

Whampoa and the Canton Trade

Life and Death in a Chinese Port, 1700–1842

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Preface

Until recently, we have had only scattered pieces of information about the anchorage at Whampoa in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It lay twenty kilometres downriver from Canton and was where all foreign ships were required to anchor. The study of the port has been subsumed under discussions about Canton and the China trade in general. While this is perhaps a logical outcome owing to the fact that all trade actually took place upriver, the end result is that we simply do not know much about Whampoa and the role it played. In fact, up until now, we have not even known the exact number of ships that anchored there each year or their gross tonnages. It will be obvious to most business and economic historians that such information is vital in order to effectively place Canton into its broader global context.

The lack of reliable data about the commerce means that—without exception—all economic studies to date on the China trade have been based entirely on estimates, with no way to determine whether the figures are trustworthy. The two main sources that scholars have traditionally depended on for the total number of ships in port are Louis Dermigny's *La Chine et l'Occident* (1964) and Liang Tingnan's *Yue haiguan zhi* 粵海關志 (Gazetteer of Guangdong Maritime Customs) (1839, hereafter YHGZ).¹ If we compare the figures in these two sources, we find many discrepancies.²

In 1757, for example, Dermigny shows fourteen ships in port, whereas Liang shows only seven ships.³ Obviously, it made a huge difference to the administrators of the trade, to the Hong merchants, to the tens of thousands of people who depended on the commerce for their livelihood, and to the emperor's annual budget

1. Louis Dermigny, *La Chine et l'Occident. Le commerce à Canton au XVIII^e siècle, 1719–1833*, 3 vols. and album (Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N., 1964), 521–25; Liang Tingnan 梁廷柟, *Yuehaiguan Zhi* 粵海關志 [Gazetteer of Guangdong Maritime Customs] (1839; repr., Guangzhou: Guangzhou Renmin Chubanshe 廣州人民出版社, 2001); hereafter cited as YHGZ.

2. Paul A. Van Dyke, *Merchants of Canton and Macao: Success and Failure in Eighteenth-Century Chinese Trade*, vol. 2 (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2016), xvii; hereafter cited as MCM 2.

3. MCM 2: Table 2.2, p. 4.

whether there were seven ships in port or fourteen. The higher number meant that the trade might have continued as it had in the previous year (when there were fifteen ships), but the lower number might give rise to a crisis with Hong merchants going broke, and low prices for exports, which would likely ruin many inland suppliers. Considering that this was the year that the emperor also banned foreigners from going to other Chinese ports, followed by a general crisis among the Hong merchants in 1758, it becomes even more important to know exactly what was happening in the volume of the trade each year so that we can explain these other phenomena.

There have been parallel narratives generated by scholars using either Liang's or Dermigny's figures, adding more confusion to an already-complicated subject. Historians outside China have largely depended on Dermigny's figures to interpret the volume of trade, whereas scholars in China have relied largely on Liang's data. While there are many years when Liang and Dermigny's figures are the same or very close, there are other years when there are wide differences. Obviously, using one or the other data will yield varying results. But even when Liang and Dermigny's figures are the same, how do we know both are not in error?

Without an accurate and reliable count of the number of ships at Whampoa and their approximate tonnages, we will never be able to resolve the ambiguities surrounding this discussion. Because Canton was such an important port in the rise of international commerce in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, before we can understand or interpret that phenomenon—in a global context—we need to know exactly what happened at Whampoa.

The Need for a Reliable Ship List

The study of the China trade has made big advances in recent years, and with all the digitized records now available, it is possible to assemble a more reliable list of ships. Part of the problem with Dermigny's and Liang's figures has been the difference between the solar and lunar calendars, respectively. Dermigny's list shows the ships in port for a 365-day year, whereas Liang's list shows ships in port for a 355-day year. Of course, there were also leap years. Because we have not had reliable arrival dates for the ships, it has been impossible to evaluate the trade in either calendar system, let alone compare the differences between the two.

Liang's reporting period might begin on January 1 and end on December 21 one year, but then the next year it would begin on January 11 and end on December 31. Liang's reporting period keeps moving forward until it begins in October and ends in September. Liang had no choice but to assemble his data in this way because the primary sources were also based on a 355-day reporting period, which was the standard practice among all officials in China.

In order to compensate for this discrepancy, we needed to know when each ship arrived in China, which is information that neither Dermigny nor Liang had access to. My new data, however, contains arrival dates (and departure dates, when

available) for every ship. Having been more accustomed to the solar calendar than the lunar calendar, I naturally attempted to compare my new data with Liang's figures by forcing his numbers into a 365-day year. This effort proved entirely unsuccessful. Liang did not specify when the ships arrived, so logically there was no way to manipulate his numbers so that they fit into a solar calendar. No matter how I restructured his figures, such as eliminating a year and distributing those ships over ten years in each direction, the figures always came out grossly out of sync with reality.⁴

It became obvious that the only way I could make meaningful comparisons between my new ship figures and Liang's numbers was to organize the data according to the lunar calendar. In order to do this, however, I needed to know exactly when every ship arrived. It has taken more than thirteen years to assemble this data, but now we can indeed make those adjustments. When making comparisons with Liang's figures, I use the lunar calendar. When comparing the data with Dermigny's figures and when discussing the ships and the volume of trade in general, I have arranged the numbers according to the solar calendar.

Readers will logically question why the data in Appendixes 1.2a–b begin in 1720 and end in January 1816. Why not begin in 1685, with the establishment of the Canton customs office, and end in 1842, with the opening of the treaty ports? That approach would indeed make more sense. Unfortunately, the available archival material does not allow such an outcome. There are insufficient data available to confirm the total number of ships at Whampoa for the years before 1720 and for the period from February 1816 to October 1827 (see discussion in Appendix 1.1a). Rather than assemble a list that was reliable for some years and not for other years, I decided to limit the collection of data to the period from 1720 to January 1816. In those years it is possible to confirm the total number of ships.

On 8 November 1827, the first issue of the *Canton Register* was published, which, among other things, recorded all ship arrivals and departures in the Pearl

4. As an example of what happens when Liang's figures are forced into the solar calendar, see Ni Yuping, *Customs Duties in the Qing Dynasty, ca. 1644–1911* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), Appendix B, 'Customs Revenue Data for Yuhei Guan, 1723–1911', Table B.1. In this table, Ni lists the revenues collected from the Canton trade. The only source he gives for the data is 'All kinds of archives'. But when we compare the numbers with those shown in the YHGZ, we see that many of them are the same. However, what Ni did not mention is that the data in the original sources are organized according to the lunar calendar, but he shows them as being solar years. As a result, many of the figures are attributed to the wrong years. In order to make up for the discrepancies between the two calendar systems, every so often Ni combines two lunar years into one. The figures in Table B.1 for 1781, 1814, and 1846, for example, are each for two lunar years, but Ni shows them as being figures for one solar year. Of course, he did not mention that he had manipulated the data. Because Ni incorrectly forced the figures into the solar year, and failed to give any references, the entire table is useless. While Ni's data provides a general view of the long-term trends of the trade, individual years are inconsistent and unreliable. The only way it works for Canton is to rearrange the solar data so that it fits into the lunar year, but in order to do that, we need to know the arrival date of every ship.

River delta. From that date forward, the numbers of ships coming and going can be obtained from this source, or from later newspapers such as the *Chinese Courier* or the *Canton Press*. With the help of the American and other private trade records, it might be possible, one day, to confirm the number of ships at Whampoa for some years from 1816 to 1827. That work will undoubtedly take many years to complete, and in the end might still end with insufficient data to confirm the numbers each year.

As any maritime historian will likely admit, it is next to impossible to assemble indisputable tonnage figures. This is the case because there were different ways of calculating and recording the size of vessels. Some companies such as the Dutch, Danes, and Swedes used 'lasts' instead of tons, and their lasts were of different sizes. Countries that used tons as their unit of measure also had varying sizes for the ton. Moreover, owners often underreported the registered size of their ships by 10 percent or more in order to save on the duties they had to pay in each port. Many of the tonnage figures in Appendixes 1.2a–b are just visual estimates, which could also vary widely. One person might look at a ship and determine it to be 300 tons, a second person might see it as 400 tons, and a third person, as 500 tons. Some tonnage figures also include the living and storage areas aboard ship, such as the cabins, gangways, bunk and hammock areas, lazarette, gunroom, gun deck, rice room, bread room, water room, galley, henhouses, and pens for livestock including ducks, turkeys, geese, cows, pigs and sheep. Other tonnage figures only include the cargo carrying capacity of the ship, which include the hold and maybe ballast space, as well as other areas in the ship where cargo could be stowed, such as between decks. Then other tonnage figures might omit these other stowage areas, and only include the hold, minus the space needed for ballast. Moreover, before 1774, it was common practice for English East India Company's (EIC) shipowners to record most of their ships as 499 tons because if they were 500 tons, then they had to carry a chaplain aboard. In reality, many of those ships were actually 600, 700, or 800 tons.⁵

In Appendixes 1.2a–b I have listed other tonnages that I found in the records for each ship in a separate column so readers can see how they differ from one observer to the next. The numbers in black were extracted from the original sources. Figures in red are my estimates. For those latter ships, I found no information in the records so I just came up with a probable size. Thus, unlike the numbers of ships, which are reliable and can be confirmed, the aggregate tonnages in Appendixes 1.2a–b are only estimates and should not be considered as accurate representations of the true size of every vessel. Nevertheless, now that we have reliable data on the number of ships, it is possible to assemble a more reliable estimate of their aggregate tonnages.

