Mourier was the youngest, born in 1746. Born of older parents, his father fifty-four and his mother forty-three, young Pierre was orphaned early, losing his father at the age of eight and his mother at the age of eleven.⁷⁰² Perhaps these losses brought Pierre to seek refuge in the books he would later spend a great deal of both time and money upon?

⁶⁹⁸ Langen, *Den afmægtige*, 284.

⁶⁹⁹ Originally from the journal *Den Patriotiske Tilskuer* from 1761, quoted in Bård Frydenlund, *Stormannen Peder Anker: en biografi* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 2009), 25.

⁷⁰⁰ *Søndagen – et Tillægsblad til "Dagen"*, #9, 1837-02-26, second column.

⁷⁰¹ Elvius, S., Hiort-Lorenzen, H.R., Hauch-Fausbøll, T. & Nygård, S. 1891-1930, *Patriciske Slægter*. Dansk Genealogiske Instituts Forlag/Tryde, Copenhagen, vol 1, p.188

⁷⁰² Both seems to have been buried inside the family church. From Danmarks kirker. Bind 1. København. 3. bind, 15. hefte. *Reformert Kirke*, 114.

Just before the death of his mother, Pierre Mourier joined *Landcadetacademiet*, the academy for army officers in Copenhagen, aged only eleven.⁷⁰³ After five years of study and training at the academy he transferred to an infantry regiment as *Fændrik*, a rank between sergeant and lieutenant or the youngest officer of a unit, rising to be second lieutenant the following year. At the same time, he received additional private training in Latin from a Norwegian student by the name of Rosenkilde,⁷⁰⁴ most likely on the initiative of his older siblings.

As a newly-wed, Mourier left the army in November 1770 with the rank of captain to join his father-in-law Courtonne on board the DAC ship DRONNING SOPHIA MAGDALENA, which was bound for Canton.⁷⁰⁵ Courtonne's previous business had not been successful, but now he apparently hoped for better fortune in Asia. It seems likely that Mourier had prepared for the trip by purchasing relevant literature to prepare himself for the experiences in the distant lands of China.⁷⁰⁶

The ship saluted castle Kronborg in early December 1770, and Mourier would spend the next 228 days in the company of several very experienced company traders of the DAC. The trader responsible for the overall success was 1st Supercargo Morten Engelbrecht Mauritzen, who for the last almost thirty years had completed ten voyages, first to Tranquebar in India and since to China, probably being the most experienced company trader in the history of the DAC.⁷⁰⁷ Also among the crew was the *Assistent* Frantz Wilhelm Otto Vogelsang, whose narrative was discussed above. The two would later be friends, and the mutual sympathy probably already began on this their first voyage together.⁷⁰⁸ During their stay in China, they would among other things be united in their study of the English language and the reading of English poetry together.⁷⁰⁹

⁷⁰³ Kay Larsen, "Dansk Ostindiske Personalía og Data," Dansk Demografisk Database. Accessed March 21, 2018. <http://ddd.dda.dk/dop/sogeseide.asp>.

⁷⁰⁴ *Søndagen – et Tillægsblad til "Dagen"*, #9, 1837-02-26, fifth column.

⁷⁰⁵ According to the Kay Larsen's database, Mourier quit the army due to poor health, while Mourier's son claims in the obituary published in *Dagen* in 1837 that it was due to the low wages, inadequate to fund a family. Neither cause, however, excludes the other. Kay Larsen, "Dansk Ostindiske Personalía og Data."

⁷⁰⁶ In the auction catalogue published in 1837 after Mourier's death, more than 3500 books from his collection are listed. Several book deals with China and a number of books are old enough to have been in the possession of Mourier at his departure, including the book by H.P. Osbeck, who had been a chaplain of the Svenska Ostindiska Companiet from 1750-52: *Reise nach Ostindien u. China*, 1765. Other books Mourier might have brought along include the *History of China* v1-4, London 1741; V. de Brunem: *Histoire de la conquete de la Chine par les Tartares mancheoux*, Lyon 1754; L. le Comte: *Memoires sur la Chine*, Paris 1701; Dalquié: *La Chine d'Athanase Kirchere*, Amsterdam 1670 and finally A. Semedo: *Historie de la China trad. par Conlon*, Paris 1645

⁷⁰⁷ Mauritzen almost completed eleven voyages to China before his death in Canton in 1773, aged 55. Only company trader Peder Molbeck completed more expeditions than Mauritzen, a total of 12 from 1762-1803. From RA: DAC Roll Books – more references on the individual pages in <http://oldenburgbusiness.net/>

⁷⁰⁸ Mourier mentions receiving help from Vogelsang in China in a private letter from January 1777 to his friend, Hans Vilhelm von Warnstedt, a friend from the Military Academy. The letter along with another from 1775 is owned by Mouriers descendants, who generously offered me transcriptions in 2016. The letters will later be added to the collection of the Maritime Museum of Denmark.

⁷⁰⁹ *Søndagen – et Tillægsblad til "Dagen"*, #9, 1837-02-26, fifth column.

Arriving in China in the following summer did not seem to end the close contact of the twelve company traders Mourier and Courtonne had shared ship with for more than seven months. Although the two men would engage in private trade in China, the areas where Europeans were allowed were so small, that they must have encountered each other daily.⁷¹⁰ The young Mourier was however in luck, for some time after his arrival he was offered employment as a resident company trader with the rank of *Assistent* in Canton for the DAC. In the new *Octroy and Convention* of 1772, the company decided to keep two supercargoes and two assistants all year round in Canton and Macao,⁷¹¹ and Mourier seems to have been at the right place at just the right time. For in the summer of 1774, the DAC supercargo Ferdinand Anthon Irgens died, leaving his financial affairs in a messy state after attempts to succeed with private trade in southeast Asia along with former DAC employees residing here. The debts of Irgens shows the connectedness of the merchants in Canton, as money was owed both to the Chinese merchants Ingsia and Manqua as well as to the Swedish supercargo Jakob Hahr, after the failed venture.⁷¹² When the DAC headquarters in Copenhagen was informed of the decision of Mourier's appointment, they replied that "*With Mons. Mouriers employment as Assistant in the Residence in Canton we [are] quite well pleased, and we hope that his behaviour will confirm the high regard we all hold him in [...]*"⁷¹³ The letter seems to suggest that the then thirty-two-year old Mourier was known to at least some of the DAC directors, which in 1774 numbered a record seven.⁷¹⁴ Of these, Brown, Fabritius, Elphinston, and de Coninck were also a part of the Reformed Church and de Coninck and possibly others who participated in the French-speaking part of the congregation, would have known Mourier's father from the church.

Besides the trade in Canton and stays in Macao, Mourier travelled to several places in Asia: Batavia,⁷¹⁵ the capital of the Dutch East Indies and trading hub, Manilla in the Philippines, and India, including the colony of Tranquebar.⁷¹⁶ But despite the DAC trade going on there, he was not

⁷¹⁰ The sources disagree on the early period of Mourier and Courtonne in China. According to Lundbæk, Mourier was a "*particular Overligger*", meaning private trader, unfortunately without any references, Lundbæk, "Kinesisk con amore," 129. But in the obituary in *Dagen* (1837: second column), Mourier's son describes them as entering DAC service before departure from Copenhagen. This is not supported by the DAC Roll Book, where they are both described as passengers, but only Courtonne having "*character af Supercargo*", ranked as supercargo, with no note of the rank of Mourier. Also, in the first private letter from Mourier to von Warnstedt mentioned in note 717, Mourier complains about the low wages for the company traders, but admits that he entered service voluntarily and that his DAC status confers advantages in China, which hints at him joining the DAC sometime after his arrival in Canton. Overall, this seems to point towards Mourier not joining the DAC before arriving in China, which is also supported by the general tendency of the company to prefer experienced traders, a description that does not seem to fit Mourier at the time of departure from Copenhagen.

⁷¹¹ Thaarup, *Historiske og statistiske Efterretninger om det Kongl.*, 61.

⁷¹² RA: DAC Copenhagen: Letters from Canton 1774-12-12

⁷¹³ My translation from: "*Med Mons Mouriers antagelse til Assistent i Residencen i Canton er vi gandske vel fornøyet, og vi haaber at hans Conduite skal stadfæste de gode tanker som vi alle have om hannem;*". RA: Asiatisk Kompagni, Afdelingen i København: "Indianske og chinesiske Breves Copie Bog" (1757-1840) 160: 1772 november 19 A - 1778 november 28 A, p. 431

⁷¹⁴ Hof & Statskalender, 1774

⁷¹⁵ Present day Jakarta in Indonesia.

⁷¹⁶ Lundbæk, "Kinesisk con amore," 129.

impressed and later wrote home to a friend: “*Tranquebar I know, it is a dump (said between us) and just the place to corrupt young people. And what in the world can one in the service of the Company gain there, even in 20-30 years? [...] The people that are here, where I am now [Canton] have other ways of earning a little [...]*”.⁷¹⁷ The “*other ways of earning a little*” seemed to have worked out well for Mourier and his father-in-law, who seem to have been in partnership with supercargo Johan Carl Stolle, who stayed in the Pearl River Delta for a number of years after his first voyages as Assistant for the DAC, departing Copenhagen in 1763, 1765, and 1767.⁷¹⁸ For in January 1781, the British EIC confirmed that the three men had provided them with £3,300 for transfer to London.⁷¹⁹ A few years later, a similar transfer took place when Mourier along with supercargo Peder Ruch, a veteran company trader with eleven voyages behind him, transferred £2,515 via the EIC to be payable to a Mr. Robert Barclay, Mr. Alexander, and Mrs. Johanna Alexander.⁷²⁰ Ruch would eventually become very wealthy, leaving 123,000 rigsdaler for a Danish hospital.⁷²¹

Besides the financial side of travelling, Mourier’s interest in language was also stimulated. Growing up in a French-speaking home, this language as well as Danish must have been central during his upbringing along with the Latin he was taught during his time in the academy and in the university in Göttingen. After entering *Landcadetacademiet* at age eleven, he must quickly have learned German if he was not already familiar with it, since that was the standard language for the teachings there. From his wife’s family, he quickly picked up the Dutch language, and his command of English was improving in China as mentioned above. But besides these languages, his years in Asia enabled him to learn Portuguese which must have been very useful in Macao as well as Spanish and the Malay language, which worked as a *lingua franca* in the region. But shortly after his arrival, he met a Spanish Augustine monk, Juan Rodriguez da Sylva, who had worked in southern China for sixteen years. Rodriguez shared Mourier’s interest in languages and was responsible for a Chinese dictionary as well as teaching materials. In his company, Mourier studied Chinese and read several Chinese tales. Later, Mourier was taught by a Chinese scholar and developed a fondness for popular Chinese literature rather than the classics.⁷²² During his fifteen years in China, Mourier must have spent a lot of time studying the Chinese language, copying books to remember the Chinese characters and to make his own dictionary, which eventually ended up being 760 pages with about 10,000 words described.

Mourier’s love of language was shared with his old friend from the voyage with the king, Johan Christian Schönheyder. Schönheyder was four years older than Mourier, had studied mathematics

⁷¹⁷ My translation from: ”*Tranquebar kiender jeg, det er et Hundehul (unter uns gesagt) og just et Stød til at bedærve unge Mennesker. Og hvad i Verden kan een i Compagniets Tieneste paa den Kant vinde endog i 20, 30 Aar? [...] De som ligge her, hvoriblandt jeg nu er een, har andre Veye at fortjene lidet [...]*” Letter from Mourier to his friend von Warnstedt, December 10, 1775. Privately owned.

⁷¹⁸ RA: DAC Roll books.

⁷¹⁹ From the database of Paul van Dyke, internal reference BL: G/12/74, 58

⁷²⁰ From the database of Paul van Dyke, internal reference BL: G/12/78 115

⁷²¹ *Personallistorisk Tidsskrift*, 1921, 171

⁷²² Lundbæk, “Kinesisk con amore,” 133.

and the Arabian language at the University of Göttingen at around the same time as Mourier, and functioned as the chaplain on the voyage to France and England. Schönheyder was apparently capable of understanding eleven languages and he made sure that his friend in China could read the latest poetry, as he sent works of the famous Danish poet Johannes Ewald to Mourier as soon as they were published.⁷²³

About a year after his arrival in Canton, his wife Elisabeth Cornelia set out to join him along with her step niece Susanne Martin. The voyage took place on board the DAC ship PRINTZ FRIDERICH,⁷²⁴ commanded by the experienced China Captain Jesper With, who had also commanded the ship of Courtonne and Mourier two years earlier. On board she would have made the acquaintance of supercargo Morten Mauritzen, one of the most experienced company traders of the DAC. This probably led to later social interactions, since Mauritzen's wife, Marie Elisabeth,⁷²⁵ travelled to China a year later, and stayed in Macao just like all the other families of the company traders. The decision to keep a permanent factory in Canton with the *Octroi* of 1772 also meant the establishment of a small community of DAC company traders and their families in Macao, since only the traders were admitted to the factory area outside Canton. The confinement to the small area of Macao must have led to both intense friendships as well as hatred toward each other in the society of traders.

