

FROM MACAU TO RIO. THE FLEMISH-PORTUGUESE RELATIONS IN THE EAST INDIES AND BRAZIL, 1715 - 1745.

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Introduction

Until the first decennia of the 18th century, direct trade between the Southern Netherlands and the East Indies did not exist. Political circumstances such as the devastating Eighty Years War (1562 - 1648) and the monopolistic attitude of the Dutch and English East India Companies, who claimed trade and shipping towards Asia for themselves, formed a barrier to Flemish participation in this direction.

The international commercial relations of the Antwerp, Ghent and Bruges merchanthouses during the second half of the 17th century were concentrated on the Spanish Empire. In exchange for luxury textiles and art, Flemish merchants principally received colonial products, wool and wine¹. Portugal also played an important role in this traffic with Setubal as main saltport and Lisbon as centre for purchasing pearls, diamonds, spices and sugar².

But at the dawn of the 18th century, the War of the Spanish Succession fundamentally altered the trade with the Iberian peninsula. With the revision of the European map in 1713, the Southern Netherlands were allocated to Austria. Although this change at first seemed like an economic disaster for Flemish entrepreneurs, since they lost a privileged position on their major export market, more liberal Viennese perspectives on international commerce soon presented new opportunities.

From 1715 on, traders and financiers from Ostend, Antwerp, Ghent and Bruges started the search for alternatives. They enlarged their commercial horizon to the East Indies, probably inspired by the lucrative expeditions of the Saint-Malo armateurs to the South Sea and China. These Breton voyages attracted a lot of attention in Flanders because they were undertaken with modest funds³. So East India trade, without the support of the government or

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¹K. DEGRYSE & J. EVERAERT, *Antwerpen in de XVIIe eeuw. De handel.* (Antwerpen, 1989), p. 114 - 117.

²F. MAURO, *Le Portugal et l'Atlantique au XVIIe siècle (1570 - 1670)* Paris, 1960, p. 213 - 234.

³L. DERMIGNY, *La Chine et l'Occident à Canton au 18ième siècle, 1719 - 1833.* 3 vols., Paris, 1964, I, p. 151 - 154.

not based on a financially strong company like in Holland and England, proved to be workable. In imitation of the Saint-Malo ventures, a direct commerce with Asia organised by several separate partnerships in the Southern Netherlands became quite profitable and resulted in a plethora of new initiatives in long-distance trade. Between 1715 and 1723 nearly forty vessels sailed from Ostend to China, India, Bengal and Arabia, all financed by private entrepreneurs⁴. Associations were even created in Ostend to develop trade with Guinea⁵.

However the flood of East India voyages under Imperial flag diminished the benefits after a few years. To avoid this increasing mutual competition, the major shipowners and financiers decided to found a joint-stock company the "*Generale Keizerlijke Indische Compagnie*" (G.I.C.), which successfully concentrated her activities in China and Bengal.

The prominent maritime nations - England and the Dutch Republic - were not very pleased with this new competitor in Asia and tried from the start to harm these Imperial outfittings with all possible means. This grim attitude forced more or less the Flemish entrepreneurs to look for new allies in this trade. Due to this situation a natural collaboration grew between the Southern Netherlands and other European countries which were also active in the East India-trade. On the maritime route beyond the Cape of Good Hope, Ostend vessels could count on the support of the French, the Swedes, the Danes and the Portuguese. Also in India, Bengal and China these "*interlopers*" were thrown on each other's society. Especially the evolution of the Flemish-Portuguese relations on the seaway to and from Asia and the commercial contacts in the East and Brazil under the above-mentioned circumstances, form the topic of this paper.

Sailing to the Cape

The first difficulties for the Imperials, also called the Ostenders, occurred when crossing the Atlantic Ocean towards the Cape of Good Hope. The East Indiamen encountered a lot of problems in finding suitable refreshment stations on their long voyages, because the Dutch and the English opponents

⁴J. PARMENTIER, *The Private East India Ventures from Ostend: The Maritime and Commercial Aspects, 1715 - 1722*. in : International Journal of Maritime History, V, n° 2 (Dec. 1993), p. 75 - 102 & K. DEGRYSE and J. PARMENTIER, *Maritime Aspects of the Ostend trade to Mocha: India and China (1715 - 1732)*. in : J.R. BRUIJN & F.S. GAASTRA (ed.), *Ships, Sailors and Spices. East India Companies and their Shipping in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries*, Amsterdam, 1993, p. 139 - 175.

⁵J. PARMENTIER, *The Ostend Guinea-Trade, 1718 - 1720*. in : International Journal of Maritime History, II, n° 1 (June 1990) p. 175 - 206.

treated them viciously when they tried to supply at Dutch and English settlements like the Cape and St.-Helena.