5. Paul A. Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade: Life and Enterprise on the China Coast, 1700–1845* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005; repr., 2007), 214n48.

Recent publications on Whampoa

In *The Canton Trade* (2005) I include new information about Whampoa and the Chinese workmen who were engaged there each year.⁶ In the English translations of the Dutch East India Company's (VOC) *Canton-Macao Dagregisters* from 1762, 1763 and 1764, there is also much information about activities at Whampoa.⁷ These annotated translations were published in 2006, 2008, and 2009, respectively. They are still in print today and available to order or can be consulted in several libraries in the United States and Europe.⁸

In a recent article, I discuss the new sea routes to China that were established in the mid-eighteenth century, which enabled ships to arrive at Whampoa all times of the year.⁹ In other articles I discuss the problem of death and desertion at Whampoa and efforts that were made to find enough sailors so that the foreign ships could return home without fear of having an insufficient crew to operate them.¹⁰ The large East Indiamen of the European East India companies usually required a crew of 120 to 150 men, with the bare minimum being 100 men. When seamen died, crew sizes dwindled, and then captains needed to come up with ways to entice other sailors to join their ship.

In an article about the 'Floating Brothels' at Whampoa (2011), and in another article about the 'Smuggling Networks' in the delta (2012), I discuss both legal and illegal activities at Whampoa, with details about prostitution and persons involved in contraband. In both volumes of the *Merchants of Canton and Macao* (2011 and 2016), I include references to activities at Whampoa.¹¹ In another article about the

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6. Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade*.
 7. Paul A. Van Dyke and Cynthia Viallé, *The Canton-Macao Dagregisters, 1762* (Macao: Macao Cultural Institute, 2006); Paul A. Van Dyke and Cynthia Viallé, *The Canton-Macao Dagregisters, 1763* (Macao: Macao Cultural Institute, 2008); Cynthia Viallé and Paul A. Van Dyke, *The Canton-Macao Dagregisters, 1764* (Macao: Macao Cultural Institute, 2009); hereafter cited as CMD 1762, 1763, and 1764, respectively. Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade*.
 8. These translated *dagregisters* are still in print and can be ordered from the Cultural Affairs Bureau of the Macao S.A.R. Government at this address: <http://www3.icm.gov.mo/gate/gb/www.icm.gov.mo/deippub/publicationE.asp> (accessed 18 February 2019). See also <http://www.gcs.gov.mo/showNews.php?DataUcn=30741&PageLang=E> (accessed 18 February 2019).
 9. Paul A. Van Dyke, 'New Sea Routes to Canton in the 18th Century and the Decline of China's Control over Trade', in *Haiyang shi yanjiu* 《海洋史研究》 [Studies of maritime history], vol. 1, ed. Li Qingxin 李慶新 (Beijing 北京: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe 社會科學文獻出版社, 2010), 57–108.
 10. Paul A. Van Dyke, 'Operational Efficiencies and the Decline of the Chinese Junk Trade in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries: The Connection', *Shipping Efficiency and Economic Growth, 1350–1800*, ed. Richard Unger (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 223–46; and Paul A. Van Dyke, 'A Ship Full of Chinese Passengers: *Princess Amelia's* Voyage from London to China in 1816–1817', in *Early Modern East Asia. War, Commerce, and Cultural Exchange*, ed. Kenneth M. Swope and Tonio Andrade (New York: Routledge, 2018), 166–96.
 11. MCM 2; and Paul A. Van Dyke, *Merchants of Canton and Macao: Politics and Strategies in Eighteenth-Century Chinese Trade*, vol. 1 (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011); hereafter cited as MCM 1.

'Canton Linguists', I discuss the many pleasure trips that local and visiting Chinese officials made to Whampoa to gain a glimpse of the foreign vessels.¹² In an article about 'Hoppong Tang Ying', Chao Huang and I discuss some of the visits that that official and his son made to Whampoa to measure the ships, and how foreign captains greeted them.¹³ In another article, I discuss the rise of Chinese sailors aboard foreign ships from the 1780s onwards, and the use of lascar seamen, all of which is part of Whampoa's history.¹⁴ Other authors have also added to our knowledge of the port.

Evan Lampe, in his book *Work, Class, and Power in the Borderlands of the Early American Pacific: The Labors of Empire* (2014) includes a chapter entitled 'The Canton Gated Community: Workers, Elite, and the China Trade' which, among other things, discusses life at Whampoa.¹⁵ While Lampe does a fairly nice job in his book explaining life at sea, he does not do so well when discussing China. This outcome is partially owing to the author's obsession with class divisions and conflicts and partially the result of the author's failure to consult many of the books and articles on the subject.¹⁶ Because of these prejudices and omissions, Lampe presents a rather distorted view of the trade and the port. He suggests that 'the Canton system was divided along class lines that were as powerful as the walls dividing China and the West'.¹⁷ The so-called merchant class (which seems to include both foreign and Chinese) 'scorned the poor Chinese, the Vagabonds, and boat people' to the point that the merchants—in cooperation with the Chinese officials—effectively excluded the common people (Chinese and foreign alike) from benefitting from the trade.¹⁸ Even though I give Lampe credit for bringing Whampoa more succinctly into the discussion, his less-than-adequate research and his ideologically charged conclusions only add more myths to an already-muddled subject. This unfortunate outcome could have been easily avoided if he had paid closer attention to the literature that was available to him in the very libraries where he did his research.¹⁹

12. Paul A. Van Dyke, 'The Canton Linguists in the 1730s: Managers of the Margins of Trade', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong* 57 (September 2017): 1–29.

13. Chao Huang and Paul A. Van Dyke, 'Hoppong Tang Ying 唐英 1750–1751 and the Development of the Guangdong Maritime Customs', *Journal of Asian History* 51, no. 2 (2017): 223–56.

14. Van Dyke, 'Ship Full of Chinese Passengers', 166–96.

15. Evan Lampe, *Work, Class, and Power in the Borderlands of the Early American Pacific: The Labors of Empire* (Lanham: Lexington, 2014), 117–74.

16. For example, he missed these very important publications: Christiaan J.A. Jörg, *Porcelain and the Dutch China Trade* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982); Anne Bulley, *Free Mariner: John Adolphus Pope in the East Indies, 1786–1821* (London: British Association for Cemeteries in South Asia [BACSA], 1992); and Anne Bulley, *The Bombay Country Ships, 1790–1833* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2000).

17. Lampe, *Work, Class, and Power*, 150.

18. Lampe, *Work, Class, and Power*, 121.

19. Lampe devotes several paragraphs in his book to criticizing Jacques Downs, who to date still has the most thoroughly researched study on early Sino-American trade and interactions (see Lampe, *Work, Class, and Power*, 118–21). While I do not agree with Downs's religious condemnation of the trade (being a result of greed and sin), Lampe essentially does the same thing by allowing his ideology, rather than the facts, to define the history.

A couple of other recent studies also have sections on Whampoa. Susan Schopp devotes several pages to the port in her PhD dissertation on Sino-French trade in the eighteenth century (2015).²⁰ She adds new information about the anchorage from French sources. While Maria Mok's recent PhD dissertation (2017) is focused on trade paintings and export art, she also brings out new data about Whampoa.²¹ In the process of examining and discussing the paintings that were drawn of the anchorage—most of which date to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries—Mok talks about various aspects of life in the port and marine activities up and down the Pearl River. It was not her intention to discuss Whampoa as a subject in its own right but rather as a means to explain what was happening (or not happening) in the pictorial scenes. More recently, Benjamin Asmussen completed his dissertation on the Sino-Danish trade, which has quite a lot of information about Danish shipping at Whampoa.²² Lisa Hellman has provided us with many new bits and pieces of information about life at Whampoa in her study of the foreign community at Canton. Much of her information was gleaned from Swedish sources, which are full of insightful details and have been largely under-used or ignored in the past.²³

Lampe, Schopp, Mok, Asmussen, Hellman, and others have added to our understanding of Whampoa, but many ambiguities remain which have pointed to a need for a thorough study of the port. There has been a general misperception by authors that sailors stayed at Whampoa and only senior officers resided in Canton.²⁴ As I have shown in previous studies, and as will be shown in many examples in the following chapters, common seamen were continually going back and forth between