During their years together in Macao, Elisabeth gave birth to six children. However, the deadly smallpox that raged in the area for many years claimed three of their children, who were buried at the Protestant cemetery in Macao.⁷²⁶

Mourier eventually decided to send the remaining three children and their mother back to Copenhagen to be inoculated. In 1780, the family left on board the DAC ship JULIANE MARIE again followed by Elisabeth's step niece. The voyage claimed the life of another child, leaving only a son, Charles Adolph, aged four and a daughter, Elisabeth, aged two.⁷²⁷ After the successful inoculation of the three, they resided with family and friends in Copenhagen. But after a short while, Elisabeth Cornelia fell ill and died from *Vattersot* or edema. She was also buried in the graveyard surrounding Reformert Kirke, not far away from her parents-in-law whom she most likely never met.⁷²⁸ Her father, Jaques Courtonne, seems to have remained behind as he is listed in

⁷²³ *Søndagen – et Tillægsblad til "Dagen"*, #9, 1837-02-26, sixth column.

⁷²⁴ The DAC Roll Books list ten passengers on this ship, of which three were soldiers. In addition, eleven "*Aparte passagerer*" are listed, different passengers, which might refer to the family members of the company traders that was going to stay in Canton for a longer period, such as Mourier's wife. Both the previous and the following ship carried passengers, but this ship seems to match the timeline mentioned in the obituary written by Mourier's son.

⁷²⁵ Listed in the DAC Roll Books on the KONGEN AF DANNEMARCK, completed 1773-11-24

⁷²⁶ Lindsay T. Ride, May Ride, and Bernard Mellor, *An East India company cemetery: protestant burials in Macao* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1996).

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⁷²⁷ *Søndagen – et Tillægsblad til "Dagen"*, #9, 1837-02-26, third column.

⁷²⁸ Danmarks kirker. Bind 1. København. 3. bind, 15. hefte. Reformert Kirke., 120.

British sources as being a private trader in Canton as late as February 1781.⁷²⁹ At some later point he returned to Copenhagen, where he died in 1791.⁷³⁰

In December 1784, the now thirty-eight-year old Mourier was suffering from poor health and boarded the DAC ship DISKO for a six-month long journey back to Copenhagen.⁷³¹ His last business in Canton included the final transactions of opium-smuggling with the brig CAROLINE MATHILDE, owned by the former DAC trader in India and later DAC director Johan Leonhard Fix. Despite the price of opium being very low at that time, the company still made a sizeable profit which would then be invested in the cargoes of the ships returning to Copenhagen.⁷³²

Besides saying farewell to his colleagues of the DAC after many years together, he must also have visited the Chinese Hong-merchant Quionqua or Geowqua, whose warehouse was just next to the DAC factory in Canton. Perhaps because of Mourier's command of the Chinese language, the two had become close friends and promised each other to keep in touch via letters.⁷³³ Geowqua (1734-1802), who was of the Wu family with useful links to inland suppliers of tea, had been in the service of the house of Chowqua for years before he was appointed as Hong merchant in the summer of 1782.⁷³⁴ His firm, the Yuanshan Hang, gained much of the trade of DAC, more than half at the time of Mourier's departure, so their friendship might have had more than one purpose.

But Mourier met several interesting people besides Chinese and European merchants. When the young prince Lee Boo of the Palau Islands in Micronesia passed Macau on the way to Britain as the first of his people, Lee Boo allegedly visited Mourier and his family more than once in late 1783. Perhaps it was here, at Mourier's family residence, that the young prince for the first time saw himself in a mirror, as it was later told in books about the prince, who died not much later in

⁷²⁹ From the database of Paul van Dyke, internal reference BL: G/12/72, 10

⁷³⁰ Jaques Courtonne, <http://www.koudal.eu/slaegt/b154.htm#P37332>, Accessed September 2017.

⁷³¹ RA: Asiatisk Kompagni, Afdelingen i København: Indkomne breve fra faktoriet i Canton (1773-1791), 237, letter #65.

⁷³² RA: Asiatisk Kompagni, Afdelingen i København: Indkomne breve fra faktoriet i Canton (1773-1791), 237, letters #56-58.

⁷³³ Their friendship is mentioned in Lundbæk, but he calls the Chinese merchant Chunqua, which he probably has from Larsen (1938)?, *Den danske kinafart*. Lundbæk, "Kinesisk con amore," 113. However, in a note posted on the back of the copy of the painting, Quionqua sent to Mourier after his return to Copenhagen, reprinted in Larsen's book, Mourier's son names the merchant "Quionqua eller Kjonkva." Perhaps one or both authors confuse Mourier's friend Quionqua with the later Chunqua, who worked with the DAC for decades in the early 19th century? This later Chunqua sent his portrait to king Frederik VI in return for the portrait offered by the king as a thankful gesture due to the services rendered during the Napoleonic Wars, see Clemmesen & Mackeprang (1980:283). According to Paul van Dyke, the Chinese merchant appears to be Geowqua, who were a key figure in the trade with the DAC. Geowqua, also spelled Quauqua or Kiauqua, previously partnered with Chowqua, whose factory can be seen below, making it a likely place for Mourier and Geowqua to have initiated their friendship, which later led to a portrait being sent to Copenhagen.

⁷³⁴ Van Dyke, *Merchants of Canton and Macao*, 108.

London from smallpox, the same disease that had claimed the lives of several of Mourier's children.⁷³⁵

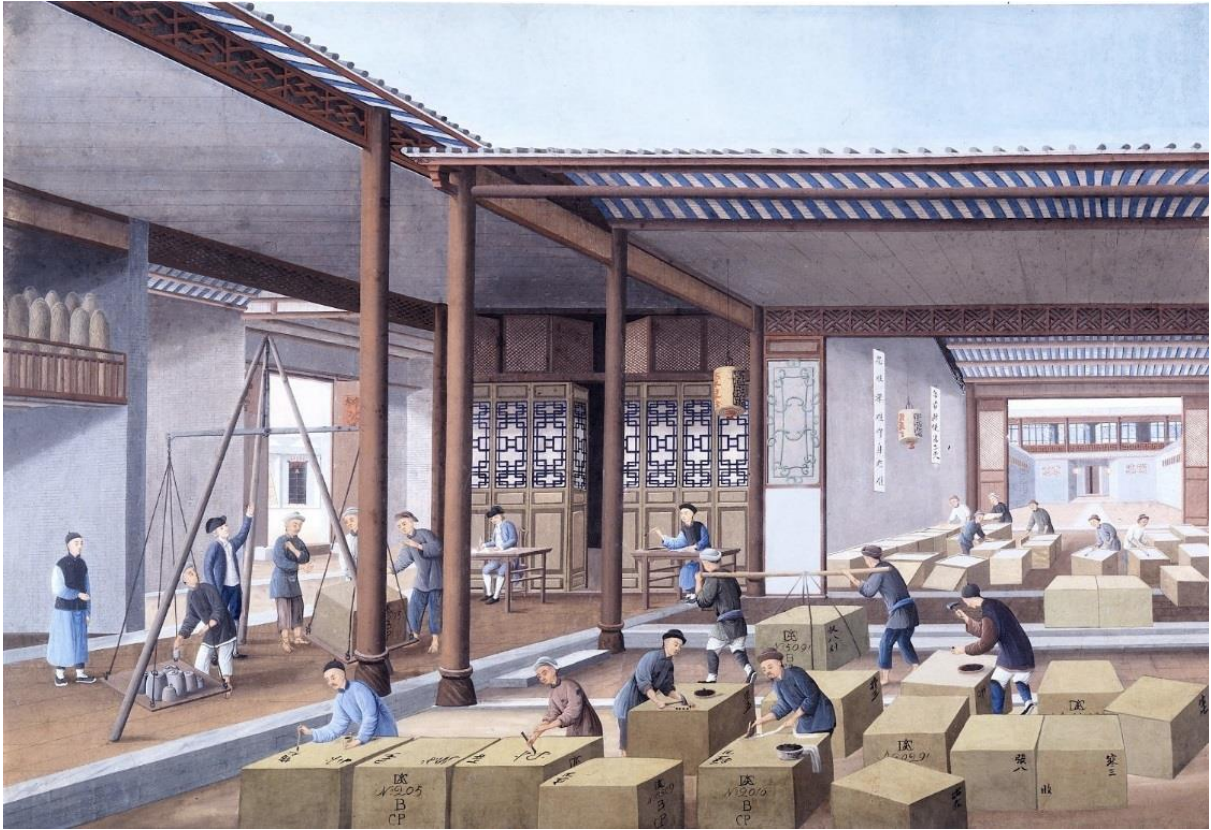


Figure 46 - Tea packing inside Chowqua's factory, as seen in late 1783 at the very peak of the DAC tea trade. The painting was likely ordered by Mourier and brought home along with five other paintings of similar motifs. If the painting had been done a few years earlier, the Chinese scribe in the centre of the painting would have been Mourier's friend Geowqua, who worked for Chowqua from late 1779 to the summer of 1782. (Dyke 2016:108) Photo: Maritime Museum of Denmark

⁷³⁵ The encounter is mentioned by Mourier's son in *Sondagen – et Tillægsblad til "Dagen"*, #10, 1837-03-5, third column, while the story of prince Lee Boo is presented at the website of the church of St Mary's Rotherhithe, where the prince is buried. Church of St. Mary's Rotherhithe, "Prince Lee Boo and Rotherhithe." <http://www.stmaryrotherhithe.org/> Accessed March 23, 2018.

Sometime before his departure, Mourier lent a large sum to the DAC to be paid to three different bankers in London, a total of £15,575, which provides an additional indication of some of the wealth he had acquired during his fifteen years in China.⁷³⁶ In Copenhagen, the sum amounted to about 85,000 rigsdaler, making Mourier and his father-in-law wealthy men and confirming the quote from Mourier's private letter above, that Canton was a good place to create a fortune. During his years in China, he had also sent funds home every year via the grand merchant de Coninck in Copenhagen, adding to the fortune awaiting him.⁷³⁷

Mourier left China on the DAC ship DISCO in early 1785, carrying numerous possessions such as books home, and most likely including six large paintings⁷³⁸ of life in the factories and of the Chinese, whose language he had learned and whose literature he had enjoyed during his fifteen years in Asia. In the tradition of other DAC company traders, he also had a bust made by Chinese face-makers in Canton, and if he had not already shipped it home, as a good friend had asked for in the middle of the 1770s, he would probably pack it now.⁷³⁹

Another souvenir he seems to have brought home was a book of ninety-nine paintings of Chinese people and ships around Canton in everyday situations. To each of the very detailed paintings, Mourier added the occupation of the person or type of ship in French and Danish, and wrote longer texts glued in for several of them, also in French and Danish, in detail describing life in Canton revealing a deep knowledge about the society.⁷⁴⁰

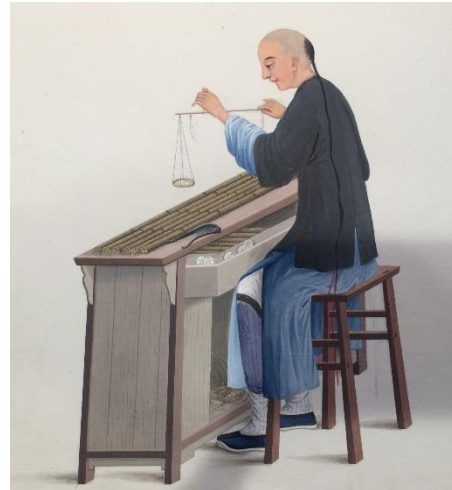


Figure 47 - "Un Agent de Change, ou Changeur / En Sølv Vexler" - The two titles of the Chinese silver exchanger, written in French and Danish by Mourier in a book of 99 paintings of Chinese persons and ships. Kept at the Royal Library in Copenhagen.

⁷³⁶ RA: Asiatisk Kompagni, Afdelingen i København: Indkomne breve fra faktoriet i Canton (1773-1791), 237, December 25th - December 31st 1784.

⁷³⁷ Letter from P.P.F. Mourier to army captain H.V. von Warnstedt, Canton 1775-12-10. In private ownership.

⁷³⁸ One of the paintings is now in the possession of the Maritime Museum of Denmark. It shows the interior of Chowqua's factory (see **Fejl! Henvisningskilde ikke fundet.**), and due to details in the picture, it can be dated to depict a scene of packing tea for the DAC ship CRONPRINSEN in late November or early December 1783. No clear evidence linking the painting to Mourier has so far surfaced, but of all the DAC company traders in Canton at that time, he is the most likely candidate for ordering the paintings from a Chinese artist, given his interest in Chinese culture, art in general and by his sizeable fortune. According to the seller of the painting, Patrick Conner of the Martyn Gregory Gallery in London, the painting is a part of a series of six paintings, created by the same artist within the same period. Finally, according to Paul van Dyke, Chowqua was one of the major suppliers of the DAC of the time of the painting, and until 1782, Mourier's friend Quionqua or Goewqua worked for him, increasing the odds of Mourier ordering the painting of a interior and a scene, he would have been most familiar with.