Shortly after the appearance of Ostend vessels in Asian waters the court of directors of the English East India Company (E.I.C.) instructed several commanders of their fleet to look for ships under foreign commissions or colours "and enquire diligently but with secrecy whether any of His Majesty's subjects English, Scotch or Irish are on board. If there be use your best endeavours to seize and secure them and bring them to England ..."⁶. Further in October 1716 a proclamation was issued by the English king, prohibiting all British natives from serving the Ostenders bound for the East Indies⁷. Also lists of ships, outfitted on the river Thames were spread, which the E.I.C. "have very great reason to believe are designed for the East Indies (under foreign colours) as well from private information to be depended on as they are full sheathed and filled with nails which are never done except for the East India voyages"⁸. The English knew very well from the start which vessels and even which fellow countrymen assisted the Flemish merchants, but only on a few occasions they had success with the above-mentioned measures⁹. Quite similar actions were undertaken by the Dutch from 1717 on. So the Imperial vessels tried to avoid as much as possible confrontations with Anglo-Dutch ships because an exhaustive use was made of English and Irish officers to train the Flemish newcomers in this traffic¹⁰. Hoisting a non-Imperial flag when they met another vessel was one of the most effective protections¹¹.

To make relatively safe outward-voyages, the Ostend East-Indiamen traditionally called at the Cape Verde Islands, which belonged to the Portuguese crown. This small archipelago near the West African coast was ideally situated to replenish the food stock on board and to give the crew a shore leave. The Cape Verde Islands were not exclusively called at by the

⁶ India Office Library London (I.O.L.), Home Miscellanea Series (H.M.S.) n° 74, f° 445 & 457.

⁷ I.O.L., H.M.S. n° 74, f° 104.

⁸ I.O.L., H.M.S. n° 74, f° 465 & 473.

⁹ Four mariners of the Ostend East Indiaman "*St. Mattheus*" (1715) were persuaded by the Dutch to desert in Surate (Algemeen Rijksarchief Brussel (A.R.B.) Raad van Financiën nr. 8603). In the same Indian port an English man-of-war hailed the Imperial frigate "*Graaf van Lalaing*" (1721) and after examining the muster roll five British natives had to leave the Ostend ship (A.R.B., Admiraliteit nr 665 - 666, log of the "*Graaf van Lalaing*").

¹⁰ K. DEGRYSE and J. PARMENTIER, *Maritime Aspects*, p. 143 - 146.

¹¹ During her voyage to China the "*St. Franciscus-Xaverius*" (1720 - '21) used Dutch, English and French flags. Rather seldom the Imperial double eagle flew (Private collection Baron de Brouwer, log of the "*St. Franciscus Xaverius*").

Ostenders, but quite often visited by the other European East - and West Indiamen as well. The Flemish ships anchored in the Bay of Porto Praia on the island Santiago. In this harbour, the Portuguese governor always welcomed them very friendly and regularly invited the captains, supercargoes - the merchants on board - and officers at his table. Being of Flemish origin was here considered as an advantage, for in March 1720 three Ostend East Indiamen - the "*St. Franciscus-Xaverius*", the "*Stadt Oostende*" and the "*Prins Eugenius*" - arriving on the roads of Porto Praia showing English flags were kindly advised by the Portuguese governor to use the Imperial colours. Although not very clearly explained in the journal of the "*St. Franciscus-Xaverius*", it seemed that the English did not have a good reputation in Santiago¹².

Porto Praia became the exquisite place for the crew to barter clothes, linen and trinkets for fresh food. The unknown writer of the journal of the Imperial Chinaman "*St. Elisabeth*" mentioned in 1724 that he gave a pair of threadbare trousers to a black native in exchange for a pig of 60 pounds. He also bartered a knife for 7 coconuts and 40 oranges¹³. Several sailors also brought on board monkeys as pets¹⁴.

The official ship's victuals purchased in Porto Praia by preference consisted of living cattle - the purser of the "*St. Elisabeth*" bought 8 sheep, 2 pigs and 4 cows - poultry, fresh vegetables, fruit and drinking-water.