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20. Susan E. Schopp, 'The French in the Pearl River Delta: A Topical Case Study of Sino-European Exchanges in the Canton Trade, 1698–1840' (PhD diss., Dept. of History, University of Macau, 2015). Schopp's study is now being prepared for publication as Susan E. Schopp, *Sino-French Trade at Canton, 1698–1842* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2020).
 21. Maria Kar-wing Mok 莫家詠, 'Xiěshí yù xiǎngxiàng zhī jiān: Guǎngzhōu shāngguǎn jì huángbù bódì wàixiāo huà de shǐliào yìyì' 寫實與想像之間：廣州商館暨黃埔泊地外銷畫的史料意義 [Between realism and imagination: The historical meaning of Canton and Whampoa export paintings] (PhD diss., Dept. of History, Sun Yat-sen University, 2017). Maria is presently revising the dissertation for publication.
 22. Benjamin Asmussen, 'Networks and Faces between Copenhagen and Canton 1730–1840' (PhD diss., Center for Business History, Department of Management, Politics & Philosophy, Copenhagen Business School, 2018). Benjamin is presently revising the dissertation for publication. It will appear first in Danish as *Kinafarene – mellem Kongens København og Kejserens Kina*. (Copenhagen: Gad, 2019). He will publish an English version at a later date.
 23. Lisa Hellman, *This House Is Not a Home. European Everyday Life in Canton and Macao, 1730–1830* (Leiden: Brill, 2019).
 24. 'Most officers and all sailors lived at Whampoa. The only foreigners in Canton were the supercargoes, their servants and slaves'. Hellman, *This House Is Not a Home*, 85. If these statements were true, none of the ships would get unloaded or loaded, because captains, supercargoes, and their servants, did not physically handle cargo themselves, and they certainly did not row their own boats. The moving of baggage, furniture, silver chests, import cargoes and people between the two places was done primarily by foreign seaman, and many of those men stayed in the factories while their ships were at Whampoa.

the two localities to deliver baggage, furniture, money, provisions, water, letters, people, and cargo. Foreign seamen stayed in the factories as guards; they helped with the packing, loading, and unloading; and they manned the boats whenever the captains or supercargoes needed to make a trip downriver. One would think that these interactions would be obvious, considering that we have always known about these daily routines. For some reason, these activities have largely been overlooked by scholars, to the point that common seamen have been removed from discussions about Canton even though they were there all along.

Many questions remain: Why was there such widespread desertion? Did daily diets, wages, and ill treatment aboard the ships give rise to more desertion, or were there other causes? How did sailors support themselves after they left their ships? How did captains get enough men to fill out their crews after men deserted? Owing to pollution flowing downriver, foreigners could not drink the river water at Whampoa or at Canton, so where did they get their fresh water every day? How was the shipping of cargo between the two locations organized, and how many people did it involve? Did sailors have to work all day every day, or did they get a break from time to time, to go on shore leave? If they went on shore leave, then were the men also paid their wages so they had money to spend? How were problems between seamen and local Chinese handled at Whampoa, such as thefts and confrontations? With so many ships lying at anchor, it was perhaps inevitable that there would be collisions, and when that happened, how were the damages settled? Were there curfews at Whampoa as well, where all sailors were restricted from leaving their posts, or could they roam about as they pleased aboard the ships and onshore? What kinds of interactions did common sailors have with local Chinese? How were crimes solved aboard the ships and on the shore at Whampoa? How were common seamen buried, and did religion have any bearing on how or where a person was interred? Was there any type of suicide prevention or methods used to help seamen recover from emotional and mental illnesses? What health practices were observed aboard ships at anchor and in the bankshalls onshore? What were the duties and responsibilities of chaplains at Whampoa, and how did they determine what type of funeral would be granted to a seaman?

Obviously, there are many other topics, which cumulatively show that we really know very little about life at the anchorage. Hellman has recently clarified some issues, but unfortunately her book did not come out until I was doing the final revisions to this manuscript. Owing to publication deadlines and limitations, I have not been able to fully incorporate everything she has discussed into this present study. Lampe tried to address some of the issues mentioned above in his book, but with incomplete and unconvincing results. Mok begins to show in her study that there was much more going on at Whampoa than we previously understood.²⁵

25. Hellman, *This House Is Not a Home*; Lampe, *Work, Class, and Power*; Mok 莫家詠, 'Xiěshí yù xiǎngxiàng zhī jiān.

With all the new bits and pieces of information that have recently come out about Whampoa, it has become increasingly obvious that a thorough study was needed to analyse what was actually going on at the port on a daily basis. Only then could we begin to answer some of these questions.

The Present Study

The origin of the present study can be traced back to the assembling of new ship data, which began in 2006. As I mentioned in the preface of the second volume of *Merchants of Canton and Macao*, I needed to have an accurate count of ships and their national distributions in order to understand better the pressures placed on Chinese merchants. When the British, French, Ostend, Swedish, Dutch, or Danish ships failed to show up, or if the number of ships from those nationals was reduced, then obviously the merchants who traditionally supplied those foreigners with products were likewise affected. In the process of collecting ship data, I found an enormous amount of new information about the social, political, and commercial activities, as well as operational structures that were supporting the foreign community at Whampoa, which led to the writing of this book.

Introduction: Whampoa and the Canton Trade

Canton was the port where all trade was transacted, but Whampoa was where the merchandise was actually imported and exported. From a dozen or so ships in the 1720s, the trade grew to upwards of sixty or more ships in the 1770s, and fifty to a hundred ships by the turn of the nineteenth century. The total volume of the foreign trade at Whampoa went from around 5,000 tons in the 1720s to more than 40,000 tons in the early 1800s. The duties collected from the trade went from about 400,000 taels in the 1750s to 1.2 million taels in the 1810s. It was very much in the interests of the governor general and customs superintendents (Hoppos) in Canton to maintain those revenues for the sake of their future careers.

There was a dramatic shift in the composition of the trade in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, which has not been well-understood in the past. As is pointed out in Chapter 1, from 1784 onwards, the British gained the upper hand in the trade with no other company being able to challenge the EIC's influence over the commerce. This was a very different situation from earlier years, when mainland European companies competed with the EIC. While there was an increase in the number of small private ships arriving at Whampoa from the 1770s onward, they were not united and could not fill the void left behind by the departing East India companies. By 1800, the British were supreme and became bolder in making changes that they thought were needed. The EIC supercargoes had the power to make or destroy any of the Hong merchants overnight if they so desired, and they became more aggressive in other matters as well.

While Chinese merchants did what they could to keep a check on the EIC's control over their lives, they were largely unsuccessful which led to several of them wanting to retire from the trade. But even in that act, the EIC now had the power to counter their requests and insist that they stay in the trade. The active merchants knew well that they needed the EIC to survive and did their best to stay in the company's good favour. Qing officials also saw the company increasingly more as a threat as it gained more power and influence over the commerce. On the one hand, governor generals and Hoppos had to accommodate the British in order to keep the trade revenues flowing to Beijing, but on the other hand, they did what they could to limit the EIC's control over the commerce. This led to a love-hate relationship

developing between the British supercargoes and the Chinese authorities where complaints were thrown back and forth accusing each other of impositions and injustices, while at the same time, both sides doing what they could to prevent the disputes from damaging the trade.

In the past, historians have often interpreted these exchanges as an East-West divide, with China pitting itself against the foreigners. From the new trade data presented here, however, we can see clearly that many of these conflicts were the product of an Anglo-Sino divide. Qing officials were not trying to hinder or discourage other foreigners from coming to China. In fact, it was those persons who were needed to bring a balanced competition back into the foreign trade. From the early eighteenth century, Qing officials had maintained the policy of keeping the trade competitive and not allow any entity—whether it be a Chinese Hong merchant or a foreign company—to gain control over any part of the commerce. Tighter restrictions were introduced in the early nineteenth century to keep the EIC in check, and were not intended to negatively impact other legal traders. Smugglers and pirates, on the other hand, were not welcomed and some of the restrictive measures were introduced in order to hinder those persons. Except for the Russians and Japanese, who had treaties to trade in other Chinese ports, all other foreigners were openly welcomed at Whampoa.¹

In many ways, Whampoa was the perfect harbour. It was an inland port about fifty kilometres from the coast, so it provided safety for ships during typhoons and inclement weather; it had a very large anchorage with deep enough water to accommodate the largest sailing vessels of the time; it was twenty kilometres from Canton and out of range of cannon fire; it was about forty kilometres downriver from the geographical fall line, which meant that cargo and passenger boats could reach the port by simply riding the tides upriver and following the currents downriver. Because there were two sandbars below Whampoa that needed to be crossed at high tide and required the assistance of experienced Chinese navigators (Macao pilots), the Hoppo could decide which ships would be allowed in and out of the harbour by simply controlling the pilots.

Whampoa harbour was sparsely populated with many hills and vast areas set aside for rice cultivation, so it was a good place to keep foreign seamen out of trouble (as shown in Plates 1, 2, and 3). There were open areas where the men could go on leisurely walks that were a safe distance from local villages. There was virtually nothing in the area that foreigners could damage, if they should happen to go on a drunken spree in search of excitement. There were plenty of boat people in the area to provide laundry services to the foreign fleet, and of course, prostitution was ever present. Freshwater was available on the islands, where many animals were raised

1. For the diversity of private persons involved in the trade at Whampoa, many examples can be found *The Private Side of the Canton Trade, 1700–1840: Beyond the Companies*, ed. in Paul A. Van Dyke and Susan E. Schopp (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2018).