⁷³⁹ Letter from P.P.F. Mourier to army captain H.V. von Warnstedt, Canton 1775-12-10. In private ownership

⁷⁴⁰ The book of 99 Chinese paintings are now in the possession of the Royal Library in Copenhagen, but without any name or reference to its creator. However, the text is written on high quality paper with a watermark from the Dutch company of J. Honig & Zoonen, which was also used for the Chinese dictionaries written by Mourier, also kept by the Royal Library. Comparing the hand writing of the text reveals them to be similar, although difficult to be certain

On the way back to Europe, he left the DISCO to travel to London perhaps to collect funds he had transferred from China. From London, he continued to France, perhaps revisiting old contacts from his visit with King Christian VII sixteen years earlier. From France, he continued through the Netherlands, most likely visiting members of his family-in-law and practicing his Dutch, before returning to Copenhagen.⁷⁴¹

But Mourier's luck ran out after his return to Copenhagen. In China, Mourier had purchased thirteen crates of silk cloth and nankings on commission from the wealthy manufacturer and businessman Niels Lunde Reiersen in Copenhagen. Reiersen had received a royal permission to import raw silk from China, only paying minimal taxes, but not finished cloth as brought home by Mourier. In the resulting trial, Reiersen's goods were seized and Mourier was fined 1,000 rigsdaler and fired from the DAC.⁷⁴² The matter seems to have been a part of a long struggle between Reiersen and the DAC over the textile trade.



Figure 48 - Peter Poul Ferdinand Mourier and Frederikke Christiane Herbst – depicted sometime after their wedding in 1786. Sources: Mourier was found in Poulsen: *Slægten Mourier i 1928* - the portrait of Herbst is in the collection of the National Gallery of Denmark.

But despite be widowed and losing his job, forty-year old Mourier went on to setup a new life, marrying fourteen-year old Frederikke Christiane Herbst in 1786, the daughter of a high-ranking navy officer. Together, they had seven children, although several died young. At first, they bought a house in the village of Gentofte, north of Copenhagen as well as in Norgesgade in central

whether the writer was the same. In the book of 99 paintings, the author clearly differentiates between a clear Latin-type font when writing in French and a more Gothic font when writing in Danish, hinting that Mourier, if he indeed is the author, was well capable of writing in several different fonts. The Royal Library have no preserved records of who gave the book to their collection, only that it was donated between 1832 and 1891, which makes it possible that it was donated after Mourier's death in 1836. The number of people at this time writing both in French and Danish as well as possessing a deep knowledge of Chinese society is severely limited, that it seems unlikely that anyone but Mourier wrote the texts accompanying the images from Canton.

⁷⁴¹ *Søndagen – et Tillægsblad til "Dagen"*, #9, 1837-02-26, fifth column.

⁷⁴² Bruun, *Kjøbenhavn*. III, 521.

Copenhagen.⁷⁴³ Norgesgade was the home of several DAC-colleagues as well several high-ranking inhabitants.⁷⁴⁴ Former supercargo Søren Lycke, now a grand merchant, resided in this street, along with kammerherre Lindencrone, son of supercargo Lintrup, who travelled with some of the first ships to Canton. Besides related merchants, the fancy street housed count Schimmelmann, Countess Laurwig, and the grand merchant Niels Lunde Reiersen.⁷⁴⁵ Here, the young Frederikke would adjust to a new life as a stepmother for Mourier's children, only five and nine years younger than her, along with servants and a teacher for the children, the thirty-year old theologist Johan Georg Korn. Another interesting member of the household was twenty-five-year old Mariane, called "*A Malabar Girl*,"⁷⁴⁶ probably referring to her originating from the Malabar Coast in India. Was she a servant Mourier had hired in Copenhagen, perhaps to help with the children? Or did they meet while Mourier was in Asia – perhaps serving the family in Macao as well?

After another voyage to the Netherlands, Mourier bought the estate of Aagaard in the western part of Sjælland for 70,000 rigsdaler.⁷⁴⁷ It was most likely here that Mourier's grand book collection really took shape and the walls of the small manor must have been filled with books, paintings, copperplates, and much more.

Sometime after his return from China, Mourier was contacted by his old Latin tutor, Rosenkilde, who was now a poor, elderly man known in the streets of Copenhagen as *Magister Lungepølse*. Rosenkilde was subsequently partly supported financially by Mourier until his death in the late eighteenth century.⁷⁴⁸ Also around this time, Mourier became a member of General Fabrikdirectionen,⁷⁴⁹ a public authority supervising the industry of the Oldenburg Monarchy formed in 1782.⁷⁵⁰ Here, he was



Figure 49 - The copy of the painting of Chinese merchant Quionqua, presented as a gift to the king. Until sometime in the twentieth century, the painting was on display in the Chinese tea house in Frederiksberg Garden, below the royal palace, Frederiksberg Slot. Photo: Slots- og Kulturstyrelsen

⁷⁴³ Public Census 1787, via *Dansk Demografisk Database*, <http://www.ddd.dda.dk>

⁷⁴⁴ *Husregister for København 1784*, section 135-136, Copenhagen City Archive

⁷⁴⁵ The vicinity of Mourier and Reiersen suggest that that Reiersen might have provided housing for Mourier, following the unfortunate events of Mourier's dismissal from the DAC because of goods brought home for Reiersen? So far, no sources have been found to point either way, though.

⁷⁴⁶ My translation from "*Een Malabarsk Pige*", from Public Census 1787, via *Dansk Demografisk Database*, <http://www.ddd.dda.dk>

⁷⁴⁷ Roskildehistorie.dk, <http://www.roskildehistorie.dk/gods/adelsgoods/Loeve/Aagaard.htm> Accessed March 24, 2017.

⁷⁴⁸ *Søndagen – et Tillægsblad til "Dagen"*, #9, 1837-02-26, fifth column.

⁷⁴⁹ Public census 1787: København (Staden), Sankt Annæ Øster Kvarter, , Norgesgade Lit.TT, 2, FT-1787, RA

⁷⁵⁰ From the archival notes of the National Archive, Copenhagen, accessed March 2018: https://www.sa.dk/daisy/arkivskaber_detaljer?a=&b=&c=fabrikksdirektionen&d=1&e=2017&f=&g=&h=&ngid=122632&ngnid=&heid=&henid=&epid=&faid=&meid=&m2rid=&side=&sort=&dir=&gsc=&int=&ep=&es=&ed=

later joined by his much younger brother-in-law, Michael Johan Christian von Herbst.⁷⁵¹

Mourier seems to have been fond of life in the countryside, of improving the manor, of raising his children, as well as enjoying the arts. But his new wife Frederikke, twenty-six years younger than the now fifty-year old Mourier, persuaded him to return the capital, and in 1796 the manor of Aagaard was sold for 112,500 rigsdaler. The family moved to a house in Købmagergade in central Copenhagen.⁷⁵² Among the servants was still the Indian woman Mariane that worked for the family in 1787.⁷⁵³ Once again the neighbours would include several high-ranking merchants such as Fabricius, van Hemert, the Tutein family, and Wasserfall.⁷⁵⁴

A few years later, in 1801, Mourier had a chance to return to some of the virtues of the country life when he purchased a farm called *Bjerregaarden* in the farming village of Valby just outside the city walls of Copenhagen, close to the royal Frederiksberg Castle.⁷⁵⁵ The relatively new farm included a large piece of land, more than sixteen hectares, including a small hill and leading down to the beach in the south.⁷⁵⁶ The price for *Bjerregaarden* and a neighbouring farm was 12,800 rigsdaler in total, a tenth of the selling price of his previous manor. In the following years the Mourier family seems to have expanded and enhanced their country estate, as it seems to have been sold again in 1813 for more than double the amount.⁷⁵⁷ By moving his summer residence here, Mourier seems to be part of a trend where the villages and fields in the area close to both the city and the summer palace of the king were transforming from farms into country estates for the well-to-do Copenhagen elite, although it seems that the top level elite preferred country estates north of the city. Another example of this transformation was the neighbouring farm of Mourier's, which was sold from a farmer to Tønnes Langøe, a highly experienced DAC captain, in 1789.⁷⁵⁸ It is possible that Langøe played a role in attracting Mourier to the area, since they met on several occasions in Canton in the preceding years. In their country house, the Mourier family and their servants would spend the summers, while the winters were spent in their house in Copenhagen.

In 1809, Mourier hired the young student B.S. Ingemann as a teacher for two of his youngest children, Raoul and Adèle Térêze. Ingemann would later become a celebrated poet and writer, and spend his free time creating poetry, not only on paper, but also on the garden furniture of the Mourier family. According to later family sources, Ingemann lived almost like a member of the family, fell in love with the youngest daughter of the house, and was very well liked by Mourier's

⁷⁵¹ Gravsted.dk, <http://www.gravsted.dk/>, Accessed May 22, 2017.

⁷⁵² Public Census 1801, via *Dansk Demografisk Database*, <http://www.ddd.dda.dk>

⁷⁵³ In the census, a woman by the name of Mariane Mathilde is mentioned, aged 39. This fits the 25-year old Mariane mentioned in the census 14 years earlier, so they are most likely the same person. Public Census 1801, via *Dansk Demografisk Database*, <http://www.ddd.dda.dk>

⁷⁵⁴ *Husregister for København 1798*, section 119-123, Copenhagen City Archive

⁷⁵⁵ *Søndagen – et Tillægsblad til "Dagen"*, #9, 1837-02-26, sixth column.

⁷⁵⁶ *Brandtaxationer vedr. Valbys Gårde: 1793. 1827. 1840. 1858.*, 155. Valby Lokalhistoriske Selskabs arkiv.

⁷⁵⁷ *Brandtaxationer vedr. Valbys Gårde: 1793. 1827. 1840. 1858.*, p. 157. Valby Lokalhistoriske Selskabs arkiv.

⁷⁵⁸ *Brandtaxationer vedr. Valbys Gårde: 1793. 1827. 1840. 1858.*, p. 173. Valby Lokalhistoriske Selskabs arkiv.

wife.⁷⁵⁹ Later in his literary career, Ingemann would offer his books with dedications to Mourier's much younger wife. Recent research suggests that the two formative years of Ingemann's life spent with the Mourier family played a significant role in his literary life, as well as the many family connections tying Ingemann and his later wife to company traders and sailors of the DAC.⁷⁶⁰

Among the friends of the Mourier family was the extremely wealthy and powerful family de Coninck – also members of the Reformed Church in Copenhagen. Marie de Coninck – married to the grand merchant and earlier DAC director Frédéric de Coninck visited Mrs. Mourier and her newborn sixth child in the summer of 1793. Her impression of the mother must not have been favourable, as Marie de Coninck later wrote in her diary that Mrs. Mourier “*for each pregnancy becomes even fatter and uglier.*”⁷⁶¹

The two oldest surviving children, Charles Adolph Denys and Elisabeth Jacobine Vilhelmine, both born in Macao, were married and had moved away from Copenhagen. Elisabeth married a nobleman in 1794, while Charles kept the family connection to the DAC alive by marrying the daughter of Poul Frederik Skibsted, director of the DAC from 1789-1812. At the wedding of young Elisabeth, Mourier's old friend Vogelsang must have attended as well, being both a colleague of so many years as well as being a fellow DAC director of Skibsted. Another hint at the links with the DAC and the merchant community was shown at the burial of the extremely wealthy merchant and former DAC director Frédéric de Coninck in September 1811. While one of Mourier's relatives handled the service as priest of the Reformed Church, Mourier contributed with a poem in the newspaper *Adresseavisen*, praising the great deeds of the deceased.⁷⁶²

Besides the continued connections to the DAC, the links to the royal family also continued, as Mourier's brother, Charles Henri, was appointed as a teacher for the crown prince, the later Frederik VI. This family link later led to a long-lasting gift from the Mourier family to Frederik VI. Sometime after Mourier's return from China, he received a portrait of his Chinese merchant friend Quionqua or Geowqua, mentioned above, and Mourier's son Charles decided to have the painting copied and presented to the king as a gift.

An older brother, Frédéric Moise, nineteen years Mourier's senior, kept the close bond with the Reformed Church intact, serving as priest after their father probably until his death in 1786.⁷⁶³ Frédéric's son René Pierre Francois once again renewed the family links to the DAC, as he became one of the last directors of the now venerable company, serving from 1824-1836.⁷⁶⁴

⁷⁵⁹ Niels Kofoed, *Magiens poetik: den litterære fejde i 1831 mellem B.S. Ingemann og H.C. Ørsted i idéhistorisk og filosofisk perspektiv* (Copenhagen: Reitzel, 2002).

⁷⁶⁰ Kofoed, *Magiens poetik*, 106, 109.

⁷⁶¹ My translation from: “*For hver graviditet bliver hun federe og grimere*”, found in the 1st diary of Marie de Coninck, preserved at Historisk Arkiv for Rudersdal Kommune. It was then translated from French to Danish by Torsten Søgaard. Torsten Søgaard, “Marie de Conincks dagbøger 1793-1815,” *Søllerødbogen* (2007).

⁷⁶² Friis-Hansen and Slente, *Frédéric de Coninck og Dronninggaard*, 100.

⁷⁶³ Biografisk Leksikon III: Mourier

⁷⁶⁴ *Hof & Statskalender* for relevant years.