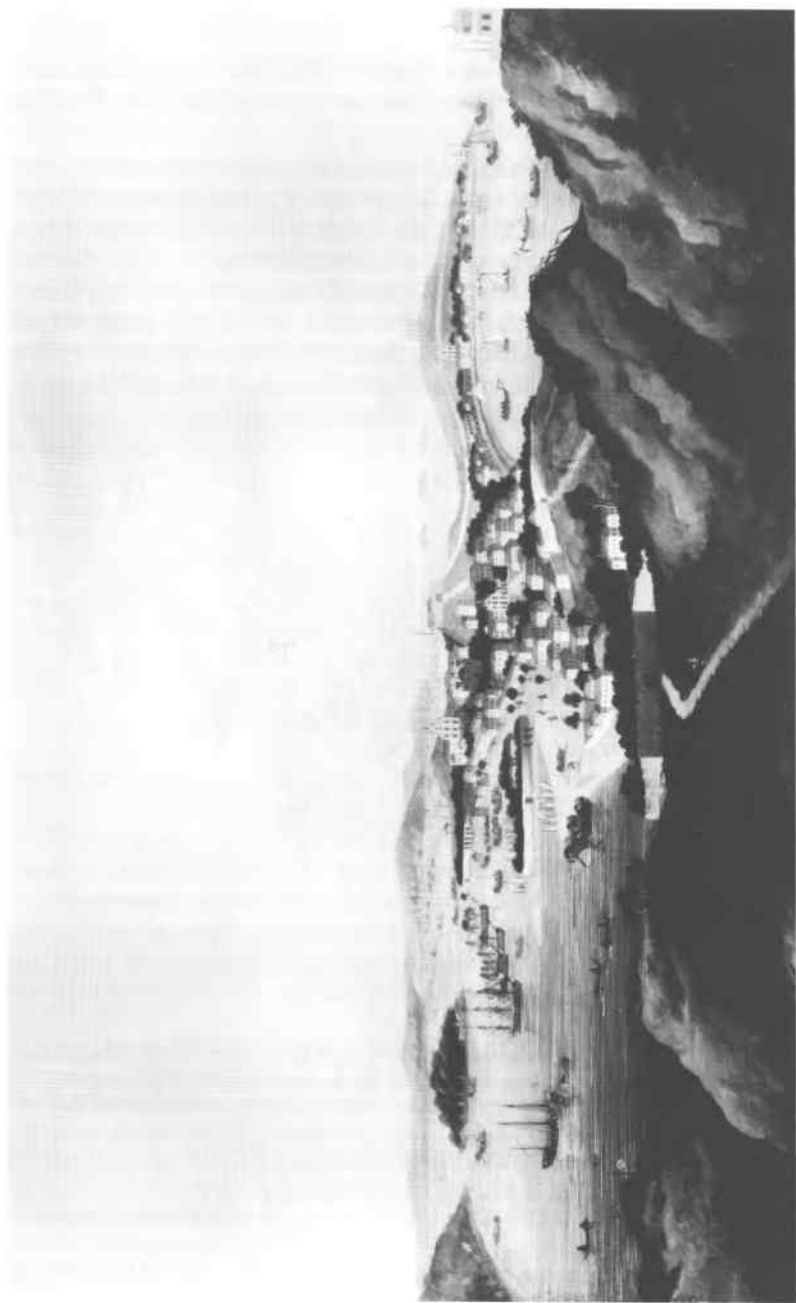
Normally the next stage on the voyages to the East was the Cape of Good Hope. However, the Dutch East India Company (V.O.C.) considered the Ostenders as "*interlopers*". Asking for assistance, even water, became almost impossible. On the outward-voyage only one Imperial vessel the "*Keyser Carolus VI*" (1718) tried in vain to call at the Cape. This ship, under the command of Godefroy de la Merveille - an experienced captain from St. Malo - was in a very bad shape, but the Dutch ordered the captain to leave at once. De la Merveille was not a man to give up easily. He sheltered for some weeks in Saldanha Bay, near the Cape colony, under French colours and on Christmas Eve, 1718 shipped into Table Bay again, hoping to enlist the active support of other foreign vessels then at anchor there. His plan failed and he had to continue his journey with a hardly seaworthy ship¹⁵.

¹² Private collection Baron de Brouwer, op. cit., f° 20 - 22.

¹³ Koninklijke Bibliotheek Brussel (K.B.B.), Hs. III - 966, diary of the "*St. Elisabeth*", f° 5 - 6.

¹⁴ Private collection Baron de Brouwer, op. cit., f° 22.

¹⁵ M. BOUCHER, *Flemish interlopers beyond the Cape of Good Hope, 1715 - 1723*, in *Historia* 21,2 (1976), p. 121 - 131. Boucher wrongly mentioned that this incident with the "*Keyser Carolus VI*" happened on the return-voyage (A.R.B., Raad van Financiën nr 8604).



View of Macau, ca. 1770. On the left side the roads for European Chinamen and other seagoing-vessels were situated (Hong Kong Museum of Art, Hong Kong).

The arrival of the Ostenders was a lively event for the local inhabitants. We found that the Dutch family Meijer took the opportunity to embark on the "Keyser Carolus VI" for India¹⁶.

In consequence of this incident the Imperial ships preferred to follow from 1718 on an alternative route to avoid a call at the Cape and even managed to sail faster through the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean. It became common practice for the Ostenders to proceed further south than the Cape. Several East Indiamen made a land fall at Tristan da Cunha. In this area, they turned east, hoping to meet the westerlies so that they could reach the Indian Ocean very quickly¹⁷. If necessary, ships bound for Arabia and India could provision a few weeks later a second time in Moçambique or at the island Johanna, nowadays Anjouan in the Comores Archipelago.