As was the case in most major seaports at the time, customs officers—known in Western ports as ‘tidewaiters’—were stationed next to each foreign ship to guard against smuggling. Foreigners usually referred to these men as Hoppomen, Jack Hoppo, alongside mandarins, and other names.² Two Hoppomen boarded each ship at Bocca Tigris. After the vessel anchored at Whampoa, the men moved into two separate sampans that were fastened to each side of every ship, at the stern. In Chinese, the tidewaiters were known as *yachuanguan* 押船官 or *cangkouguan* 艙口官 and their boats, *yachuanguan ting* 押船官艇 or *cangkou chuan* 艙口船.³ The tidewaiters’ boats were part of the scene at Whampoa from the very beginning of the trade in the late seventeenth century, but they rarely show up in paintings of the port. One exception is Plate 2, which shows a few of these boats, on one side of some ships. According to practice, however, there should be two sampans, and every ship would have them, without exception.

As long as the Hoppomen were incorruptible, they were effective checks on smuggling. From their vantage points on each side of the ships, they could see everything that was loaded and unloaded, as well as all persons coming and going. However, as I have shown in another study, many of the tidewaiters succumbed to the temptation of bribes and other forms of illegal activity which undermined the Hoppo’s control over the trade.⁴ Part of the problem with regulating corruption was the lack of checks and balances that could reveal cracks in the administration. Examples below show the Hoppomen selling liquor to the crews, purchasing stolen goods from foreign seamen, and accepting bribes in exchange for turning a blind eye to smuggling.

There were certain procedures that needed to be followed in the mooring and unmooring of the ships at Whampoa in order to prevent running aground and collisions. Nonetheless, despite the precautions taken, accidents still occurred. Ships also sprang leaks, from time to time, which might require them to be laid on their sides and careened, which, of course, had to be done after the cargo was unloaded. Flag signals were used at Whampoa to communicate from ship to ship and between ship and shore.

Each of the European nations represented at Whampoa had commodores who were in charge of their respective fleets. Commodores helped to keep the peace among the crews at Whampoa. If any problems arose—such as deserters going from one ship to another, or a scuffle between sailors—commodores of different nations

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2. Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade*, 22; C. Toogood Downing, *The Fan-Qui in China in 1836–7*, 3 vols. (London: Henry Colburn, 1838; repr., Shannon, Ireland: Irish University Press, 1972), 1: 85–6.
 3. J. F. Davis, *A Commercial Vocabulary, Containing Chinese Words and Phrases Peculiar to Canton and Macao, and to the Trade of Those Places; Together with Titles and Address of All the Officers of Government, Hong Merchants, &c. &c.* (Macao: Honorable Company’s Press, 1824), 21; E. C. Bridgman, *Chinese Chrestomathy in the Canton Dialect* (Macao: S. Wells Williams, 1841), 222, paragraph 9.
 4. Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade*, 22.

communicated with each other to resolve the matters as quickly and peacefully as possible. If they were unable to come to terms, then the Chinese authorities stepped in to ensure that peace was restored.

Whampoa was known to be a place of frequent death, and there were many ways to meet one's end. Some men died of natural causes, such as illness from disease, others fell overboard and drowned, and some would meet their end from swinging cargo or falling into the hold. Men also died from over drinking, which was often fuelled by extreme boredom. The number of deaths that occurred in the foreign community at Whampoa from 1720 to 1815 was probably in the thousands. Each nationality had their own burial protocols, which were often based on religious beliefs. Christian nations generally honoured their dead according to the deceased's rank aboard the ship. Others, such as lascars and Parsees, honoured their deceased according to their respective religious and ethnic traditions.

Crimes between foreigners were often settled by foreigners themselves and might not involve the Chinese authorities. Qing officials usually granted their guests extraterritorial privileges, without asking for them. Hoppo, governor general, and governors, however, closely monitored all infractions to ensure that they were settled peaceably and without further incident. Offences that occurred between men within one nation were generally handled by those respective officers and without interference from Chinese authorities. Altercations between Europeans of different nations, however, were often more difficult to resolve. If foreigners could not come to agreement as to how to settle a violation among themselves, then it was the responsibility of Qing officials to step in and try the culprits in a Chinese court. In order to prevent this from happening, foreigners might insist on trying the men in their own countries and their own courts. Such requests were always denied. This fact has been misrepresented in the past. It was not that extraterritorial rights were denied to those persons, but rather that foreigners were either unwilling or unable (according to their laws) to prosecute the men in China.

It was mandatory for all crimes committed between foreigners and Chinese to be tried in a Chinese court. This was non-negotiable because extraterritorial privileges only extended to conflicts between foreigners. Captains and supercargoes often objected to these demands but usually had little choice but to submit to the laws of the land. Otherwise, they might have their trade stopped and their ships prevented from leaving. There were cases when foreigners managed to leave China without handing over their nationals who were accused of crimes against Chinese, but those were exceptions and were done contrary to the demands of Qing officials.

As far as punishments are concerned, Europeans, Americans, and other foreigners at Whampoa had similar ways of disciplining malefactors. Men suspected of crimes were immediately apprehended and put in irons, which usually meant handcuffs, shackles, and possibly being chained to the ship so they could not move from the spot. Lashings on the bare back was the most common discipline in the foreign community for all sorts of offences. Other punishments that were in use at

Whampoa include monetary fines, demotion, dismissal, ducking, keelhauling, and running the gauntlet.

Although being locked up for many days or weeks with shackles and chains around the neck were themselves forms of punishment, those acts were not usually considered to be part of a criminal's sentence. The physical detaining of men was simply a means of ensuring that the culprits did not run away or cause more trouble. It was a tool that all captains could use whenever they thought it necessary. Ships did not have a jail or spare room where they could keep men in custody, so chains were universally used to restrain malefactors. The prisoner could then be fastened to the ship at any convenient location.

Capital crimes were more difficult to resolve, because some foreigners such as the British were not allowed to try their men for this offence aboard their ships. Depending upon the country, they might collect all the evidence and then send the offenders to their home countries to be tried. In these cases, it was their own laws that prevented them from exercising their extraterritorial privileges in China. Other nationals, such as the Dutch captains, had the right to try their nationals for capital crimes, and could then carry out a hanging aboard the ships at Whampoa if the men were found to be guilty. The misunderstandings surrounding these differences in European laws and the freedoms to exercise extraterritorial rights in China has resulted in some of these cases being misrepresented in the history books, all of which will be discussed in the following chapters.

Chinese also committed crimes against foreigners, especially thefts. The chop boats that carried cargo to Whampoa were especially vulnerable to being pilfered by Chinese crews. Some foreign captains required a couple of their trusted men to be placed on every chop boat, but even with that protective measure, thefts continued. While foreigners were forbidden from punishing Chinese who were caught stealing, captains were allowed to capture Chinese culprits, put them in irons, and deliver them to the nearest customs house along with the evidence. The Chinese authorities would then decide the men's fate, which, if found guilty, usually resulted in multiple bamboeing (*bastinadoing*) on the bare buttocks as well as monetary fines and confiscation of the stolen goods. The Chinese merchants from where the merchandise originated were generally held responsible for returning goods that their employees or subcontractors had pilfered from foreigners.

Desertions were common at Whampoa. From the beginning years of the trade in the early eighteenth century, men were secretly moving from ship to ship. Desertion was, in fact, a breach in a man's employment contract, so if they left the ship without permission, they were treated as criminals and were punished for their offences. Captains did what they could to keep their men from leaving, and to get their men back, after deserting. Nonetheless, many ships left China with fewer men than when they arrived. Some of those losses were owing to deaths among the crew, but other reductions in the crew sizes were simply the result of men running away.

Even though it was strictly against Chinese laws, some men were actually discharged at Whampoa, usually for repeated offences, and were then refused back aboard the ship. In other cases, seamen such as lascars and Chinese, were simply dismissed at Macao or Whampoa because they were no longer needed. The Chinese seamen usually knew in advance that their employment would end once the ship reached China, but lascars and other Asian seamen might be discharged without advance notice simply because the captain no longer needed them. The men were left up to their own means to find new employment. By the early nineteenth century, these dismissals at Whampoa had become so common that companies began insisting that their daily sustenance be borne by the ship that discharged them until the men found new employment. Qing officials repeatedly warned foreigners not to dismiss their men in China, but the practice continued nonetheless. Some captains discharged their men at Macao, instead, where there were places for them to stay until they found a new employer.

On a few occasions, the men aboard a ship at Whampoa united in protest to demand that their captain grant them privileges that they thought they deserved. Some of these protests concerned their trading privileges. The seamen signed a document called a 'round robin' which showed their solidarity in the matter. Some of these protests produced the desired outcome whereas others did not, but in all the cases presented below, the matters were solved without violence.