As the number of years Mourier had lived accumulated, so did his book collection.⁷⁶⁵ The more than 3,500 volumes in his library spanned from astronomy, geography, and navigation over to the science of conducting sieges and building fortifications as described by Vauban, to a vast selection of works from classical antiquity. While his interest in books reached back to both ancient Greece and Rome, newer literature such as Burke, Hume, Adam Smith, Voltaire, and others suggests a man who kept himself up-to-date on current trends in not only literature but also in the emerging political sciences. His interest in languages is clearly shown, but his library also reveals interests into quite varied fields such as the workings of electricity, the story of the Knights Templar in the Middle Ages, of indigenous people such as the Lapps in Finnmark, and of business in the descriptions of English trade and Norwegian iron works. Books in the field of religion and theology do not clearly stand out, but several books suggest a serious interest in the upbringing, education, and entertainment of children, seen in works such as *Gulliver's Travels*, books by Rousseau, as well as the *Orbis Sensualium Pictus* by Comenius – often called the first illustrated children's book, published in 1658. On another note, erotic books such as the *Errotika biblion* from 1783 that deals with a variety of what was at the time considered sexual perversions, hints about the practice of the early romantic period of reading such books together in intellectual circles.⁷⁶⁶ Finally, the fifteen years Mourier spent in China clearly stands out. A large number of Western books describe various aspects of the history and politics of the empire, while books in Chinese must have presented quite a novelty for the visitor in Mourier's library along with two Chinese dictionaries, with one written by him. Sometime after his return to Denmark, Mourier contributed to the then new field of



Figure 50 - Mourier was a member of the famous Dreyers Klub, here depicted in 1817 by F.L. Bernth. Mourier is possibly the man in the red uniform to the left. Photo: Bakkehusmuseet

sinology. The young German scholar Klaproth published the journal *Asiatisches Magazin* in 1802, and here Mourier shared his knowledge in three articles; one about music and opera and Canton, one about a Dutch book attacking Chinese culture, and a third providing descriptions of Buddhist monks and ceremonies.⁷⁶⁷

The pioneering efforts of Mourier in learning Chinese and writing a dictionary was noticed by the Danish historian Peter Frederik Suhm, who encouraged one of his students to learn the language from Mourier. The attempt to learn what

⁷⁶⁵ After his death in 1836, a catalogue of the collection was published for an auction in 1837. Here, the bibliographic data of 3558 volumes are meticulously assembled along with hundreds of drawings, copper plates etc. It seems reasonable that the family would have picked out books of their interest, thus not allowing us a complete insight into the collection, but the catalogue is nonetheless a detailed source to what interested Mourier in his time. Royal Library: *Fortegnelse over en betydelig og velconditioneret Samling Bøger ... tilhørende afgangne Capitain P. P. F. Mouriers og Fruens Sterbo*, 1837

⁷⁶⁶ According to associate professor Mads Mordhorst of the Center for Business History, CBS.

⁷⁶⁷ Lundbæk, "Kinesisk con amore," 140.

Mourier's son later called "*the horrible hieroglyph-language*"⁷⁶⁸ quickly failed, however, and Suhm did not encourage others to try again. Suhm and Mourier must have known each other from Dreyers Klub, one of the many new clubs and societies emerging around the time of the French Revolution. Dreyers Klub from 1775 was the most esteemed of these new clubs and was frequented by civil servants, merchants, and literary celebrities such as Rahbek, the Ørsted brothers, Oehlenschläger, and Baggesen. Besides discussion of literature and politics, balls and concerts were held and here a Chinese punch bowl was used for serving drinks. This large piece of chinaware was a gift from one of the club members, most likely either Mourier or a former DAC captain.⁷⁶⁹ In this period, where the ideas of the French Revolution had a significant impact on both public and private discussions among the intellectuals of Copenhagen, Mourier sided with the republican fraction, actively assisting the young author Malte Conrad Bruun during the persecutions of him in the last years of the eighteenth century, before he fled to Paris.⁷⁷⁰ The impression of Mourier both possessing and displaying an interest in the republican ideas is also expressed in his portrait in 50. The eighteenth century was characterised by an abundance of personal decoration both in clothing and wigs as well as everyday objects, such as tobacco boxes and handkerchiefs, for example, decorated to illustrate the status of the wearer. During the French Revolution of 1789 onwards, ideals changed and fashion changed radically into simpler pieces of clothing, expressing solidarity with the people and the new egalitarian ideas.⁷⁷¹ The jacket and long trousers of the working man became the new ideal, and many proponents of the new regime began to wear a jacket of a single colour worn in a somewhat sloppy fashion along with a white necktie – exactly what Mourier has chosen for his portrait that seems to be from around this time.

Mourier's command of so many languages must have been a great benefit as a merchant and scholar, but sometimes it caused him trouble. Such a case happened during the British attack on Copenhagen in 1807, when Mourier went to Bakkegården to prepare it for an eventual occupation by the British troops who had encircled the capital. But apparently, he came too late as Scottish soldiers had already occupied the manor for use as their headquarters. Thinking Mourier a spy due to his excellent command of the English language, that he was a countryman enrolled in the Danish service, they imprisoned him in his own house. Mourier was detained until the end of the bombardment of Copenhagen, worrying of the fate of his family during the massive barrages. After the Danish capitulation, Mourier was released and hurried to the now partly ruined city and found his house heavily damaged, but with no loss of life among his family.⁷⁷²

⁷⁶⁸ My translation from "*dette frygtelige Hieroglyf=Sprog*", from *Søndagen – et Tillægsblad til "Dagen"*, #9, 1837-02-26, fifth column.

⁷⁶⁹ J. Davidsen, *Fru det gamle Kongens København* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1910), 141.

⁷⁷⁰ *Søndagen – et Tillægsblad til "Dagen"*, #10, 1837-03-5, second column.

⁷⁷¹ Tine Damsholt, "Fædrelandskærlighed og borgerånd: en analyse af den patriotiske diskurs i Danmark i sidste del af 1700-tallet" (PhD dissert., Københavns Universitet, 1996), 137.

⁷⁷² *Søndagen – et Tillægsblad til "Dagen"*, #9, 1837-02-26, fourth column.

Along with his myriad interests, Mourier was fond of music, playing the violoncello, flute, and fortepiano in addition to the guitar which he had learned to play during his time in Macao.⁷⁷³ It seems likely that he would have entertained with his new skills at Sunday concerts in the Danish factory in Canton, for as a contemporary British captain wrote in the summer of 1784: “*At the Danish factory, there is, every Sunday evening, a concert of instrumental music, by gentlemen of the several nations, which everybody who pleases may attend. This is the only occasion when there appears to be anything like a general intercourse.*”⁷⁷⁴ Although these musical sessions do not seem to be described elsewhere, they must nonetheless have played a role for expanding local networks and introducing newly arrived traders to the small community.

After his return to Copenhagen he enjoyed the music of the later famous composer Weyse, then the organist of Reformert Kirke, playing fantasies after the sermons. Every week concerts were held in the family residence, featuring contemporary music. For Mourier, the performances must have echoed the many times he had listened to the Chinese music in both Canton and Macao, which he eventually learned to appreciate.⁷⁷⁵

In the last years of his long life, Mourier must have felt his old age as several of his children died, as well as his second wife Frederikke after forty-four years of marriage. In January 1837, he died a peaceful death, leaving a great fortune of 188,000 rigsdaler behind.⁷⁷⁶

Analysis of Mourier

When examining the extremely varied life of Mourier, it is easy to get carried away with a sense of adventure. The sources can be used to paint a picture of a man who easily makes new friends, adapts to new surroundings, and is a highly social figure. But they could also be interpreted in the opposite direction, showing us an inward-looking nerd, happy with his books, his dictionaries, and his poetry and music. A paragraph in the obituary written by Mourier’s son hints at this interpretation: “[...] *he was reserved and a long time to befriend, but this was not due to cold-heartedness, since he felt very warmly for humanity as a whole. It was [...] rather [...] his bashfulness, a certain fear of bothering and being bothered.*”⁷⁷⁷

Another narrative, that only vaguely suggests itself in the course of my research, is a story of Mourier as a boastful liar. In the obituary written by his son, numerous people and famous events are mentioned showing the importance of his father. However, many of these claims are hard to verify in other sources, arousing suspicion, although the chronological distance makes it likely that other factors are at play.

⁷⁷³ Søndagen – et Tillægsblad til ”Dagen”, #9, 1837-02-26, sixth column.

⁷⁷⁴ Shaw, *The Journals of Major Samuel Shaw*, 179-80

⁷⁷⁵ Søndagen – et Tillægsblad til ”Dagen”, #10, 1837-03-5, third column.

⁷⁷⁶ Lundbæk, “Kinesisk con amore,” 129.

⁷⁷⁷ My translation from ”[...] *han var meget tilbageholden og seen til at vorde Veen med Nogen; men dette var ingenlunde Virkning af Kulde, thi han følte meget varmt for den hele Menneskehed. Det var [...] tildeels Følgen af en ham egen Undseelighed, en vis Frygt for at genere og at generes.*” From Søndagen – et Tillægsblad til ”Dagen”, #10, 1837-03-5, fourth column.

In terms of network theory, Mourier is an extreme example of a broker. He encountered a breadth of people of Danish history and had the possibility to tie his observations of the people in his network together for fascinating narratives to be told to his children and grandchildren. In his life, he tied the religious network of his father's Reformed Church together with a network of army officers, and he connected with civil servants at and around the royal court, as well as with northern European scholars from Göttingen. By marrying the daughter of a Dutch merchant in Copenhagen, his network gained a mercantile component, which was further enhanced by his fifteen years in the service of the DAC. Being in Canton and Macao for so many years gave his network global dimensions, including both businessmen and scholars of various European as well as Chinese heritage. Visiting the Netherlands, France, and England again on his return from China, almost two decades after his first visit with the king, must have reawakened old ties, while his years owning an estate in the countryside in western Sjælland provided links to the local gentry. Through his friend von Warnstedt, who had joined the Copenhagen Freemason lodge of *Zorobabel til Nordstjernen* in 1773,⁷⁷⁸ Mourier was indirectly connected to the international network of Freemasons, where several other former DAC colleagues were members. The final network, which he seems to have woven into his massive web, seems to be the new literary and scientific elite of Copenhagen who in the so-called Golden Age dominates the narrative of the mental revival of Denmark after the Napoleonic Wars. To put it short: In the early nineteenth century, Mourier must have been the most interesting man in Copenhagen to join for tea in his vast library!



Figure 51 - The networks mentioned in the narrative of Mourier. Three distinct cliques emerge – first merchants coupled with the Reformed Church, secondly the Copenhagen literary, military, and civil servant-elite, and thirdly an international academic clique.

⁷⁷⁸ Ritzau, *St. Job.*, 2.

But at the same time as being a broker in an extreme degree, not much seems to have been left from Mourier's own hand and very little seems to have been written about the fascinating man. Perhaps Mourier as a broker was most useful as a friend and contact, whose efforts helped others meet and assist each other, rather than him achieving things only for himself? The contrast from the time around the Napoleonic Wars, where his name must have been known to a huge amount of people until today, where not even the smallest entry in *Biografisk Leksikon* tells about his life and network, is immense. Calling on the network theory, it is apparent that Mourier is situated in a structural hole⁷⁷⁹ in the network of Copenhagen's elite around the year 1800. According to the theory, Mourier's position possesses an immense potential, being the only one able to combine and control the information available in his varied networks. But although his wealth seems to speak of success, the absence of Mourier's name in the varied contemporary sources of the time point in another direction. The works of Burts and others point to a possible explanation, namely that every new network a broker potentially ties together requires resources to maintain his position. Therefore, the position of the broker in a network contains an inherent fragility, and perhaps it is here that Mourier encountered problems. To be a full member of these networks required more time and more energy than he could possibly possess, leading to marginalisation and weakening the benefits of brokerage. Being a part of a network provided both benefits and obligations, an example of the latter probably being the employment of the young Ingemann as a tutor for his children, which might have been initiated out of a feeling of obligation towards the grandfather of Ingemann, the old China-captain Swane.⁷⁸⁰

At the same time, as described by Sunderland, memberships of associations and networks do not necessarily spread harmony, but a reduction of trust or even antipathy is also likely.⁷⁸¹ Combined with the problem of maintaining too many networks as in the case of Mourier, the trust and thus capabilities of each network dwindle as the number of memberships rise, although this can be counteracted through the improved attractiveness of an actor who belongs to varied networks. This notion can be explored further when contemplating how small a footprint Mourier seems to have left in the many circles he frequented, at least when viewed through the sources available today.⁷⁸² Even though his Chinese dictionary is preserved at the Royal Library in Copenhagen, no other written works survive him. Perhaps the life of Mourier can be summarised with inspiration from the play *Julius Caesar* by Shakespeare: "*The evil that men do lives after them; The good is oft interred with their bones,*"⁷⁸³ meaning that while a few of the employees of the DAC are remembered by their unlawful actions, such as director Haaber who committed fraud in the company service worth more than

⁷⁷⁹ Burt, *Brokerage and closure*.

⁷⁸⁰ This idea comes from the Danish historian Lone Kølbe Martinsen, who will go into further detail with the early life of Ingemann in a later article, as of 2017 yet unpublished.

⁷⁸¹ Sunderland, *Social capital, trust and the industrial revolution: 1780-1880*, 11.

⁷⁸² A query to the curators of Bakkehusmuseet, the museum of the literary elite of early 19th century Copenhagen, brought no additional information about Mourier, despite him being acquainted with several of the members of that circle, most notably Ingemann, as well as Mourier's house being close to Bakkehuset on the same hilltop in Frederiksberg/Valby.

⁷⁸³ William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar* (1603), act 3, scene 2.