Goa and Macau

Once arrived in Asia, the Luso-Flemish contacts were limited during the period preceding the foundation of the G.I.C. At first the Ostenders possessed no factories in this area and were obliged to sail from port to port in East India until a complete cargo was gathered. An exception has to be made for the China ventures in the course of which the transactions only took place in Canton. Indiamen using this method visited several ports at the Malabar coast (south-west-India) before calling at Goa, the Portuguese overseas capital, in pursuit of pepper and textiles. Free Indian harbours, like Colechi and Calicut, where unlimited trade without Dutch interference was possible, were frequented by the Imperials. Also in the French factory Mahé and at the tiny Danish trading-post Oddeway Torre trade assistance was never refused¹⁸. In contradiction with the official policy of the E.I.C., Robert Adams, the head of the English settlement Anjengo (near Calicut), became a major supplier of pepper to the Ostenders¹⁹. Informed by their network of spies at the Malabar coast, the Dutch protested against Adams' behaviour, but the factor of

¹⁶ J. PARMENTIER, *De holle compagnie. Smokkel en legale handel onder Zuidnederlandse vlag in Bengalen, ca. 1720 - 1744*. Hilversum, 1992, p. 11. The youngest daughter of the Meijer-family, Anna Comelia, married in India François de Schonamille, later on governor of the Imperial factory Banquibazar in Bengal.

¹⁷ K. DEGRYSE and J. PARMENTIER, *Maritime Aspects*, p. 153.

¹⁸ A.R.B., Raad van Financiën nr 8604; Universiteitsbibliotheek Gent (V.B.G.), Hs. nr. 929, Journal of the "Sint-Pieter" (1721 - '22) and K.B.B., Hs. II - 161, Journal of the "Concordia" (1719 - '20).

¹⁹ J. PARMENTIER, *De specerijhandel van de Oostendse Oost-Indiëvaarders, 1714 - 1735*, in: *Specerijkelijk. De specerijenroutes*. Brussel, 1992, p. 232.

Anjengo argued that the English East India Company would always be served by preference and for the rest he was free to negotiate with all other nations²⁰.

Only in the port of Mangalore, at the mid-coast of Malabar, the Flemish merchants once started trading relations with the Portuguese residents. The supercargoes of the "*Concordia*" (1719 - 1720) bought a not specified quantity of cowries over there²¹. These little sea-shells originated from the Maldivian Islands and were shipped to Europe as barter-products in the Guinea-trade. The cowries were widely used as a standard value as well as a currency on the Slave Coast (Togo and Benin)²².

Sailing to the north, the next stop became Goa, but the commercial facilities there were very poor. This town was not anymore the cosmopolitan city, the centre of Euro-Asian traffic nor the leading seaport of intra-Asian trade Jan Huygen van Linschoten described in 1596²³. The chaplain on board of the "*Concordia*" (1719 - '20), Servatius Varrée, mirrored us a completely different picture; only a shadow was left of this once flourishing town. Buildings were in decay and commerce was marginal due to the exorbitant export-taxes of 10 % demanded by the Portuguese. Only the cloisters and churches were - more than necessary - well-maintained²⁴. This view on the Portuguese presence and activities in Goa matched with the 18th century-reality. Since the 17th century Lisbon and Goa had gradually lost grip on the Euro-Asian traffic and their superior position in the pepper-trade was fading. Around 1650 the Dutch and English companies dominated trade with the East and the Portuguese were relegated to the background²⁵. However, the Portuguese Crown was determined to revive the direct trade with India by establishing a national trading company in the 1690s. This enterprise was

²⁰ Algemeen Rijksarchief Den Haag (A.R.D.H.), V.O.C. nr. 1897, Letters from the Malabar coast, April 1718. In this case the attitude of the Dutch was rather hypocritical because they also purchased large quantities of pepper from Robert Adams (J. PARMENTIER, *De specerijhandel*, p. 232 - 234).

²¹ K.B.B., Hs. II - 161, Journal of the "*Concordia*", 1/1/1720.

²² M. JOHNSON, *The Cowrie Currencies of West Africa*, in: Journal of African History, vol. 11, n° 1 (1970), p. 14 - 28.

²³ H. KERN, *Itinerario. Voyage ofte schipvaert van Jan Huygen van Linschoten naer Oost ofte Portugaels Indiën, 1579 - 1592*. Linschoten-Vereeniging II, dl. 1, 's Gravenhage, 1910, p. 120 - 124.

²⁴ K.B.B., Hs. II - 161, Journal of the "*Concordia*", 30/8/1720.

²⁵ S. ARASARATNAM, *India and the Indian Ocean in the Seventeenth Century* in: A. DAS GUPTA and M.N. PEARSON (ed.), *India and the Indian Ocean 1500 - 1800*. Calcutta, 1987, p. 94 - 130.

funded in good measure by wealthy merchants based at Goa. It received a twelve-year concession, during which period it was granted a monopoly over trade in a large number of commodities. Unfortunately for this company, which was rather successful, the fall of the Portuguese stronghold Mombasa (East Africa) in late 1698 became the occasion for pressures on the Viceroy of Goa from private traders to suppress its activities, on the grounds that it neglected the security of Portuguese possessions for the single-minded pursuit of profit. Thus, in 1700, the company merged with another Lisbon-based company, which only lasted a few years²⁶.

Fifteen years later, when the Imperial colours were first spotted in India, private merchants organised from Lisbon a few ventures quite similar to the initial Flemish East India expeditions.