There were times when not everyone aboard the ship agreed to the complaints, and then only part of a crew protested. These situations were more frustrating for the protestors because the captains were not likely to listen to them if they did not have the backing of the entire crew. The recalcitrant men might then attempt to take over the ship in a mutiny so that they could forcibly initiate the changes they wanted. Many of these attempts were fuelled by excessive drinking of alcohol. Of course, seamen knew, in their sober minds, that such violent means would never produce the outcome they wanted, because they would inevitably be caught. But with rage and drink clouding their judgement, the men determined in the moment that it was worth a try. There was more than one attempt at mutiny at Whampoa, but as far as we know, the only one that came close to succeeding was that of the EIC ship *Belvidere* in 1787.

Whenever there are a large number of bored and restless men in one place with money to spend, there is a great potential for prostitution. Perhaps, not unexpectedly, brothels were common at Whampoa as they were in many major seaports. Sexual encounters, however, were not limited to the opposite sex, or even to another human. A few men were caught engaging in sodomy or bestiality both of which were referred to as 'unnatural acts'.

Disasters such as floods, fires, and storms were no strangers to Whampoa and could put many lives at risk. Some ships were struck by lightning, and anyone who happened to be in the mast at the time would likely be killed instantly. Lightning, of course, could also set a ship afire. Shipowners took out marine insurance to help

protect against such disasters. If an investor was unfortunate enough to put all his money into one ship, however, he could lose everything in an instant.

When I began writing this book, I had no idea that I was putting together a story about Chinese tolerance. In fact, it was not until I had all the chapters written and was summing up the discussion in the conclusion, that the theme of tolerance emerged. Story after story and case after case presented in the chapters reveal an administration that practised extreme patience and tolerance to their foreign guests. On outward appearance, officials might use harsh language with uncompromising words in order to appear authoritarian and in control. But their actions often reveal a different demeanor.

One of the most obvious examples of accommodation is the toleration exercised of the gun salutes at Whampoa before 1784. Hundreds of cannons were fired by each ship while they were at anchor, which not only upset the local residents but could be heard all the way to Canton. Even when the imperial exams were held every three years in the city, candidates might be interrupted by the constant cannon fire downriver. Some Hoppo did what they could to minimize the noise by requesting that fewer cannons be fired, but more often than not, the noise was just tolerated. The local residents at Whampoa must have been much relieved when the cannon salutes were banned in 1784.

In hindsight, we can say that restricting foreigners from firing cannons at Whampoa probably would not have hindered the trade or prevented captains from returning to China. But before 1784 there were no Chinese officials who dared to force a ban on cannons. While it is understandable that the daily lighting of fireworks was tolerated, because it was part of Chinese culture, the firing of cannon salutes was not a Chinese tradition. It was nonetheless tolerated as an evil that came along with the advancement of the foreign trade.

The care of the ships and crews at Whampoa were left entirely up to the foreigners to manage. Even when ships caught fire or floundered in the river, foreigners were left to their own devices to find a solution. Local Chinese would only come to their assistance if asked to do so, and only after officials had given their consent. There were times of crisis when riots broke out among foreigners, and many smaller disruptions, but they were usually short-lived.

While officials at the Whampoa customs house were undoubtedly closely monitoring the foreign movements in the area, by the late eighteenth century there were so many ships arriving each year with thousands of sailors aboard that they just had to overlook some offences. Qing officials might warn supercargoes and captains not to allow deserters or dismissals, but generally they just let the detached men work out their own situations. Occasionally, river patrols captured a man who was wandering about on his own, but they normally did not go hunting for them. Nor did they penalize anyone for preventing men from leaving the ships.

Prostitution was allowed at Whampoa and occurred almost every night even though it was contrary to Qing policy of keeping the foreign community separated

from locals. Officials undoubtedly saw the logic in allowing these sexual encounters to continue, which helped to pacify their foreign guests. There were many other interactions between foreigners and Chinese as well, such as the daily arrival of the barbers, washerwomen and vendors, which was tolerated as long as no trouble emerged from the exchanges.

All these interactions might come to an abrupt halt when a major dispute arose, but as soon as those matters were settled, everyone went back to their normal activities. These grey areas of the trade were where tolerance could be applied in the interests of maintaining harmony. If Qing officials had adopted more legalistic attitudes, and treated their foreign guests with a firmer hand, there would undoubtedly have been a corresponding effect on the growth of the commerce.

Of course, too much leniency gave rise to negative aspects as well. Tolerance is what enabled rampant smuggling to occur and opium usage to advance to all levels of Chinese society. In this sense, the success of the trade is what eventually led to its collapse. A change in attitude as to what could not be tolerated would probably have helped to bring about a different outcome. However, as we know from the history books, that was not to be Canton's destiny.

All these interactions among foreigners and between foreigners and Chinese at Whampoa and Canton affected the trade in one way or another. By looking at the interactions between the two locations, we gain a greater appreciation for the incredible task of the Hoppos, governor generals, governors, and local magistrates in maintaining the peace. Even though I have studied the Canton trade for many decades, and have published multiple articles and books on the subject, I was much surprised to learn of the enormity and frequency of the interactions up and downriver. On any given day in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, there were so many men traversing the river to and from Whampoa that one could imagine writing a book about life between the ports.

Some seamen, such as the water crews, were in motion almost continually for the entire four or five months their ships were anchored in China. The men who served as guards aboard the chop boats (cargo sampans) were constantly on the move as well, delivering cargo, and then returning to Canton to guide another shipment downriver. The picture that we have previously had of the crews staying at Whampoa and the senior officers at Canton needs revision. While it is true that captains and supercargoes usually spent most of their time upriver, they made frequent visits to Whampoa. Of course, those senior officers did not row or sail their pinnaces or longboats themselves but had a crew of about eight men in waiting to take them whenever and wherever they needed to go. Like the Chinese compradors, these boatmen were on the move day and night orchestrating their movements with the coming and going of the tides. These men slept according to the tidal ebb and flow, whether aboard a boat, at the factory, at a customs house, on the ship at Whampoa, or at the bankshalls. Many of these men spent most of their time traversing the river.

In *The Canton Trade*, I argue that we need to include Macao in any analysis of how the trade operated and that, in many respects, the entire delta operated as a unit, with thousands of little parts operating in concert with each other. This present study brings Whampoa more clearly into the picture by showing the hands-on operation of physically moving cargo, people, and provisions from one place to another. The massive movement of people and goods up and down the river has usually just been taken for granted, in history books, but was indeed a significant management challenge for supercargoes to keep everything flowing smoothly. And the fact that many men fell ill and became incapacitated in China, constant adjustments needed to be made in the management of the trade when key people could no longer do the work or died.

It was also a great challenge for Chinese officials to monitor the activities and movements of all these people. While the customs officers might be able to enjoy their evenings in quietude, the marine police had to keep a constant watch on the movement of boats and people, day and night. The darkness of night was the most probable time for bandits to succeed in their endeavours. Naturally, evening was also a ripe time for trysts between foreigners and Chinese. Thus, rather than settle in for a relaxing evening, the Chinese river patrols needed to stay alert at all times.

It was a daunting task for Qing officials to keep these crowds moving smoothly to where they needed to go and under control. The main policies that kept everything in motion and at peace were the separation of Chinese and foreigners where practicable, the widespread use of tolerance rather than strict adherence to the law, and the universal granting of extraterritorial privileges whereby foreigners could govern themselves. While the extent to which these policies were effectively enforced can be questioned, there is little doubt that the removal of any one of them would have had a dramatic impact on the trade.

In a nutshell, it was flexibility that kept the peace. Administrators did whatever was necessary to maintain harmony, even if it meant turning a blind eye to the laws of the land. While there were different ideas about the extent to which one could or should be flexible, there was a common tradition among administrators on all levels of being flexible to the point that it did not raise concerns of senior officials or the imperial court in Beijing. Ironically, we could probably also argue that it was the widespread application of flexibility and tolerance that allowed corruption to become widespread and weakened the administration from within, which eventually brought the Canton system to an end.

Layout of the Book

There is not necessarily a natural sequence to the organization of the chapters and their topics. I begin in Chapter 1 with a discussion of the new ship data and what they tell us about the administration of the trade, the accounting practices of the Neiwufu 內務府 in Beijing, and the gradual shift in the composition of trade in the

late eighteenth century. The Hoppos juggled the figures around in order to give a report each year that would be acceptable to the emperor. The emerging dominance of the EIC is also discussed. The new ship data is perhaps one of the most significant contributions of the book, which is why I placed it in the front.

I thought it important to first show how the ships came to anchor, how they were repaired, how the commodores controlled the vessels under their charge, and how everyone communicated with each other via signals, before moving on to other aspects of life at Whampoa, so those matters are discussed in Chapter 2. The bankshalls show up continually in later chapters, so it seemed appropriate to introduce their role and function in Chapter 3. I also recount in later chapters some of the conflicts that took place at the bankshalls, much of which was the result of liquor being sold and consumed there.