600,000 rigsdaler, others like Mourier whose worth in life as a broker and as a connector of people which must have been immense for many, left little trace after his death, where no more networks could be connected by him.

IV.4 – After the Storm: Ludvigsen

The last period in the history of the DAC has occasionally been dismissed by historians as uneventful and thus unworthy of attention. And while it is true that the five expeditions to China following the Napoleonic Wars pales in number to the fleets of frigates sent off in the hectic 1780s, their company traders are still part of the overall story, their experiences reflect that of their predecessors, and their cultural encounters with their Chinese counterparts were most likely just as complex as earlier on. Therefore, the last microhistorical narrative will focus on company trader Theodor Emil Ludvigsen, who began his career in the *Navigation*-section of the DAC ships before on the final two voyages of the company serving as Assistant in the now tiny *Negotie*-section of the crew, consisting only of a single colleague, Bentley, and himself.

A Narrative of Ludvigsen

Family connections helped pave the way for the young Theodor Emil Ludvigsen. While his parents had lost their fortune in the national bankruptcy of 1813, Ludvigsen's mother's sister⁷⁸⁴ was married to DAC director and merchant Conrad Hauser, originally from Basel.⁷⁸⁵ As a merchant in Marseille, Hauser performed numerous services for the navy of the Oldenburg Monarchy,⁷⁸⁶ and later entered a joint merchant house with prominent Oldenburg merchants in Copenhagen, most of them belonging to the Reformed Church like Hauser himself. In 1778, Hauser became the administrator of the Royal West Indian Trade Society⁷⁸⁷ along with other directors from the merchant and civil servant elite, such as Schimmelmann and Ryberg. Besides leading the company, he also used it to invest some of his vast wealth in the West Indian trade and later invested heavily in the rebuilding of Copenhagen after the British bombardment



Figure 52 - Theodor Emil Ludvigsen, painted in 1829, aged twenty-five. Photo: SMK

⁷⁸⁴ Cecilia Maria, née Ludvigsen (1768-1844), widow after Peter Ludvigsen, employed at the West Indian Trade Society. The fact that they shared last names hints at a possible family relation, possibly cousins. Hauser and Cecilia Maria was married in August 1813. G.L. Grove, "Konferensraad Conrad Hauser," *Personahistorisk Tidsskrift* 4, 3rd row (1895), 11

⁷⁸⁵ Biografisk Leksikon I

⁷⁸⁶ Receiving the reward of the title of Royal Agent by recommendation of Admiral Hooglant, at that time director of the DAC. From Biografisk Leksikon I

⁷⁸⁷ Kongelige Danske Vestindiske Handelsselskab. Grove, "Konferensraad Conrad Hauser," 11.

of 1807. As all his children died very young and he eventually adopted two children, one of them the sister of Ludvigsen.⁷⁸⁸

It was Hauser who suggested to Ludvigsen's father⁷⁸⁹ that his fourteen-year old son should enter the service of the DAC in Bengal and offered to use his connections to the factors at the lodge in Frederiksnagore to provide a position of *Voluntair* for the boy. This must have been seen as a great adventure to the young Ludvigsen, who, according to his own description, persuaded his parents to let him leave and go on board the KRONPRINDESSEN in November 1818.⁷⁹⁰ To pay for his voyage to India Ludvigsen was hired as a ship's boy with a salary of 4 rigsdaler a month, despite his complete lack of maritime experience. After overcoming initial seasickness and enduring the rituals of crossing the Equator for the first time, Ludvigsen arrived in Frederiksnagore, being well-received by the connections of his uncle. While Ludvigsen seems to have enjoyed the time in Bengal with little work filling his days, he had arrived at the very end of an era. KRONPRINDESSEN was to be the last ship serviced in the lodge in Frederiksnagore, and all buildings were to be sold after its departure.⁷⁹¹ So in January 1820, Ludvigsen and the rest of the expedition left for Copenhagen with several passengers on board and even a Hindu cook to prepare their food. On the journey home, an interesting meeting took place at the Cape of Good Hope, where Ludvigsen saw the DAC ship CHRISTIANSHAVN on its way to Canton – the first company expedition going there since the start of the Napoleonic Wars in 1807. Unknown to Ludvigsen at that time, this ship would be his home on the seas for many years to come in service of the DAC.

The voyage home was otherwise uneventful. A symbol of the changing times, of the new technology that would drastically change the relationship between China and the West, was however noticed by Ludvigsen on his return voyage from India. Entering the Sound between Denmark and Sweden, they were greeted by a steamship⁷⁹² with cheering passengers to welcome their return.⁷⁹³ Not soon after, the appearance of the first steamships on the Pearl River would enable especially the British to change the old Canton System from the early eighteenth century into a more colonial dependency.

Seemingly not put off by the harsh living conditions on board the crowded DAC ships, Ludvigsen decided to pursue a career within navigation and passed his first exam in latitude, examined by navy commander Peter Johan Vleügel, from a family of naval officers of Dutch descent recruited to the Oldenburg Monarchy in the late seventeenth century.⁷⁹⁴ The Vleügel family had another DAC

⁷⁸⁸ Cathrine Regine Ludvigsen, born 1803. Grove, "Konferensraad Conrad Hauser," 11.

⁷⁸⁹ Christian Henrik Louja Ludvigsen (1772-1830).

⁷⁹⁰ Ludvigsen, *Erindringer om mine Soreiser og Livs Begivenheder*, 4.

⁷⁹¹ Ludvigsen, *Erindringer om mine Soreiser og Livs Begivenheder*, 7.

⁷⁹² This must have been the CALEDONIA, the first and only steamship in the Oldenburg Monarchy at this time, imported from Britain in 1819.

⁷⁹³ Ludvigsen, *Erindringer om mine Soreiser og Livs Begivenheder*, 14.

⁷⁹⁴ Theodor A. Topsøe-Jensen and Emil Marquard, *Officerer i den dansk-norske Søetat 1660-1814 og den danske Søetat 1814-1932*, Vol 2 (Copenhagen, 1935), 721.

connection, as Peter Johan's brother Cornelis commanded the DAC ship CHRISTIANSHAVN during the Napoleonic Wars, when it became a navy ship.

In April 1822, Ludvigsen and KRONPRINDESSEN left Copenhagen, headed for Canton. This time, his position as *Styrmandselev* - apprentice mate - and status as a non-commissioned officer elevated him on board, both in terms of dining and quarters. Instead of eating with the rest of the crew, he now advanced to the so-called 2nd Table along with seven others. A cabin constructed from sail cloth was available for him and two colleagues of similar rank; Muus and Bergmann.⁷⁹⁵

Arriving in the Pearl River Delta in September, the ship anchored in Whampoa along with several other European ships. Despite Ludvigsen being a part of the Navigation-section of the crew, he seems to have visited Canton several times during his first voyage there. But he also found fellowship with the Chinese, for instance the aging comprador Afog, who according to Ludvigsen "[...] spoke better Danish than our chief surgeon, Dr. Bestle, German by birth."⁷⁹⁶ Afog supplied the ship and crew during the entire stay and Ludvigsen enjoyed visiting him, being treated to tea and ginger.

Sometime after their arrival, in November 1822, a great fire ravaged the European factories as well as 6,000 Chinese houses with a large number of casualties. While Ludvigsen remained on the ship, a large detachment of officers and sailors were sent up the Pearl River to guard the silver still present in the vault, and still secure even though the factory had gone up in flames. But the fire was still a personal loss for Ludvigsen as several crates of wine destined for trade were destroyed in the fire, a gift from his uncle Conrad Hauser, at that time director of the DAC.⁷⁹⁷

At the end of his first stay in China, Ludvigsen along with twelve other officers and company traders from KRONPRINDESSEN were invited to a dinner at the house of Hong merchants Chunqua. The relationship between Chunqua of the DAC was of a special nature since the last expedition of the company before the Napoleonic Wars, CHRISTIANSHAVN 1806-



Figure 53 - The painting of the Hong Merchant Chunqua which was presented to the supercargoes of the KRONPRINDESSEN on Ludvigsen's first expedition to China 1822-23. Photo: National Museum of Denmark.

07, had left large debts behind, and among others to Chunqua. At the same time, various goods had been left in the care of Chunqua till the next DAC ship would arrive, not knowing that thirteen

⁷⁹⁵ Ludvigsen, *Erindringer om mine Søreiser og Livs Begivenheder*, 14.

⁷⁹⁶ My translation of: "[...] talte bedre Dansk end vores Overlæge, Dr. Bestle, en Tysker af Fødsel." Ludvigsen, *Erindringer om mine Søreiser og Livs Begivenheder*, 17.

⁷⁹⁷ Ludvigsen, *Erindringer om mine Søreiser og Livs Begivenheder*, 18.

years would pass. During this time, Chunqua took care of both debts and belongings, and as a sign of gratitude the DAC brought him a portrait of King Frederik VI with the first ship after the war. In return, Chunqua prepared a number of presents⁷⁹⁸ for the Danish king which were received by Ludvigsen's colleagues on board the KRONPRINSESSEN in 1823.

All of this must have been known to Ludvigsen, as the thirteen DAC guests were smuggled in palanquins from the factories near the river to the inner city of Canton behind the great city walls, where Chunqua had prepared a grand feast. Ludvigsen enjoyed the very long meal with his DAC colleagues and six elderly mandarins, sitting next to company trader Hauch who was in Canton for the second time. After a very long and skillfully arranged meal, including performance and shows, the DAC officials were smuggled back to the factory at 2 AM.

A similar number of officials from the expedition went on a tour together on the voyage home.⁷⁹⁹ KRONPRINSESSEN stopped for supplies at the island of St. Helena in the South Atlantic, and during that time the thirteen achieved permission from the governor of the island to visit the grave of the former emperor Napoleon, who lay buried there after having spent six years in

captivity on the remote island. The last residence of the emperor and old ally of the Oldenburg Monarchy seemed to make a great impression on Ludvigsen and his fellows, and resentment towards the British for their treatment of Napoleon and perhaps the Oldenburg Monarchy after the war shines through his memoirs.⁸⁰⁰

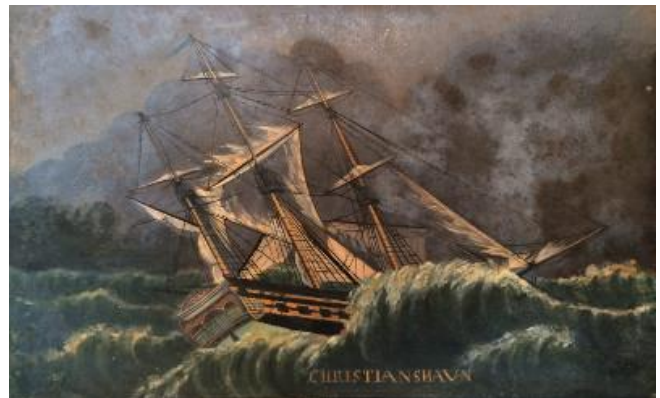


Figure 54 - The DAC ship CHRISTIANSHAVN in hard weather - the small painting is from supercargo Bentley's personal papers. From the Royal Library, Copenhagen

⁷⁹⁸ Along with the painting, Chunqua sent two crates of tea, a personal letter and a Jui - a ceremonial scepter with symbols representing a long life. From Clemmensen, *Kina og Danmark 1600-1950*, 282.

⁷⁹⁹ Ludvigsen, *Erindringer om mine Soreiser og Livs Begivenheder*, 22.

⁸⁰⁰ Ludvigsen, *Erindringer om mine Soreiser og Livs Begivenheder*, 24.

In July 1823, Ludvigsen's first voyage was complete as the ship anchored on the roads of Copenhagen. With his new navigational experience, he completed an exam of latitude and was now fully educated as a navigational officer. However, in the years that passed before Ludvigsen could participate in the next DAC expedition in the spring of 1826, he decided that a career in business would be desirable, preferably in Bengal, where his first voyage had taken him. To achieve this, he used his network with the Muus family. Ludvigsen seemingly first encountered the family on his first voyage, where the then twenty-one-year old Ove Muus were a passenger, destined to take over an indigo factory in Merpore in India.⁸⁰¹ On his second voyage, Ludvigsen shared quarters with the brother of Ove, the then twenty-seven-year old Carl Muus. Utilising his acquaintance or perhaps even friendship with the brothers, Ludvigsen received a letter of recommendation from their father, toll inspector Hans Muus who had worked for many years as a civil servant in Copenhagen,⁸⁰² that he be used at Ove Muus' indigo factory in Bengal. To reach Bengal, he took the position of *Reservestyrmænd*, reserve mate on board the DAC ship CHRISTIANSHAVN, beforehand informing the captain of his intention on leaving the ship and the DAC service in Asia to pursue his personal business goals. As his private cargo, Ludvigsen brought a number of canaries to be sold in Asia, perhaps underestimating the amount of work and provisions needed to keep the many birds alive. Ludvigsen's intention, or perhaps rather dream as indicated by the birds, was to leave the ship at the Cape of Good Hope, where transport to India could easily be found. But due to a weather delay in the journey, CHRISTIANSHAVN could not go by the direct route to China, but instead had to bypass a monsoon by taking an easterly route beyond the Philippines. Ludvigsen was the only navigational officer with experience from this passage, and was thus persuaded to stay on board till Canton and find his Bengal transport from there.⁸⁰³ Upon arrival to Whampoa, a Chinese trader immediately bought all the birds from Ludvigsen providing him with a profit of 450 rigsdaler for sharing his water rations with them on the voyage of so many months. While attempting to find passage on a ship to Bengal, one of the only two company traders fell ill, namely *Negotiebetient* Johan Peter Vogelsang, nephew of Frantz Wilhelm Otto Vogelsang as described in the previous section. Soon, Ludvigsen had to perform a dual role. First as a new company trader, he had to assist his colleague Bentley in the factory with the purchase of Chinese goods. At the same time, he had to take over Vogelsang's other position as *Skibsassistent* or steward of the ship, being responsible for all provisions on board. Although Vogelsang was very ill, he was still able to convey his knowledge of his two positions to Ludvigsen.⁸⁰⁴ The long stay in Canton provided Ludvigsen with a number of



Figure 55 - The last supercargo of the DAC, Richard Bentley (1784-1856), who sailed with Ludvigsen on all his voyages. Photo: Maritime Museum of Denmark

⁸⁰¹ Ludvigsen, *Erindringer om mine Søreiser og Livs Begivenheder*, 7.