As far as we were able to retrace, the initiative was taken by English adventurers sailing with Portuguese passports and once even Imperial credentials issued in Leghorn (Livorno) were used²⁷. Dutch and English sources mention four so-called "Portuguese" voyages. The first journey was originated by Henry Johnson of London with the frigate "*St. Francisco Xavier*" (1715) towards China and Bengal. The English supercargo John Opie and captain Peter Solgard were the commanders of two expeditions in 1715 and 1717, with the "*Charles the 6th*", bound for Borneo and China²⁸. The Chinaman "*Sta. Catharina*" (1717 - 1718) was the last suspicious outfitting under Portuguese commission. According to the V.O.C. the Irishman Pedro French set up this enterprise²⁹. Like the Ostend ventures the Anglo-Portuguese "interlopers" were banned out of Asian places controlled by the Dutch and the English.

It is not very clear if these voyages were profitable at all. We only have indications that results were not comparable to the successful Ostend expeditions. Concerning the last journey of captain Solgard, an English informant wrote that "her owners are greatly frustrated of their expectations"³⁰.

²⁶ S. SUBRAHMANYAM, *The Portuguese Empire in Asia 1500 - 1700 : A Political and Economic History*. London/New York, 1993, p. 186 - 188.

²⁷ A.R.D.H., V.O.C. nr. 1878, Generale Missiven, 30/11/1717, f° 577 and I.O.L., H.M.S. n° 74, f° 473.

²⁸ A.R.D.H., V.O.C. nr. 1872, Generale Missiven, 30/11/1716, f° 671 - 672.

²⁹ A.R.D.H., V.O.C. nr. 1878, Generale Missiven, 30/11/1717, f° 578.

³⁰ I.O.L. H.M.S. n° 74 f° 453.

As sketched above, one might think that the Portuguese did not play a prominent role in the East India trade anymore. Certainly the Euro-Asian shipping was taken over by other Europeans, but inside the Asian commerce the Lusitanian presence continued to be important. In particular, an examination of both English and French trade in the first decennia of the 18th century reveals the existence of structures of cooperation between these nations and the Portuguese, who were far more expert than these other Europeans at understanding the structure and functioning of Asian markets and political systems³¹. Especially with the participation of the Portuguese private traders in the Bengal intra-Asian trade and in the traffic from Macau the Imperials got acquainted with.

As soon as the Flemish Chinamen moored at Macau, the captains and the supercargoes paid a courtesy visit to the town's Portuguese governor, during which they would enquire about the political situation in China and the commercial facilities in Canton, nowadays Guangzhou. This Chinese inland-port alongside the Pearl River became in this period the only window to the West. From the late 17th century onwards, European trade with China was centralised in Canton and strictly regulated³². Emperor K'ang-hsi (1662 - 1722) even rigorously enforced this policy in 1717. After being informed that in the province Soochow (south-east China) many of the Chinese ocean-going vessels built there, were sold overseas and rice was smuggled out to foreign countries - both acts would deprive China of scarce resources and it might be a threat to the country's maritime defence - K'ang-hsi imposed a ban, which lasted until 1727, on the native trade with Manila and the V.O.C.-capital Batavia on Java³³. The Portuguese and the Chinese in Macau welcomed K'ang-hsi's commercial restrictions for it gave the deathblow to the flourishing trade of the Cantonese junks to Batavia. Moreover, the steadily growing Dutch demand for tea benefited mainly the Macauese shipowning merchants, who took advantage of the opportunity to bump up their prices³⁴.

³¹ S. SUBRAHMANYAM, *The Portuguese Empire*, p. 181 - 196.

³² J. PARMENTIER, *Tea Time in Flanders. The maritime trade between the Southern Netherlands and China in the 18th century*, Gent, 1996, p. 94 - 98.

³³ NG CHIN-KEONG, *The case of Chen I-lao : Maritime Trade and Overseas Chinese Policies, 1717 - 1754*, in: R. PTAK and D. ROTHERMUND (ed.), *Emporia. Commodities and Entrepreneurs in Asian Maritime Trade*, c. 1400 - 1750, Stuttgart, 1991, p. 377 - 378.

³⁴ The number of ocean-going ships registered in Macau rose from 9 to 23 in a single year (C.R. BOXER, *Fidalgos in the Far East 1550 - 1770. Fact and Fancy in the history of Macao*, The Hague, 1948, p. 211).

Loff		Coopees.
		149. Stücken ungefähr lang 15. Ell. breit 1. Ell. 15. Zoll.
Cost		
Nro 15.	50. ft. Coopees	- Charles Pike - 7.19 - - 379:22
Cost 60 ft	16. 50. ft. dito	- Alexander Huming - - 82 - - 108:4
	17. 49. ft. dito m. o. w.	- Charles Pike - - 7.16 - - 367:16
		11.50:10
		Bolfaeks.
		66. Stücken ungefähr lang 15. Ell. breit 1. Ell. 11. Zoll.
Cost 60 ft	18. 66. ft. Bolfaeks. m. o. w.	Tempest. Milner - - 7.1. - - 464:2
		83. M ^r Milner sold all the goods he bought in at 10% Profit all together.
		Baftas.
		1433. Stücken ungefähr lang 16 ¹⁸ / ₁₂ Ell. breit von 1. Ell. 10. Zoll. bis 1. Ell. 12. Zoll.
All mixed	19. 59. ft. Baftas	Langeloh - - 9:5 - - 540:7
Cost 77 ft	20. 50. ft. dito	M. Lambrecht - - 8:18 - - 428:4
Cost 55 ft	21. 50. ft. dito	Langeloh - - 8:25 - - 439:2

Detail from the auction-book of the cargo of the Swedish Bengalman "Ulrica Eleonora" (1735). As mentioned here the Lisbon supercargo Tempest Milner sold his part of the Bengal textiles with 10 % profit (Rigsarkivet, København).