There is no special sequence to Chapters 4 to 11. In the process of writing the book, I had moved these chapters around a lot, trying to find the most logical and effective organization. In the end, however, it did not seem to matter where they were positioned as the outcome was the same. Chapter 4 introduces 'Healthcare, Injuries, Deaths, and Drunkenness' aboard the ships. Chapter 5 turns to 'Death Estimates, Burial Protocols, and Special Celebrations', which, among other things, provides estimates of the number of foreign deaths in China each year, reveals some of the funeral protocols that were observed, and discusses the reasons for cannon salutes and approximately how many were fired on a daily basis before their end in 1784. Chapter 6 then turns to crimes that were committed at Whampoa and the respective punishments that were delivered.

Chapter 7 then turns to Chinese thefts, which were a constant problem on the chop boats that carried goods between Canton and Whampoa. Chinese also stole things from the ships, especially at night. Chapter 8 then turns to the 'Labour Market, Desertions, and Dismissals'. I discuss the demand for seaman at Whampoa, some of the reasons for desertion, and give examples of men being discharged in China. In Chapter 9, I recount some of the protests that were launched by the crews at Whampoa, the EIC's row-guard policy that was introduced in 1786, religious practices, and the attempted mutiny of the *Belvidere* in 1787.

Chapter 10 then turns to the floating brothels and prostitution, discussing some of the sexual activities that were prevalent at Whampoa. In Chapter 11 I turn to 'Disasters and Marine Insurance'. Typhoons, floods, lightning strikes, and fires were all part of the scene at Whampoa, which threatened ships, crews, and trade. Marine insurance provided some protection from these disasters. The conclusion then summarizes what all this new information about Whampoa tells us about the Canton trade and the Chinese administration in general.

The plates are numbered 1 to 29, but they are not necessarily in sequential order according to when they first appear in the chapters. The numbering of the appendixes, however, corresponds to the chapters to which they belong. Appendixes 1.1a to 1.15 belong to Chapter 1, and appendixes 4.1 to 4.7 belong to Chapter 4. The

same is true with tables, with 2.1 to 2.3 belonging to Chapter 2, and so on. The exceptions to this rule are the Tables in Appendix 1.1a, which are lettered A to H and seemed to be a more effective way to keep them separated from the tables in the text. The abbreviations and sources for all the appendixes can be found in Appendix 1.1b.

I begin the discussion in Chapter 1 with a detailed discussion of the new ship data, a comparison of those figures with previous ship data, examples of how the Hoppos manipulated the numbers to benefit themselves, and efforts made to counter British dominance in the early nineteenth century.

Conclusion: The Story Is in the Details

Whampoa was a special place in early modern trade and commerce. While Canton has rightfully commanded the main focus of history books as a great port of particular significance to senior officers, Whampoa was the place that would have dominated the memories of most seamen. As far as the administration of the trade was concerned, it was a quiet, out-of-the-way anchorage that could accommodate hundreds of ships, and, at the same time, kept foreign armaments and seamen away from the Chinese populous. The two sandbars downriver required the expertise of the Macao pilots to guide ships through the deepest channels and with the tides, which gave the Hoppo control over who would be allowed at Whampoa and when they would be permitted to leave. These qualities melded with Beijing's desires of maintaining harmony while encouraging foreign trade.

The new ship data show that the trade figures reported to the emperor were often manipulated in order to even out—as much as was possible—the ups and downs of the duties collected each year. The imperial court appears to have had little or no interest in ensuring that the correct number of ships were reported each year. The duties, however, were another matter. There was a lot of pressure on Hoppo to collect the same amount of duties as previous years, but of course, if they could increase the tax revenues, that was even better. As far as the data reveals, there does not seem to have been any efforts made to match the number of ships arriving with the amount of duties collected. This oversight enabled some Hoppo to under-report the numbers which resulted in thirty-five ships from 1773 to January 1816 not being reported to the emperor. At an average of 19,700 taels of duties collected per ship, the missing revenues collected from those vessels comes to 689,500 taels. By simply matching the numbers of ships with the duties collected, the Neiwufu could have detected these discrepancies, but for whatever reasons, that did not happen.

With the new ship data presented here, we can now show that during the years from 1750 to 1772, the Hoppo reported all the ships that arrived, but the correct number was not necessarily reported each year. Throughout the period from 1750 to January 1816, Hoppo manipulated the data, moving figures from one year to the next. Consequently, we cannot rely solely on information contained in the *Yuehaiguan Zhi* to tell the story of the Canton trade, as has been done so often in the

past. Not only are many of the figures contained in that document misleading, and in some cases in error, there is an enormous amount of information about the trade that is not included in that source. Everything mentioned in *Yuehaiguan Zhi* needs to be corroborated with supportive evidence in other sources before we can consider it to be a correct representation of the trade. As the many examples in this present study show, the story is in the details and the more details that we have, the closer we get to what actually happened.

As long as the amount of the duties collected came close to the previous year, little or no attention was paid by the imperial court to the manipulating of the ship numbers. This is another example of the trade being too loosely monitored and controlled, rather than too strict, as most of the history books of the past tell us. When all we use to understand the trade is the Chinese or English language sources, then we get a very different outcome. This is yet another example of why it is so important to include all the available data. If we only use a fraction of the sources, then we can expect to receive only a fraction of the story. One example I have presented here and in other studies is the very distorted view of the past in defining the trade according to the flags displayed on the ships. We know now that the flags—especially on private ships—only tell us the nationality of captain. The owners and sponsors of the vessel might have nothing to do with that nation.

With the new ship data, we can now show clearly that from 1784 onwards, the British were the dominate players in the trade. While the EIC grew in importance, it gained considerable influence over the commerce and also over the lives of the Hong merchants. Chinese merchants and officials did what they could to limit the EIC's control over the trade, while at the same time, not discourage the company from reducing its businesses in China and thereby causing a drop in imperial revenues. The British became more aggressive in the delta from the late eighteenth century onwards, and the Qing government was not able to restore the competition that was lost with the departure of the mainland European companies. Thus, instead of conflicts in the trade being described as East-West divisions as has so often been the story in the past, this study has found the rise in conflicts being more of an Anglo-Sino divide. The EIC became increasingly more of a threat to not only the Qing administration, but also to the Hong merchants, as it gained more influence over the commerce. While Hoppo continued to welcome all persons to Whampoa who wanted to engage in legitimate trade (except Russians and Japanese), what they especially needed was more non-British traders so that they could counter the dominance of the EIC. However, there were no other business entities that emerged after 1784 that could restore the competitive balance within the foreign community at Canton. The Qing government's intense focus on maintaining fiscal revenues, the inherent belief that China had everything that it needed, and the attitude that the best way to control the trade was for the world to come to China and not for Chinese to go seeking commercial connections abroad, left the door open for the

British to move in and gain more influence, which, rightly or wrongly, is exactly what they did.

There was a well-established procedure of guiding ships upriver to the anchorage at Whampoa. Care needed to be exercised when ships moved in and out of their moorings, but collisions occurred nonetheless. Sometimes ships sprang a leak and needed to be careened so the holes could be plugged. Commodores were appointed according to seniority and took care of all matters concerning the vessels and their crews, and conducted trials to convict and punish malefactors. While it is well known that ships used flag signals at sea, it is perhaps less known that all kinds of signals were used while at anchor as well to communicate messages from ship to ship and from ship to shore.

While sitting at Whampoa for three, four, or five months, the ships needed a place to store provisions, overhaul rigging, and make repairs to the sails and service boats. Bamboo shacks called bankshalls were set up at a designated place for this purpose. The French were permitted to have their bankshall on French Island, whereas most of the other nations—with a few exceptions—built them on Whampoa Island. Sick seamen were sent to the bankshalls to recover, and they were kept under twenty-four-hour guard by six to eight seamen who were stationed there for that purpose. Large ships might have a bankshall to themselves, whereas small ships might share a bankshall with others.

Because liquor was stored and sold at the bankshalls, the shacks were places where many disturbances arose. It was against most of the East India companies' policies for alcohol to be sold at the bankshalls, but because some of the captains and senior officers were the ones who actually benefited from the sales, liquor was often available. If there were no foreigners selling spirits in any given year, then a Chinese sampan might pass by with samshu for sale. Sometimes Chinese set up 'punch houses' where they sold samshu. There are numerous references to Chinese diluting their liquor with water and then tainting it with arsenic or some other chemical or drug in order to restore its strong flavour. Thus, besides alcohol causing disruption in the harmony at Whampoa by itself, tainted liquor might give rise to much sickness and death among the foreign seamen. Shore leave was often allowed at the bankshalls, so, as one might imagine, arguments and fights sometimes arose there. Moreover, because many provisions and valuable items were stored in the bankshalls, they were sometimes the target of thieves, which in a couple cases ended in the intruder being killed.