⁸⁰² H.R. Hiort-Lorenzen, "Biografiske Optegnelser af Toldinspektør i Kjøbenhavn, Etatsraad Hans Muus," *Personhistorisk Tidsskrift* 26, no. 5 (1905).

⁸⁰³ Ludvigsen, *Erindringer om mine Søreiser og Livs Begivenheder*, 29.

⁸⁰⁴ Ludvigsen, *Erindringer om mine Søreiser og Livs Begivenheder*, 32.

closer Chinese contacts as well as possibilities for making a profit by selling goods in Canton he had privately purchased from the European ships in Whampoa.

In late February 1827, CHRISTIANSHAVN departed from Canton. Shortly after reaching the latitude of Madagascar, company trader Vogelsang died confirming Ludvigsen's new positions on board. The voyage home suffered from harsh weather, sickness among the crew, as well as leaks in the hull, but in September 1827 the old ship with twenty-seven years in the service of the company made it back to the roads of Copenhagen. As new *Skibsassistent*, Ludvigsen was now charged with the task of visiting the relatives of the deceased officers of the expedition, including Vogelsang's wife and three small children. According to Ludvigsen himself, he immediately felt an attraction towards the twenty-eight-year old Cecilie Diedrikke, née Lønborg, four years his senior, which later led to marriage. But behind the love described in the much later memoirs, a number of practical reasons probably were considered by both parties. Vogelsang had left his widow in a good financial state, but she nonetheless needed help to sell the goods bought by her late husband, which Ludvigsen offered her.

A few years passed before the DAC would send out another expedition, this time to Manila and Canton, but once again Ludvigsen was hired, this time as both company trader under the supervision of supercargo Bentley as well as the ship's steward.

As Ludvigsen and Bentley would be the very last company traders of the DAC, alone constituting the Negotie-section of the crew on the two final expeditions to China, a short narrative of Bentley seems appropriate: Bentley had participated in the same voyages as Ludvigsen, but his experience also stretched back to three expeditions prior to the Napoleonic Wars,⁸⁰⁵ making this voyage to China his seventh. Richard Bentley, twenty years Ludvigsen's senior, was the son of an English silk dyer who came to Copenhagen to work at the silk factory of Niels Lunde Reiersen.⁸⁰⁶ While Richard Bentley pursued his career in the DAC, his brother Daniel followed a career in law and as a civil servant, becoming mayor of first the town of Køge⁸⁰⁷ south of the capital and later Copenhagen in 1821.⁸⁰⁸ Daniel Bentley married Cecilie Catharine Lehmann, a daughter of Captain Johan Frederik Lehmann, who also seems to have played a role for Richard Bentley. In 1802, Lehmann became the curator of the then eighteen-year old Bentley,⁸⁰⁹ perhaps following the death of his father. In Bentley's *Album Amicorum*,⁸¹⁰ several greetings from the Lehmann family is preserved, along with greetings from his fellow company trader Johan Peter Vogelsang, his son Frantz Wilhelm, as well as another Vogelsang, Albrecht Wilhelm, suggesting a close link with that family.

⁸⁰⁵ See the *Business Wiki of the Oldenburg Mornarchy* and RA: DAC Roll Books for relevant years.

⁸⁰⁶ Bruun, *Kjøbenhavn*. III, 521. This was the merchant, Mourier illegally imported textiles for, which ended up with him being fired from the DAC, see his narrative above.

⁸⁰⁷ From the newspaper: *Den til Forsendelse med de Kongelige Rideposter privilegerede Danske Statstidende*, 1821-8-6, Statsbiblioteket

⁸⁰⁸ Biografisk Leksikon I

⁸⁰⁹ Copenhagen City Archive: Borgerskabsprotokol 1795-1804, 420

⁸¹⁰ Preserved at the Royal Library of Copenhagen.

Ludvigsen and Bentley seem to have been a good team, at least according to Ludvigsen's memoirs, although he seems to enjoy making fun of the older and more conservative Bentley. At various times, Ludvigsen describes him as "near-sighted," "an able man," "somewhat old-fashioned," "a bit of a prude," "sometimes very aristocratic," "stiffly distinguished," and as one of the "abstemious men,"⁸¹¹ traits which might be recognized in the painting of Bentley above. Bentley's descendants later called him "Kineseren" – the Chinese, since he loved to tell stories about his voyages to China and displayed a fondness for the country and its inhabitants.⁸¹²

At age twenty-four, Ludvigsen used the status of his new position to propose to Vogelsang's widow, and they were engaged shortly before his departure in May 1829. Besides bidding her farewell, he also met with who he called "his fatherly protector, director of the Asiatic Company, the honorable Mr. Schäffer [...]"⁸¹³ The ship was the same as before, the old CHRISTIANSHAVN, but now having undergone major repairs at the DAC shipyard, it was deemed ready for another voyage. After the repair, financed by the state, the more than thirty-year old ship was renamed FREDERIK VI.⁸¹⁴

After almost four months, the expedition reached Java where they picked up supplies. Ludvigsen went ashore, exploring the coast along with the captain and the supercargo. The newly engaged Ludvigsen was eager to set his mark upon the world, and carved the names of his fiancée and himself in several trees as well as in a monument of a late Lord Chatcar.⁸¹⁵ Souvenirs from the animal and plant kingdoms were also collected in the shape of the head and fur of a jaguar, which later was given to the University of Copenhagen, as well as a rooster, which was the victor of fights for money enjoyed by the Malay on the island. The rooster made the voyage back to Copenhagen alive and produced a large offspring. The gardener of the Frederiksberg Gardens, the location of the summer palace of the king in Copenhagen, had requested a hundred pineapple plants, which also made the voyage home to bloom near the palace. Another type of animal brought on board was a small family of what Ludvigsen refers to as "small, handsome musk deer"⁸¹⁶ – although the family of three died after two weeks and Ludvigsen had them stuffed and kept them in his home until they reached the collection of the Sorø Academy. After the arrival of FREDERIK VI in Manila, Ludvigsen's interest in seashells brought him around the city and into contact with many officials, noblemen, and merchants sharing his interest in natural history. During their stay in Manila, their primary business contact was the merchant house Kjerulf & Co, established in 1820 by William Duntzfeldt Kierulff (1800-1841). He was both named after his father Severin Kierulff, who served

⁸¹¹ My translations from Ludvigsen's memoirs of: "nærsynet", p. 42; "en for Mand", p. 43; "lidt gammeldags", p. 63; "noget jomfrunalsk", p. 63; "til sine Tider meget aristokratisk", p. 63; "stift fornemt", p. 63 and "afholdende Mænd", p. 63.

⁸¹² Lehmann, *Til Østen under Sejl*, 180.

⁸¹³ My translation of "[...] min faderlige Beskytter, Directeur ved det asiatiske Compagni, Etatsraad Schäffer [...]" Ludvigsen, *Erindringer om mine Søreiser og Livs Begivenheder*, 36. Ludvigsen's exact relation to Schäffer is unclear. At the time of Ludvigsen's voyage Schäffer, aged 46, possessed a degree in law, was Mayor of Copenhagen (Biografisk Leksikon II), and became legal director of the DAC from 1820. Schäffer overlapped Hauser, Ludvigsen's uncle as DAC director with about five years – that might explain the familiarity. From *Hof & Statskalender*.

⁸¹⁴ Klem, *Skibsbyggeriet i Danmark og bertugdommerne i 1700-årene*, Vol I, 248.

⁸¹⁵ Ludvigsen, *Erindringer om mine Søreiser og Livs Begivenheder*, 37.

⁸¹⁶ Translated from "smukke smaa Moscus Hjorte." Ludvigsen, *Erindringer om mine Søreiser og Livs Begivenheder*, 39.

the DAC in India for almost forty years, as well as his father's business associate in India Christian Wilhelm Duntzfelt (1762-1809), who for a short period near the end of the eighteenth century was director of the DAC.⁸¹⁷ Together they ran the merchant house of Duntzfelt, Bloom & Kierulff from 1782, among others working with de Coninck in Copenhagen and whose daughter Duntzfelt later married.⁸¹⁸ In Manila, Ludvigsen also met the twin brother of William Duntzfelt Kierulff, the medical doctor Christian Pingel Kierulff (1800-1849).⁸¹⁹ Like his brother, Christian was also named after one of his father's business contacts, namely Johan Christian Pingel, a close friend of C.W. Duntzfelt. Pingel's brother in Copenhagen also married a daughter of de Coninck. Thus, the two Kierulff brothers in Manila, whom Ludvigsen seems to have spent a long time, represents a micro-version of the global merchant environment with links to Copenhagen and the Oldenburg Monarchy.

Arriving at the mouth of the Pearl River Delta in late October 1829, the FREDERIK VI was met by a small vessel carrying some of the Chinese servants who had previously been employed in the DAC factory in Canton. Word of the arrival of the ship must have spread quickly or have arrived from the Philippines in advance. Ludvigsen hired a Chinese head servant named Aho, whose family ran a small business in Macao. The wealthy Hong merchant Houqua had also heard about their arrival and sent a large and comfortable sampan to pick up the company traders. Houqua was the cousin of Geowqua,⁸²⁰ who had befriended supercargo Mourier (see his narrative above) more than thirty years earlier. Perhaps this long relationship with the DAC worked to the advantage of the company, for Ludvigsen praises the trustworthiness of Houqua in his memoirs. The varied cargo of the ship was sold, with favourable prices reached for steel, cloth, and amber, and supercargo Bentley and Assistant Ludvigsen repaid Houqua's loyalty by purchasing a large amount of tea from him. Another Hong merchant and trader of tea and sugar, Ponkequa, invited the two company traders and Tronier,⁸²¹ the captain of FREDERIK VI, to his private home and garden across the Pearl River. Although Ponkequa only supplied a smaller amount of the total cargo, the relationship seems to have been quite friendly, even with the Hong merchant's young daughter of six visiting the factory.⁸²²

In January 1830, company traders Bentley and Ludvigsen had finished their trade and made farewell-visits to all the merchants and traders with whom they had conducted business. In the following days, return visits were conducted with customary presents for the company traders as

⁸¹⁷ This ended after a fist-fight with J.L. Fix, also director of the DAC, who accused Duntzfelt of smuggling. Werner, *Christian Wilhelm Duntzfeldt*, 39.

⁸¹⁸ Werner, *Christian Wilhelm Duntzfeldt*, 10.

⁸¹⁹ Ludvigsen, *Erindringer om mine Soreiser og Livs Begivenheder*, 40.

⁸²⁰ Van Dyke, "The Danish Asiatic Company," 62.

⁸²¹ Captain Tronier must have learned from the fellowship of Bentley, Ludvigsen and their Chinese colleagues, as he some years later in 1838 received a citizenship in Copenhagen as a wholesale merchant and became a member of Grosserer-Societetet. (RA: Grosserer-Societetet: *Medlemsfortegnelse (1742-1982)* 2: 1724,1900)

⁸²² Ludvigsen, *Erindringer om mine Soreiser og Livs Begivenheder*, 51.

well as the greeting of “*Farewell and a thousand percent,*”⁸²³ according to Ludvigsen referring to a wish for great profits for the expedition. Near the end of January, the FREDERIK VI left the Pearl River Delta, accompanied by a smaller, private ship, the ELISABETH of Hamburg. Ludvigsen had made the acquaintance of the captain, Wendt, and later learned that the ship made the trip back to Northern Europe in less than four months,⁸²⁴ more than a month faster than the large DAC ship, perhaps hinting at the times to come.