Meanwhile in the Dutch Republic the V.O.C.-directors wanted to eliminate the growing competition from the Ostenders, who carried a significant proportion of Chinese tea in the years 1719 - 1728 to Europe³⁵. To cripple the Flemish tea-trade, the Dutch East India Company commissioned her servants in Batavia to buy up as much tea as possible and also to obtain it in China itself. With this plan, the V.O.C. hoped to upset the balance between supply and demand in Canton, through which the acquisition of tea by other Europeans would be impeded since the Chinese tea production was geared to a limited demand. Purchasing tea in Canton would become more expensive and by sending a bulk of tea to Amsterdam, prices would drop in Europe. The V.O.C.-direction was even prepared to reckon with a possible loss on tea only to ruin the Ostend China-trade. Batavia carried out these instructions to the best of its ability, buying up as much tea as possible from the Portuguese in Macau for large sums of money, but did not send any ships to Canton. The market was, indeed, speedily flooded, but the Ostend merchants' competitive position was hardly weakened at all³⁶.

The failure of the Dutch attempt can be explained by the fact that the Imperial frigates made fast voyages, obliged as they were since the number of ports where they could take provisions, was very limited. The short journeys turned out to be advantageous for they lowered the cost of transport³⁷. Above all, the Ostenders purchased tea of higher quality, which was much in demand in England and even more wanted in the Dutch tea-houses. So the ironic situation occurred that merchants from Holland and Zeeland were present in great numbers at the Flemish tea-auctions, while at the same time the poorer tea of the V.O.C. was being hawked around the streets of Amsterdam³⁸.

These circumstances created by the Dutch and the Chinese emperor evolved into the paradoxical outcome that the Flemish and the Macauese merchants, both competitors in the tea-trade, had benefits of each others situation ; the

³⁵ During the period 1719 - '28, the Imperial ships brought 7, 047, 584 lb. Chinese tea to Ostend and Bruges or 41,78 % of the global import into Western Europe (J. PARMENTIER, *Tea Time in Flanders*, p. 110).

³⁶ C.J.A. JÖRG, *Porcelain and the Dutch China Trade*, The Hague, 1982, p. 20.

³⁷ K. DEGRYSE and J. PARMENTIER, *Maritime Aspects*, p. 148 - 162.

³⁸ J. PARMENTIER, "*Tea Time in Flanders*", p. 110 - 117 and K. DEGRYSE, *De Oostendse Chinahandel (1718 - 1735)*. in : Belgisch tijdschrift voor filologie en geschiedenis, III, 1974,2, p. 330 - 340.

Portuguese could sell large quantities of tea at very high prices to Batavia only because the Dutch tried to harm the Ostenders in their most important commodity, while on the other hand the Flemish were only too pleased to leave the trade in less profitable, cheaper sorts of tea to the V.O.C. and her Macaunese intermediaries³⁹.

Tempest Milner and Banquibazar

The third region in Asia where the Flemish-Portuguese interests in maritime trade got intertwined, was Bengal. In 1720, after a range of Imperial voyages towards India, Mocha (Arabia) and Canton, the "*Stadt Weenen*" anchored as the first Flemish frigate in the Ganges-delta. The commercial responsibility of the venture was entrusted to the Scotchman Alexander Hume, what proved to be an excellent choice⁴⁰. He explored the trade facilities and already received the offer to establish an Imperial factory in this region. The positive result of the expedition later on stimulated the directors of the Ostend Company to invest a lot of money in the Bengal trade and to organise a trading post over there, called Banquibazar⁴¹.

At the turn of the 18th century, the Bengal region - roughly defined to include the territory now covered by Bangladesh and the Indian states of West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa - provided nearly 40 percent of the average annual value in Asian goods the Dutch Company sent to Holland. The picture was not too different in the case of the English East India Company⁴². Bengal had

³⁹ The difference in the quality of the tea was also caused by the way it was packed. The Ostenders, like the E.I.C., used sheet lead to line the insides of the tea chests, what guaranteed more or less the freshness. The Dutch, by contrast, bought their tea in Batavia packed in baskets and bamboo-leaves. In addition, this tea had to be stored in damp warehouses until the return fleet to Holland was ready, which did not improve its quality (J. PARMENTIER *Tea Time in Flanders*, p. 101 and C.J.A. JÖRG, *Porcelain and the Dutch China Trade*, p. 19 -20).