The trade at Whampoa continued to grow with each passing decade until there were more than 100 ships arriving almost every year from the mid-1820s onwards. Whampoa accommodated a few hundred foreign seamen in the 1720s, but by the 1830s their numbers had grown to over 10,000. As the arrivals increased, so did the deaths. Captains did what they could to minimize the dangers, by constantly scrubbing the decks and sleeping quarters with vinegar and cleaning the ships inside and out. Some ships were smoked at Whampoa as well, to kill vermin and rodents

that had plagued its quarters. While scurvy, dysentery, and other natural diseases were probably responsible for most of the deaths, drowning and work-related injuries ended the lives of many others. Drowning was in fact so common that if a sailor fell into the water, he was not likely to surface again until a day or two later. And not a few men died from overconsumption of alcohol.

Many crimes were committed at Whampoa such as theft, desertion, and insubordination, and flogging was the most popular form of punishment. Different types of whips were used, but the cat-o'-nine-tails was one of the most popular. First offenders might be given a dozen lashes, whereas repeat offenders might receive several dozen lashes. With other types of whips such as the single pronged *tampe*, a sailor might be given a couple hundred lashes. When we read about these punishments in the foreign records, it is important to pay attention to the weapon employed. Sentences of fifty lashes with a cat-o'-nine-tails on the bare back was a very serious punishment that scarred the man for life and could take several weeks to recover. That many lashes with a rope whip, on the other hand, was a rather light sentence. The records often do not specify the tool used to inflict the punishments, which means we need to read between the lines a bit to understand what was happening aboard the ships at Whampoa.

Running the gauntlet was less popular, but was also used at Whampoa, as was ducking and keelhauling. The latter punishment, however, depended on the depth of the water. In order to pull the man under the ship there needed to be enough water between the hull and the bottom of the river so that he could pass the keel without getting stuck. There were also methods used such as gagging to silence seamen who were prone to creating commotion after curfew.

The captains and supercargoes of some ships, such as those of the VOC, had the authority to try their men for murder on the spot. This resulted in the Dutch hanging three men at Whampoa, who had taken the lives of other seamen. Capital punishment was also inflicted on the leader of a mutiny on a Prussian ship. The officers of other companies, such as the EIC, did not have the authority to try their men for murder in China. They rather arrested the suspect, collected the evidence, and were expected to deliver the accused man to their home port for trial and sentencing.

In all the cases presented above where only foreigners were involved in a crime, extraterritorial privileges were granted to them to carry out the trials and punishments according to their own laws. Qing officials might oversee the trials and punishments to ensure justice was done. In no cases, however, would they allow the men to be tried and punished in their home countries. Officials insisted that all crimes committed in China must be processed in China, which was not an unjust demand. Foreigners would likely have insisted on the same outcome for crimes committed in their own countries.

Extraterritorial privileges generally worked fairly smoothly when the crimes were committed between persons within the same company or nationality. The perpetrators were tried and punished in China according to the laws of that nation.

For capital crimes, however, it became more complicated because the officers of some companies were not permitted to try their men outside of their country. These cases created a lot of problems for Qing officials who insisted on the men being tried in China. If the foreigners were unable or unwilling to carry out the punishments in China, then Qing officials took control of the matter and tried and punished the men according to Chinese laws, which was often done at the protest of those nations.

Extraterritorial rights were also ineffective with crimes committed between nations in China. If a Frenchman killed an Englishman, or some other serious offence was committed between the two, then it often resulted in both nations being unwilling to settle the matter in China. Either they did not have authority to carry out a trial for the specific crime committed, or they might disagree as to whose laws the men should be tried under. In such cases, they might both prefer to refer the matter to their home countries so as not to cause problems between the nations in Europe. However, whenever extraterritorial rights broke down and a stalemate emerged, then Qing officials immediately stepped in and demanded that the men be tried according to Chinese law.

If Chinese were involved in a crime, in any way, Qing officials insisted that the foreign culprits be handed over to them for questioning to be tried in a Chinese court of law. While foreigners were usually very reluctant to comply with these demands, owing to the mistrust they had of the Chinese judicial system, in the end they might have no other choice. In some of the cases presented above where a Chinese was killed, unintentionally or intentionally, the accused foreign men were actually later released. They suffered several years of imprisonment, bamboo thrashings, and in one case, a very humiliating time in a cangue. But in the end, they were granted their freedom and sent home, despite a Chinese dying at their hands. Thus, in those cases, the Qing government did not insist on a life for a life, which shows they also understood the difference between manslaughter and murder.

In Duvelaër's case, where a Chinese boy was accidentally killed during a hunting spree, a Frenchman was handed over to atone for the death, but we have no information of what became of him. In many of these cases, a monetary fine was usually part of the punishment, which covered the cost of the trials and imprisonments, and gave the victims' families some compensation for their losses.

In other crimes such as thefts where Chinese were involved, foreigners were allowed to capture the culprits and hand the men over to Qing authorities, along with any evidence they might have. Foreigners were not permitted to inflict any punishment on suspected Chinese, but in a couple of cases, they did anyway. Purchasing stolen goods was also a crime, so if a seaman stole an item from a ship and then attempted to sell it to a Chinese man for samshu, both of them might be arrested. The foreign seamen were tried and punished aboard their ships and in accordance with their respective laws, and the Chinese were tried and punished by Qing officials. The most common form of Chinese theft was to pilfer goods aboard

the chop boats while the goods were on their way to Whampoa. In one case, the Chinese thieves daringly cut their way into the rudder opening of an EIC ship and robbed a cabin below deck. In less daring feats, they stole anchor cables, anchors, and plundered what metal, sails, and other saleable items they could find in foreign service boats.

Whampoa could be a very boring place for foreign seamen as there was no place for them to go for entertainment. Many men deserted and attempted to join other ships. Sometimes men were just dismissed by their captains owing to their abusive and recalcitrant behaviour. There was no place for these men to go, except another ship or a foreign bankshall. They might wander around for a few days, or sometimes even a few weeks, stealing whatever they could to survive, but in the end, they had to join a ship before all of them left Whampoa. The many deaths that were experienced aboard many of the foreign ships during their voyages to China, ensured that someone would eventually take in the deserters and dismissed seamen. If all else failed, they could offer to work their passage without pay, or sneak down to Macao and join a Portuguese ship.

In order to gain more control of their seamen at Whampoa, the EIC established a row guard in 1786. Every year thereafter, armed boats rowed around the EIC fleet every Sunday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. and arrested any men they found causing trouble or operating outside of their commissions. Englishmen and others were often allowed shore leave at Whampoa on Sundays, so naturally that was also the day that altercations usually emerged that needed to be quashed. Here again Qing officials did not interfere. Establishing a row guard was consistent with Qing policies as well because foreigners were expected to police themselves while they were in China, and they had the freedom to do this in whatever means they thought best so long as it did not cause problems with the local Chinese. This was part of their extraterritorial privileges and responsibilities.

Brothels and sex were as much a part of the scene at Whampoa as they were in any major seaport. Chinese sampans visited the foreign ships each evening offering sexual services to the men. Sometimes the prostitutes were allowed aboard the ships. Qing officials tolerated these activities, probably because they knew that the prostitutes would help to keep the foreign community under better control. Although strictly illegal, homosexuality was also prevalent, although I have only found a few examples. Those cases should not be considered exceptions, but rather windows into what was going on all along. Because everyone knew they would be punished if caught, they were careful to carry out these acts in secret. It was only a very few men that actually got caught. If all other attempts failed to satisfy their needs, then a seaman might resort to more desperate measures and try to have sex with one of the animals aboard the ship or at the bankshalls.

Finally, beside natural illnesses, work-related accidents, tainted samshu, and sexual diseases, there was also the threat of fires, storms, and floods. Several bankshalls and ships burned up in China, resulting in many deaths from fire or from

drowning while fleeing the flames. One of the questions raised from this study is why the Chinese did not help with fires aboard the ships at Whampoa, which was an outcome very different from Canton where foreigners and Chinese worked hand in hand to put out the flames. When Chinese lives or property were not at risk, they seemed to have been less inclined to help. Perhaps they did not want to engage in these matters, or perhaps the foreigners did not want them to help, as a Chinese presence would complicate matters with some helpers possibly attempting to steal things or misunderstandings arising that could make a bad situation even worse. Whatever the case may have been, fires at Whampoa aboard the ships and at the bankshalls were indeed treated much differently by local Chinese residents and officials than fires that occurred at Canton.

Some ships were struck by lightning while in the Pearl River which ended the lives of a few men. Floods sometimes also ravished the factories in Canton and bankshalls at Whampoa, washing away everything in their path. Some voyages were protected by marine insurance, which might reimburse the loss of ship or property, but there was no such thing as life insurance during this period. If a seaman was washed away in a storm or hit by lightning, he was gone, and there was no compensation to the family except perhaps the wages that were still owed to him. An absentee investor would walk away with his life if a ship was struck by one of these disasters, but if he put all his money in one ship, he might as well go to a gambling den and lay down all his earnings on a single bet. Marine insurance might protect the ship and cargo while at sea, but those policies often expired as soon as the ship arrived at its destination. This meant that most of the accidents that happened at Whampoa were not covered by insurance and were a direct charge against the owners and sponsors.