The voyage home experienced a violent thunderstorm, made worse by a broken rudder of the old ship, leading to a visit on Isle de France⁸²⁵ for repairs in April. Here, Ludvigsen’s interest in natural history again lead to new contacts, as several families on the island invited him into their homes to see his collection of Chinese and Philippine sea shells, including the Danish consul, Wiehe, previously a merchant on the Coromandel Coast in India. After Isle de France, the FREDERIK VI sailed without problems to St. Helena for provisions, where Ludvigsen for now the third time saw the last home of Napoleon, and also attended a theatre performance in the local freemason lodge.⁸²⁶

In the final days of September 1830, FREDERIK VI and Ludvigsen returned to Copenhagen and little more than a month later, the now twenty-six-year old Ludvigsen married the thirty-one-year old Cecilie Frederikke Vogelsang, the widow of the nephew of Frantz Wilhelm Otto Vogelsang. A year later she gave birth to a daughter, Petra Christiane. Along with Cecilie Frederikke’s three children from her previous marriage and Ludvigsen’s mother, who had moved in some time later after her youngest child began his training as a merchant, Ludvigsen now had to support a large family. Perhaps this influenced his decision to join the final China-expedition of the DAC. The old FREDERIK VI, the DAC’s only remaining ship, was equipped in the early spring of 1833, and in April the expedition left Copenhagen, carrying not only the traditional cargo of silver and a larger quantity of amber from the Baltic Sea, but also three stock-owners of the company, whose job it was to make sure that no one carried hidden goods to be sold in China, which might hurt the company trade. The three stock-owners left the ship in Elsinore. In September, FREDERIK VI arrived in Manila where Ludvigsen met his previous acquaintances, including the Kierulff brothers. A new merchant house had branched out from Kierulff & Co, namely the Zobel, Buttchardt & Co, which also invited Bentley, Ludvigsen, and the captain for a dinner party along with the Kierulff family. Another new contact was the Danish Captain Løvgreen, master of the brig BALTIC. He had recently arrived in Manila from Australia. But despite all the new and old business relations no cargo was sold, but a few items were purchased for sale in Canton. After a dangerous typhoon, FREDERIK VI arrived at the Pearl River in the middle of October, where they once again were met by Chinese servants and their old comprador, all of whom had previously been hired by Ludvigsen.⁸²⁷ After visiting an old friend, the Dutch consul Bletterman in Macao to inquire about the situation in Canton, Ludvigsen met Captain Burd of the Danish ship NORDEN (see the

⁸²³ Ludvigsen, *Erindringer om mine Soreiser og Livs Begivenheder*, 52.

⁸²⁴ Ludvigsen, *Erindringer om mine Soreiser og Livs Begivenheder*, 53.

⁸²⁵ Present-day Mauritius.

⁸²⁶ Ludvigsen, *Erindringer om mine Soreiser og Livs Begivenheder*, 57.

⁸²⁷ Ludvigsen, *Erindringer om mine Soreiser og Livs Begivenheder*, 64.

section on private Danish trade). Burd possessed an extensive network in Southeast Asia and owned several ships, including the SYDEN, carrying rice from Bali to China. In Canton, Bentley and Ludvigsen met the Hong merchants once again, including the now old Houqua recently married to his twelfth wife. Visiting a young Hong merchant named Sunshing, Ludvigsen encountered the effects of opium, which in many cases replaced the silver brought on the European ships, especially the British from India. In Sunshing's opium-room, Ludvigsen tried a pipe of opium along with the captain, but without success, and the two Danes agreed that it tasted like burned rye bread!⁸²⁸ After a successful trade, numerous dinner parties, and the customary exchange of presents, the last DAC ship in China left Whampoa on the 20th of January 1834. On the way, they met another of the Kierulff brothers, Severin Kierulff, in command of the brig NORDEN and thus, a private Danish ship entered the Pearl River Delta at about the same time as the final ship of the old state-supported monopolistic company left it.⁸²⁹

After an uneventful journey with another stop at St. Helena and Napoleon's grave, FREDERIK VI anchored in Copenhagen in the last days of June 1834, ending the final expedition of the Danish Asiatic Company. Bentley, Ludvigsen, and Captain Seidelin went ashore and later met the DAC directors, who were apparently happy with the successful outcome of the journey. One of the directors, René Pierre Francois Mourier, was the nephew of the still-living but venerable Mourier described above, encompassing decades of company history. The second director at the time was Friderich Christian Schäffer, whom Ludvigsen describes as his protector, while the third and final director was Hermann Christian Müffelman, merchant and member of the Copenhagen *Skydeselskab*.

On the voyage, Ludvigsen had extended his vast experience to Captain Seidelin, purchasing Chinese goods for both of them, and upon their return to Copenhagen selling them for a great profit, much larger than their salary for the entire trip.⁸³⁰

Ludvigsen invested some of his profits in a house in Vestergade, near the west gate of Copenhagen. Lying on the main street from the gate to the old city square, the house, just like its neighbours, had an inn in the back, providing an additional income. At the same time the old DAC was finally dissolved with a price of 143 rigsdaler paid for each stock, of which Ludvigsen also owned some. As a final task for the now-closed company, Ludvigsen was asked to sort the old archive and decide what should be kept for posterity, thus creating the foundation for this thesis. After two years of work, the material was handed over to the archive of *General-Toldkammeret* and from there to the Danish National Archive today.

Ludvigsen's long career in the DAC had ended, although he was only



Figure 56 - Ludvigsen in his old age - perhaps the only DAC company trader to be photographed?
Photo: Geni.com

⁸²⁸ Ludvigsen, *Erindringer om mine Soreiser og Livs Begivenheder*, 69.

⁸²⁹ Ludvigsen, *Erindringer om mine Soreiser og Livs Begivenheder*, 69.

⁸³⁰ Ludvigsen, *Erindringer om mine Soreiser og Livs Begivenheder*, 72.

thirty-one at the time. After investing first in shipping to the West Indies and the Mediterranean, he was offered the position of director of a society offering apartments to the poor, and later, in 1852 also as a commissioner in a Copenhagen insurance company. In 1853, Ludvigsen's daughter Petra Christiane married the officer and civil servant Niels Henrik Holst, who would later be the first General Director of DSB – the Danish State Railway.⁸³¹ After a long marriage, Holst died in 1899, making Ludvigsen's daughter a widow, just like Ludvigsen had become at the death of his wife Cecilie Frederikke in 1882. In 1879, the now seventy-four-year old Ludvigsen had been knighted due to his long work as a director without any salary. In 1896, the ninety-two-year old DAC company trader closed his eyes for the last time, ending an era as the last of the 400 company traders responsible for more than a century of trade between the Oldenburg Monarchy and the Chinese Empire.

Analysis of Ludvigsen

Methodologically speaking, Ludvigsen represents a special case in the narratives of company traders. His voluminous memoirs are unique among the company traders and even though they are written late in life, in 1882 at the age of seventy-eight, it seems clear that they are based on other, now probably lost, material such as personal journals due to the extreme amount of detail in the recollection of events that took place more than half a century ago. At the same time, Ludvigsen is the end of a long chain of company traders, beginning with van Hurk at the first expedition in 1730 and ending with the final expedition and Ludvigsen 103 years later.

In these narratives the feeling of a mature trade and of standards developed over a long time clearly shows through, for instance when Ludvigsen drinks tea with the Danish-speaking Chinese comprador Afog. The concept of *commercial commons*, described by the American historian Douglas Catterall, seems recognisable in the narrative of Ludvigsen. Even though Catterall originally used it on the period from 1680 to the 1750s to describe the decentralised port-based practices, networks, and organisations used to solve problems rather than relying on states or privileged companies such as the DAC, it is clear from Ludvigsen's narrative that the concept is perhaps even more useful in this later period. Ludvigsen's meetings with the Kierulff brothers, as well as the formal and informal interactions with the Hong Merchants, support Catterall's idea of a *shared information culture*.⁸³² For even though detailed instructions from the DAC headquarters in Copenhagen is still carried, knowledge from informants closer in terms of both geography and experience seems to play a significant role as well. The maturity of the trade is also underlined by all the private, non-DAC actors present at the destinations visited by Ludvigsen. The old company structures appear less important, as new private traders are everywhere.

Another insight into Ludvigsen's values and world views comes from his constant collecting and exchanging of animals and plants, in one way fitting into his time characterised by growth in the field of natural sciences and people such as Linné, Darwin, and others making new sense of nature. But on the other hand it is possible that this trend had been present among company traders and

⁸³¹ Biografisk Leksikon I

⁸³² Douglas Catterall, "Metropolitan locales, global commerce, and East Indies capital and credit in the eighteenth century," *Journal of Global History* 12, no. 1 (2017): 93-114.

even sailors for longer, seen, for example, in the detailed books about their voyages to China and life there published by the ship's chaplains Huusman and Boye in the 1730s and 1740s, as well as company trader Lintrup bringing live Chinese fish back to Copenhagen from one of the first expeditions.⁸³³ The very few sources available for a deeper look into the minds of the company traders do not, unfortunately, allow us to determine this.

As in the narratives of the previous periods, personal connections appear to still play a significant role. Ludvigsen's uncle was director in the DAC as he advanced through the ranks and another important link was made when he married the widow of Johan Peter Vogelsang, nephew of the Vogelsang described above. These connections carried advantages, as when Ludvigsen was allowed to bring personal crates of wine to Canton to sell for his own profit. It seems unlikely that it would have been allowed a generation or two earlier. Relevant people who seem well-connected in the network of seamen and traders are revisited again and again like the Kierulff brothers, the same Chinese servants and comprador are chosen, and the same Hong merchants complete the trade for the ships. Perhaps in a time of weakening company structures, the personal networks of the company traders become even more important, especially considering Ludvigsen and Bentley were the only company traders on the last two expeditions compared to the crowds of fifteen people a hundred years prior.

IV.5 – Summary

The narratives of four company traders and directors provide us with a new insight into the complexity of the China trade and the networks necessary to carry it through. As several historians have previously documented, the DAC was perhaps the most central business organisation in the Oldenburg in this epoch, a narrative made more popular through the excellent archival material available at the National Archive in Copenhagen, arranged by company trader Ludvigsen. But as the microhistorical narratives show, the grand company was as much a platform for semi-independent actors to act upon as it was a firm in the modern sense. For van Hurk, the new company became a spring board into the business elite of the Oldenburg Monarchy and provided a career brokering between merchants of Copenhagen and the Netherlands. Vogelsang differs, in the respect that he seems more like a modern employee of a twentieth century firm – in doing his job well, his future is secure – safe, but unspectacular. Mourier was in several respects more like van Hurk – for him, the DAC was a vehicle for travelling, for opening doors, for providing scholarly inspiration and last, but definitely not least, for making a fortune. Despite being fired from the company upon his return to Copenhagen, the wealth gained in China seems to have been enough to allow him to live a comfortable life as estate-owner, book collector, and music lover without working too hard. From the last narrative of Ludvigsen, due to the existence of his personal memoirs, we can achieve a deeper insight into why he actually chose the life of the traveller and of the trader. In the beginning family connections and economic crisis places him in the service of the company, as so many before him. But as the years pass and new expeditions are equipped, he agrees again and again to join, even after getting married and becoming a father. In his memoirs, he is not particularly explicit about the pecuniary side of the voyages, but he does seem to have a healthy sum of money providing him

⁸³³ Henningsen, "Turist i København i 1737."

with the possibility of buying a large house in the city and providing him with income for the rest of his life. Ludvigsen is interesting as a man of his time, with his keen interest in the natural sciences, where his job provides plenty of opportunities to learn more, where he can build a collection of plants and animals, as well as build his network with people of similar inclination.

Shared by all four actors is the sense that while their days were filled with the company business of actually making the trade work, interacting with their Chinese counterparts and each other, achieving personal goals, and developing interests were all also present to a higher degree than what might be expected, illustrating the DAC as not just a company but also a platform.

V – Finale – Overall Conclusion

“You may be as perfect as a man can be, without patrons you will always be sailing against the stream.”⁸³⁴

Professor Simon Pauli, 1640

As noted by Professor Pauli of the University of Copenhagen in the dedication of a new book, without the support of those above, progress in life was difficult, although not completely impossible. Considering the networks of the DAC-directors and the company traders analysed in the previous chapter, clientalism in various forms did indeed seem to play a major role in the business world around the Danish Asiatic Company. But the relations uncovered in the previous chapters are also too complex merely to be described as classical clientalism.

V.1 – Rise and Fall

The Danish Asiatic Company rose to tremendous heights in the eighteenth century up to 1783, with the assistance of the most central, well-connected, and experienced merchants and others of the Oldenburg Monarchy. The profits possible were so great, that the company attracted the top of the business elite who not only managed the company successfully, but also made fortunes supplying the DAC as well as trading the goods brought home from Asia. As in the case of Ryberg and de Coninck, the structure of the company and Copenhagen as a rising entrepôt allowed sums never seen before to circulate in the city. But the end came, perhaps differently than expected, as expressed in the words of the poet T. S. Eliot: “*This is the way the world ends / Not with a bang but a whimper.*”⁸³⁵ For while a narrative arose already at the beginning of the DAC’s crisis in the mid-1780s, perhaps expressing ideas conceived even earlier about the grand company being a colossus with feet of clay and having an arcane structure expressing the mercantilism ideals of old --unusable in a modern, liberal world-- the company lived on for a long time. From the formation of the *Kinesiske Selskabet* in 1730 and until the crisis in 1783, fifty-three years of growth had dominated the narrative of the company. But the final fifty-seven years of the company’s existence would be a long, whimpering decline, seeing the networks of both company traders and directors decrease and the traditional expensive expeditions to China being challenged by new and more agile merchants, some of them even with roots in the old company. But even in its old age, the DAC still fulfilled the needs of the king of bringing revenue, trade, and prestige to his lands as well as the DAC serving as a backup for the Navy in case of need, as seen in the Napoleonic Wars from 1807.