⁴⁰ The Scot Alexander Hume can be described as an modern manager with exceptional diplomatic qualities. In very difficult circumstances he succeeded to persuade the local government in Bengal to give the Imperials the necessary facilities to set up a factory. The Dutch and certainly the English discovered his qualities and the latter offered him a seat in the Board of Directors of the East India Company, when the future of the Ostend Company became very uncertain in 1731. Alexander then moved to London and was also chosen as a member of the Secret Committee of the E.I.C., which largely determined its policy. For many years he represented the borough of Southwark in Parliament (J. PARMENTIER, *De holle compagnie*, p. 21 - 36 and C. GILL, *Merchants and Mariners of the 18th century*, London, 1961, p. 46 - 47).

⁴¹ J. PARMENTIER, *De holle compagnie*, p. 21 - 28 and L. BOEVA, *De factorij Banquibazar*. in : Spiegel Historiae XV (1980) p. 393 - 397.

⁴² O. PRAKASH, *The Dutch East India Company and the Economy of Bengal, 1630 - 1720*, Princeton, 1985, p. 8 - 10.

actually taken over the leadership of the Coromandelcoast (south-east India) as main production centre of textiles for the European market. The comparative advantage of the Ganges-delta in relation to the other textile-producing regions of India consisted in the manufacturing of fine cotton and silk textiles. In terms of quality, the cotton grown in the vicinity of Dacca did not have a rival on the entire subcontinent. The quantity grown, however, was rather small, and the bulk of the cotton used in the region had to be imported from areas such as Gujarat (north-west India). In raw silk, on the other hand, the region was not only self-sufficient but, in fact, supplied large quantities to other areas. More importantly, there was a long tradition of highly skilled craftsmanship in the region⁴³.

Compared to India, the area around the Ganges-estuary had a rather stable political structure. Directly proportional to this political stability the economic importance of Bengal increased. Until the 1740s, the Bengal export merchandises were cheaper than those produced by the Indian competitor, mainly because the food prices, due to abundant harvests, were much lower and the local labour-market overshadowed the Indian potential. Besides these trumps, the master card of Bengal became the rich variety of commodities. The principal items procured by the Europeans in the region were raw silk, textiles and saltpetre. Furthermore, this area functioned as a major producer of sugar, rice and wheat. All these profitable export products also formed the cynosure of the "country-trade" or intra-Asian trade, organised by both European and Asian merchants⁴⁴.

In contradistinction to the Flemish China-trade, which ended when the G.I.C. was dissolved by the Austrian emperor Charles VI in 1731, the factory Banquibazar survived the swan-song of the Ostend Company until 1744, despite the grim opposition of the Dutch and the English in the early years of its existence. Without any financial assistance of Vienna or Flanders, the new governor of the Imperial trading-post, the Ostender François de Schonamille, was able to participate more or less under-cover in the French country-trade, set up by the well-known director of the neighbouring factory Chandernagore, Joseph François Dupleix. Rather important for the success of Dupleix' network from Djeddah to Macau was the Portuguese element. French country-traders employed Luso-Indian seamen and pilots for their knowledge of certain routes. In other cases, the French and also the Ostenders managed to buy into or merge with established Portuguese partnerships. The brothers Alexandre, João and Domingos Carvalho, living in Calcutta and Madras

⁴³ O. PRAKASH, *The Dutch East India Company*, p. 53 - 62.

⁴⁴ J. PARMENTIER, *De holle compagnie*, p. 15 - 17.

together with their brother-in-law, Luis de Medeiros, formed with Dupleix and his friends a major association dealing with inter-Asian trade during the 1730s⁴⁵.

The Ostenders earned other revenues in Banquibazar by acting as agents on behalf of smaller companies such as the Danish Asiatic Company and the Swedish East India Company, or for private merchants, who possessed no settlements near the Ganges. Having a factory in Bengal implied that the Ostenders enjoyed a favourable tax-climate compared to non-residents who tried to develop commercial activities. In this framework, François de Schonamille managed, with the help of Dupleix and a few other French merchants, who were eager to rake in some extra money with illicit trade, to help three Portuguese expeditions to procure return cargoes for Brazil and Lisbon during the years 1733 - 1740⁴⁶. At first sight, three ships is a modest number, but we have to emphasize that these were the sole Portuguese vessels, sailing from Lisbon to Bengal in this period⁴⁷.

The initiator of the Portuguese Bengal ventures was Tempest Milner, an Englishman, born in Lisbon⁴⁸. It was hardly a surprise that an English entrepreneur was in charge of the expeditions for in the Portuguese capital a large and wealthy British merchant community was living, which participated in several branches of Portuguese commerce such as the Brazilian sugar-trade⁴⁹.