When we look at the Canton trade from the perspective of Whampoa, we see an entirely different side of the commerce. The picture we gain from such an approach is the view of the trade from the common seaman's perspective. For them, it was not risking an investment for the sake of gaining a profit, as was the case with many of their superiors. Their trip to China was rather a means of sustaining themselves. Adventure was likely to have been in some of their minds, and they might gain a few dollars from selling some trinkets or souvenirs that they had purchased in Canton, but earning a fortune was not a factor when deciding to join a ship, as it might have been for officers or investors.

While I have shown in another study that tens of thousands of Chinese depended on the trade for their livelihoods,¹ this present study shows that thousands of foreign seamen also depended on the China trade for their existence. While there is nothing new about this observation, we at least now have names and actual examples to testify to this fact. For many of these men, their three or four months stay at Whampoa, and their trips back and forth to Canton, were likely one of the highlights of their lives. This study shows that hundreds of seamen went between

1. Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade*, 165, 177–78.

Whampoa and Canton on a regular basis, dispelling the notion that only officers went upriver. While many seamen remained downriver for most of the time the ships were in China, others stayed at the factories in Canton, or were continually in motion fetching water and transporting people and cargo.

Most of the men probably knew they were putting their lives at risk by joining a ship bound for Asia, but what was their alternative? They could die from work-related injuries at home as well as aboard a ship. While there was probably less of a risk of dying from disease or drowning in Europe in the eighteenth century, there was not much adventure involved in such an existence. By joining a ship, they could not only earn a living wage, but also see the world and encounter many strange and wonderful things. If they were careful with their money, they might even return home with a few dollars in their pocket. Of course, there was also the risk of encountering horrible diseases, being victims of storms, fires or floods, or falling from aloft into the river or the hold, but those were the risks that went with the occupation.

Today there are only a few dozen graves that have survived from the hundreds of foreigners who died in China. Most of those tombs, however, are of officers. They had the money to pay for gravestones, so they have markers testifying to their involvement in the China trade. But even with that advantage, many of the graves of the captains and supercargoes have disappeared. There are thousands of graves still waiting to be found.

The crewmen of some ships launched protests against injustices or policies that they thought might threaten their lives. The two issues that appear in the protests presented above are private trade privileges and the protection of the water supply aboard the ships. Not all protests were successful at producing change and might lead to even more troubles than before such as punishment for inciting disorder.

Other seamen were more desperate and attempted mutiny in their efforts to right the wrongs they thought had been committed. While there were a couple of attempts at mutiny that came close to succeeding, they were eventually quashed and the prevailing order restored aboard the ships. Even if seamen had managed to take control of a ship at Whampoa, there was no way they would remain in control of it because neighbouring officers would step in to suppress their aggression. These actions were done by desperate and disillusioned men whose judgements were often tainted by drink and the rage of the moment.

What all these examples show is that the Qing government was again very accommodating to their foreign guests. They did what was necessary to maintain harmony and gave the foreign community enough freedom to sustain the trade. Seamen were allowed to go on shore leave on the neighbouring islands, but not to intrude upon any of the Chinese residents. Foreign captains even discharged men at Whampoa, with no place for them to go, and yet officials just sat by and let the foreigners work out their own solutions. They might send them a warning not to leave unattached men in China, but no concerted efforts were made to end the practice of dismissing men at Whampoa or to provide accommodation for those individuals.

We could argue that such tolerance put harmony at risk, because deserters and dismissed men had no other choice but to quickly find another job or resort to thievery to survive. Here again, Qing officials did not interfere. They were willing to allow foreigners to operate in this margin of insecurity and uncertainty, while watching from a distance. If things got out of hand, then they would jump in to restore harmony. While Qing officials did put an end to the three-day shore leave at Canton for EIC crews, it had taken a hundred years for that to come about. And the ban was not extended to all foreign seamen, only the men of the EIC, who had caused most of the offences.

It is only by looking at the detailed records from Whampoa that we begin to understand how the Qing government managed and controlled the trade. What emerges in so many of these examples is incredible patience and tolerance. Men caught in places where they were not supposed to be, such as in the flower boats, were released after payments had been made. Foreigners were allowed passage between Whampoa and Canton, to deliver goods or to fetch water, and they took boats regularly to Powder Island to dry gunpowder. Many of the water crews actually went to places north of Canton to fetch water, and they went to various locations in the Whampoa area as well, all of which they had the freedom to do. Boats were coming and going from Whampoa constantly. As long as the men in the boats were involved in carrying cargo or maintaining the crews, they were free to carry out their tasks.

Captains were allowed to fire hundreds of cannons day after day and week after week. It was not until a couple of Chinese were killed during a cannon salute in 1784 that the practice was stopped, despite how annoying it must have been. The tranquillity of local residents was constantly being upset by cannon fire and musket salutes. One can only imagine how the local residents at Whampoa must have felt about all the noise generated every day from the firing of guns, all for the sake of encouraging trade. As I have pointed out in other studies, the Qing government was often so tolerant of foreigners that it resulted in prejudices developing against Chinese merchants, in favour of their customers.² The same might be said of the Qing tolerance of gun salutes for so many years, which accommodated foreign customs at the annoyance of local residents.

Tolerance and an attitude of flexibility was at the centre of the administration of trade and Qing policies in general. While officials often spoke very authoritatively with harsh words during times of crisis, such as when a murder occurred, their actions tell another story. While threats of imprisonment and punishments to foreigners who did not comply were handed out frequently by Qing officials, the threats were mostly empty words that were used to guide foreigners into compliance. Mandarins, Hong merchants, and linguists were sent repeatedly to foreign officers in order to find ways to coerce them so that officials could avoid using force on their guests. If

2. MCM 1; MCM 2.

force had been used, it would have certainly had a negative impact on the trade. Yes, foreign suspects must be handed over if they were involved in an incident involving Chinese, but that did not mean they would be treated unfairly or any differently from the way Chinese citizens might be treated. Foreigners might not agree with the punishments that were handed out, but this was not their country, and they really had no right to refuse Qing officials' demands. The governor generals had every right to force their way into the factories or aboard the ships and capture the men they wanted, but such extreme measures were always avoided. It was better to wait it out and break the foreigners down slowly, without the use of an iron fist which could result in bloodshed and more disharmony.

All in all, what we find from this study is a foreign community operating on its own and according to its own policies. From the very beginning of the trade in the early eighteenth century, extraterritorial rights were granted. Foreign individuals were only brought into the sphere of Qing influence and policy when they abused or in some way violated a Chinese citizen. It was these latter types of interactions that caused most of the problems in the trade, because foreigners often refused to submit their citizens to the rigors of Chinese law. This was the case partially because they did not know what those laws were or how they would be applied and partially because it appeared to them that Chinese laws differed from their own laws. But one wanders what Chinese might have thought about foreign punishments such as the cat-o'-nine-tails, ducking, and keelhauling.

In the end, we might rightfully ask what all of these disparate stories tell us about the trade and the Qing administration in general? There is no question that the benevolent kingdom was welcoming and patient and often willing to stretch the rule of law, and even tolerate very annoying customs such as cannon salutes, in the interests of encouraging trade. From its beginning, the commerce was a top-down and centrally-based initiative that was managed by Beijing and done for the benefit of creating, protecting, and preserving imperial revenues. Thousands of local Chinese depending on the trade for some or all of their existence, but the main recipient of the revenues collected from the commerce was the Neiwufu. Maintaining the collection of imperial revenues was the ultimate goal so officials compromised wherever they had to in order to reach that goal.

Maintaining a firm outward appearance with strong and uncompromising words was often the official face of Qing policies, but flexibility and accommodation were the day to day reality. While there were often differences of opinion between Chinese and foreigners as to what constituted justice and fairness, there is no question that both sides held those ideals in high esteem. Qing officials were willing to bend and compromise their concepts of fairness, in the interests of maintaining harmony, but usually not to the point that it threatened justice. But if upholding justice meant sacrificing imperial revenues, then even that concept might be compromised. We see examples of this in foreigners going unpunished when they defied Qing laws and refused to give up their men to stand trial in a Chinese court. In these and other

cases we could rightly say that perhaps the heavy emphasis on maintaining imperial revenues resulted in Qing officials being too willing to accommodate the trade. Not only did foreigners sometimes get away with defying Qing policies, but as has been shown in recent studies the smuggling of opium and other contraband continued to grow alongside the legitimate trade.

Thus, instead of Chinese officials being too harsh as they were often accused, evidence presented here reaffirms what other studies have found that the Qing administration was often too lenient to the point that foreigners intruded upon the locals. Just as the foreign trade disadvantaged many of the Chinese merchants, the trade had negative effects on the local population as well. While there were obvious benefits for everyone, Chinese and foreigners alike, there was a tendency for Qing officials to put the trade above everything else. The protection of imperial revenues was more important than any inconveniences, discomforts or instabilities that local Chinese might have to endure for the sake of advancing trade.

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