V.2 – Merchants and Traders

The management of the DAC followed the economic situation of the company. When grand profits were possible, grand merchants and top-level nobility participated, but as the company declined so did the level of the directors. Not necessarily on a personal level, but in network terms – being

⁸³⁴ Quoted by Gunner Lind in Wolfgang Reinhard, *Power elites and state building* (Oxford: European Science Foundation, 1996), 123.

⁸³⁵ T.S. Eliot, “The Hollow Men,” in *Poems: 1909-1925* by T.S. Eliot, (Read Books, 2007).

more local and with fewer business interests in the outside world perhaps was fitting for a world slowly moving from cosmopolitanism into nationalism in the early nineteenth century.

For both directors and company traders, family networks were essential and show up everywhere and constantly. The extended family provided a gateway into the prestigious company, and the connections ensured greater levels of trust and carried a responsibility towards the next generation. Other networks, like the Reformed Church in Copenhagen as a hub for the elite business network cannot be overestimated. Even towards the end of the period, when its importance was waning, the network of the church still helped the very last company trader, Ludvigsen, to achieve his position.

At the same time, the actors of the DAC are interesting examples of the shift from nobility to the bourgeoisie. Although this thesis takes place entirely within the absolute state as it appeared from 1660-1848, the actors reflect the development from the absolute power of the king supported by a class of chosen nobles towards a modern, bourgeois democracy. While company traders Lintrup and Fritz purchased noble titles and entered the nobility in the middle of the eighteenth century, not a single of the non-noble directors of the DAC went to the trouble of buying entry to the nobility. While they bought and used titles like *Agent, Commerce=Raad, Etats=Raad*, for example, provided by the king to signify their elevated status in the rank-society of the time, they must have felt as belonging to a new type of nobility – the business man as we still see it today.

At the other end of the spectrum, the role of the servant of a supercargo seems to have been a gateway into a strong career in the DAC. Important supercargoes such as Ruch and Vogelsang began their path in the China trade here, and it seems that embedded in the position was a large opportunity to learn. It seems likely that success in the learning situation depended on individual social compatibility, and the later success of several of the servants seems to suggest that the supercargoes were involved in the selection of their servants.

Finally for the company traders, a similarity appears towards the regulated system of Hong-merchants, which despite its differences it was in many ways similar to trading companies of the Oldenburg Monarchy. As noted by van Dyke, the Canton system had a dual role in both appeasing the Imperial Court in Beijing and controlling the foreigners coming in to take part in the lucrative trade, but also serving the needs of these foreigners to keep the influx of silver going.⁸³⁶ At the same time the DAC was a vehicle for merchants, especially those from Copenhagen, to invest and make a profit at every step of the business of the company. Zooming in on the Chinese merchants and the company traders, a similar duality appears. According to van Dyke, the Hong merchants took care of the legal trade to ensure that money flowed upwards in the system towards the Imperial Court, but at the same time recognized that smuggling was difficult to get rid of without harming the legal trade. Thus, the legal trade and the smuggling, which also served to line the pockets of all involved, were allowed to co-exist. In the company traders, we find a similar duality: The DAC as a firm had to make money for the trade to continue but at the same time, plenty of opportunity presented itself for the company traders to smuggle and trade outside the company, despite it being forbidden on several occasions. Thus, the Hong system and the DAC, as well as the merchants of Canton and

⁸³⁶ Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade*, 1.

the company traders possessed shared dualities, all facilitating the overall trade and their own economic interests.

V.3 – Networks and Microhistory

The company traders are an interesting group to work with, both in a prosopographical sense and as individuals. When examining the individuals connections between them show up constantly, sometimes very obvious but often as possibilities and clues to the great transitivity of the network formed over a hundred years of expeditions to China.

While the sources for a select few are plentiful as to flesh out the company traders to a certain degree, views into their thoughts and minds are mostly absent. With the notable exception of the very last company trader, Ludvigsen, and a few letters from Mourier, the traders are silent now and the historian must settle for drawing silhouettes. Often, it is as if the traders are located just around the persons whose biographies were later written – the great merchants, the civil servants, the intellectuals, the artists, for example. An interesting example of the traders as satellites around a later celebrity is the case of the famous Danish poet B.S. Ingemann (1789-1862). Ingemann's grandfather Lars Swane sailed numerous voyages to China in service of the DAC, from 1764-1769 as a captain. His son, Lars Svane, Ingemann's uncle, joined his father's company, first staying in Canton as a company trader in the 1770s and later participating in four expeditions to China before finally settling down in Copenhagen in 1788.⁸³⁷ Even though Ingemann's grandfather died when he was only two and his uncle when he was fourteen, both their ideas and effects from China continued to influence Ingemann through other relatives. As a young man, Ingemann from 1809-1811 became a teacher for three children of Pierre Mourier, perhaps the person alive in the Oldenburg Monarchy at this time with the greatest knowledge of Chinese customs, language, and business, as described in his narrative above. In 1811, Ingemann met his future wife, Lucie Marie Mandix,⁸³⁸ who most likely was related to two DAC company traders, who again move as unseen satellites around more well-described actors. This clouded visibility of the company traders seems odd when considering the fortunes many of them must have earned from more or less legal opportunities during the expeditions to China. But perhaps the old DAC director Count Thott was right in 1740, as described above, when he outlined a problem of the business life of the Oldenburg Monarchy. Namely that too many businessmen were entrepreneurial enough to make a fortune to secure themselves and their families a comfortable life, but not enough to build a lasting enterprise to the benefit of both society and their descendants.

The close narratives of the four DAC company traders van Hurk, Vogelsang, Mourier, and Ludvigsen also highlights a greater pattern in the Asian trade under Dannebrog. For while in the early decades of the trade China was the only focus, this clearly shifted as the eighteenth century

⁸³⁷ Data on the voyages of father and son Swane found in the DAC Roll Books for the relevant years.

⁸³⁸ A company trader named just Mandix appears in the DAC Roll Books in April 1782, December 1783 and October 1785. He is most likely related to Lucie's father Jacob Mandix (1758-1831), who seems to be of a similar age to the DAC Mandix. Jacob Mandix (Biografisk Leksikon II) was married to Margaretha Elisabeth Hvistendahl, a unusual last name which she shares with DAC company trader Matthias Hvistendahl, who travelled to China three times in the 1740's and 1750's. (DAC Roll Books).

drew to an end, highlighted by the several other neighbouring locations visited first by Mourier and later even more by Ludvigsen. The trade of the DAC thus moved from a country-specific trade, dependent on a single commodity in a single place into a greater integration into the trading system of Southeast Asia, requiring navigation skills, knowledge of the waters, and perhaps even more essential networks and knowledge of the trade and the possibilities in the various locations.

The structure of this thesis as an inverted pyramid, moving from the broad base of the company, then narrowing the focus onto the group of actors, and then finally using microhistory to create narratives about a small group of actors makes sense as both an analytical tool, but also helps the reader understand first the circumstances, and then the actors, and then their networks and actions. But, in retrospect, the order might better be reversed. For while it seems fair to assume that the DAC and the general conditions for businesspeople in the Oldenburg Monarchy provided the framework for the actors, the narratives point towards how the actors were simultaneously constrained by their framework, but also constantly recreating it through their actions. Interesting examples here are Mourier, who despite royal monopolies travels to China with his father-in-law to trade and only later becomes employed by the DAC, showing how the strict rules of the company fell short when presented with the mess of the outside world. Another example is van Hurk who carried the responsibility of the success of the new company on his shoulders on the very first voyage, he himself having to determine if the trade would be a success or not. From a more structural point of view, one might say that if the first expedition had failed economically another might have been equipped later, but given the severely limited flows of capital from the Oldenburg Monarchy at the time it might never have taken off. Likewise the fragility of the old company is exposed when company trader Vogelsang, nephew of F.W.O. Vogelsang died on the return voyage from Canton in 1826, advancing the young and commercially inexperienced Ludvigsen into the place as a senior company trader, a great responsibility, which he himself describes at the onset of the following voyage as somewhat angst-provoking.

V.4 – Closing the curtains

Combing the answers to the research questions provides a narrative about a company that was both similar and different to a modern firm. While stocks and general assemblies point toward a firm, the actions of both directors and company traders illustrate how the DAC was as much a platform for individuals as a single organism controlled by a management. Many company traders and directors attempted to use the company for maximum economic gain. At the same time, important networks outside the company seem to have played a crucial role in who was permitted inside and who would rise in the ranks. Although historians have previously mentioned the influence of the Reformed Church, the prosopography and microhistorical narratives of this thesis show how central this tiny assembly was to the elite business life of the Oldenburg Monarchy. The analysis also shows how the company functioned as a platform not only in regard to individuals, but also as a network hub, tying international networks together to such a degree that the word Danish in the name of the Danish Asiatic Company almost seems misplaced. As I have argued in a recent article⁸³⁹, emerging from the research for this thesis, the company combined interests, skills, and capitals from a number of other

⁸³⁹ Asmussen: “Det Danske Asiatiske Kompagni - en udansk affære?”, 2017

countries. As shown above, the Kinesiske Societet was partly founded by immigrant or second generation businessmen in Copenhagen, immediately drawing upon expertise from the Netherlands to be able to send off the first expedition. With the use of network analysis, I have shown how this knowledge and these skills, so costly bought from van Hurk and his contemporaries from the Oostende Company, potentially remained within the minds of generations of company traders, connected through a transfer of expertise during their long voyages. A major part of the management of the company through its entire existence would consist of descendants of Huguenots who had fled religious persecution a generation or two earlier, bringing with them a vast network of relatives from many parts of Europe. A similar story can be told about the Jewish merchants responsible for much of the silver sent to China – their exile providing a most valuable network around the world. At the same time, the products traded from China were deeply dependent on an international market, with about 80-90 percent being exported after the auctions at the company headquarters in Christianshavn. Some goods went to the Baltic area, but the majority helped satisfy the thirsty British market for tea, making it possible for a company based in a conglomerate state of only two million people to import such massive amounts of this commodity. This process also produced much of the necessary capital for the trade of the company – from British traders in Asia wishing to bring their new fortunes back to Europe. But this dependency also showed the lack of power by the management, despite being as influential and well-connected as they were. For when outside conjunctures shifted, taxes were lifted, wars ended, and politics changed, the company lost its *raison d'être*. Thus, the actors described above can be seen less as free agents shaping the world, but rather as helmsmen trying to steer a ship through a storm.

So while historians have studied in detail the company in Copenhagen, its structure, development, and economy, not least due to the wealth of available sources, it is my claim that such a company cannot be viewed outside of a complex, multinational context – as a hub of different networks tied together by an organisation, that held little value in and of itself.

V.5 – Perspectives Ahead

Much has changed in the last 250 years, but other things remain the same. Businessmen still make a profit on trade with China and a comparison with the modern-day shipping to Asia would be very relevant and the results of this dissertation could be used to ask questions to the present. With studies such as the work of Ellersgaard and Larsen,⁸⁴⁰ it becomes possible to compare the business elite of the eighteenth century with contemporary society, and preliminary results indicate that the modern elite is much more homogenous than the elite of the eighteenth century, which consisted of people from several countries as well as distinct differences of faith. But a study of the modern-day equivalents of Mourier, van Hurk, de Coninck, and Bentley would most likely be hindered by the wish of privacy that is easier to circumvent for the historian studying actors dead for hundreds of years.

⁸⁴⁰ Cristoph H. Ellersgaard, “Elites in Denmark: Power Elites and Ruling Classes in a Welfare State” (PhD dissert., University of Copenhagen, 2016). Anton, G. Larsen, “The Power Elite in the Welfare State - Key Institutional Orders of the Power Networks in Denmark,” (PhD dissert., University of Copenhagen, 2016).

Studying the period, several actors stand out as being obvious for further investigation. In the early period of the DAC, the Norwegian merchant Hans Jørgen Soelberg seems to cry out for more attention, although sources seem very hard to find. The case is better for Frederik Holmsted with his amazing career in all sorts of business ventures as well as his administrative role as mayor of Copenhagen. Holmsted deserves a biography, not the least since he in this pre-modern epoch of the early eighteenth century represents a figure with one leg in the feudal society of old and another in a modern, industrial age. Connected to Holmsted is his son-in-law Chresten Lintrup, or Christian von Lindencrone, as he was called later. Lintrup is the company trader with the highest social escalation, moving from a provincial trader background into a palace in the new centre of Copenhagen. Sources seem to be present for this fascinating character, and a study of him would shed new light on the possibilities of social advancement in the otherwise rigid society of the early eighteenth century.

Later in the period, Ryberg and Duntzfelt have already been studied in detail by Rasch and Werner, but de Coninck represents an interesting challenge. Perhaps the most central businessman of the Oldenburg Monarchy in the era of the flourishing trade, he was also the merchant with the greatest international network around the world. At the same time, his life ties into the administration of the state and a study of his life and networks would require substantial knowledge of the composition of the conglomerate state at the time.

At the end, another perspective ahead is a recommendation of the wiki-technology in collaborative historical research. Sharing notes online in a common database has immense perspectives for historians working on related topics, especially within the fields of mercantile, maritime, and global history – the history of connections and networks. For the open structure of a wiki allows all kinds of information to be entered, even questions, uncertainties, variant spellings, and much more. On the other hand, more work is then required when the information is to be used, but as a way of keeping track of both information and confusion, this tool cannot be recommended enough.

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