On board of the "*Nossa Senhora d'Adjuda*", Milner arrived in 1733 in Banquibazar after making a long journey along Surate, Bombay and the Coromandelcoast. As soon as this Portuguese vessel sailed up the Ganges, the Dutch and the English were alarmed. Both nations tried hard to prevent Milner from ordering textiles and silk by prohibiting their servants and their Bengali employees to negotiate with this newcomer. This situation meant an exquisite opportunity to Schonamille and Dupleix to offer their services in return of a high commission-fee of 7.5 percent on the cotton textiles and 8 percent on silk manufactures. In exchange, Tempest Milner could get these

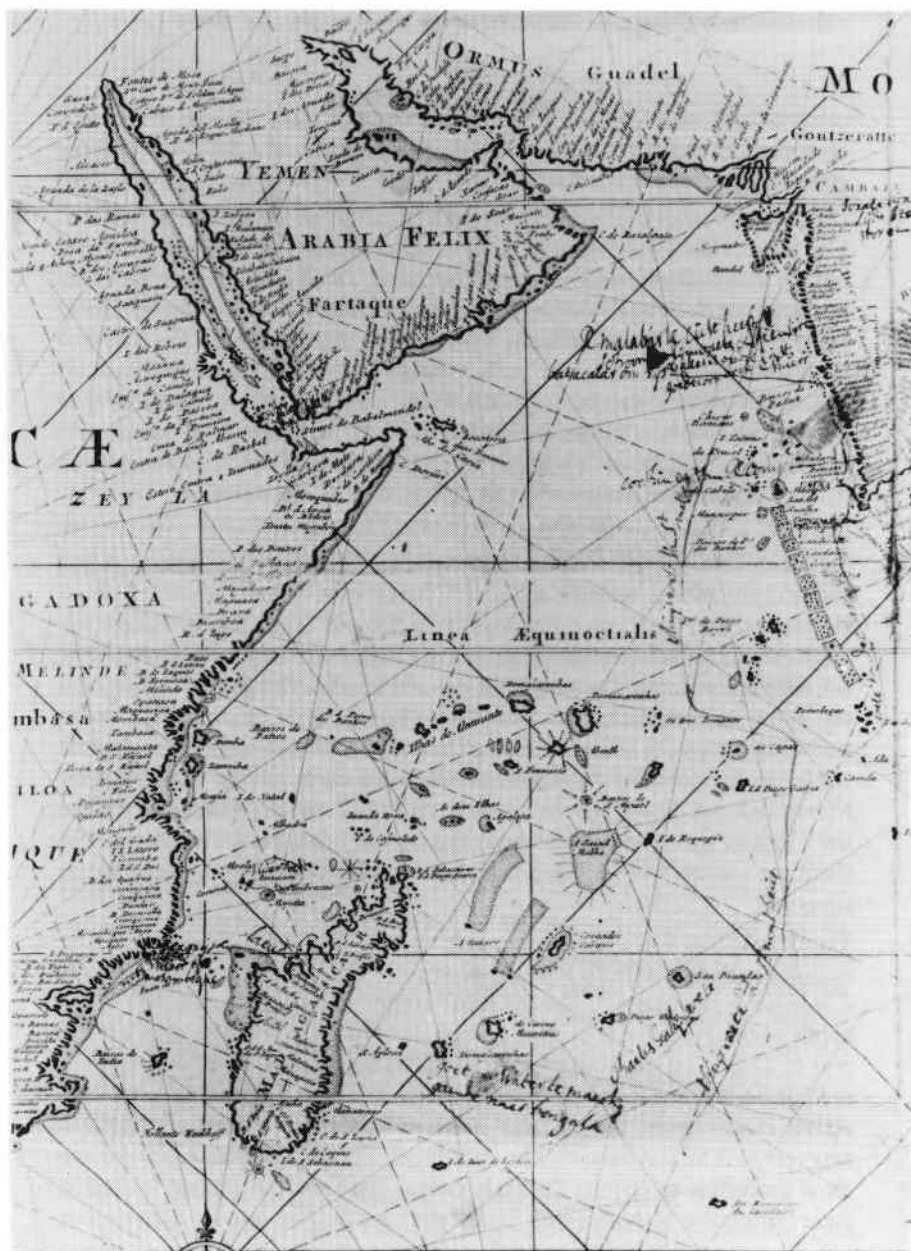
⁴⁵ C. MANNING, *French interest in Asian Trade, 1719 - 1748*. in: *Moyen Orient & Océan Indien*, VII (1990), p. 149 - 150 and J. PARMENTIER, *De holle compagnie*, p. 52 - 57.

⁴⁶ J. PARMENTIER, *De holle compagnie*, p. 58 - 77.

⁴⁷ V. MAGELHÃES GODINHO, *The Portuguese and the "Carreira da India", 1497 - 1810*. in: J.R. BRUIJN & F. S. GAASTRA (ed.) *Ships, Sailors and Spices. East India Companies and their Shipping in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries*, Amsterdam, 1993, p. 20 - 21.

⁴⁸ A.R.D.H., V.O.C. nr. 2304, *Missives of the Council of Hughli to Batavia*, 28/01/1734.

⁴⁹ H.E.S. FISHER, *The Portugal Trade. A Study of Anglo-Portuguese Commerce 1700 - 1770*, London, 1971, p. 128 - 131.



The Indian Ocean with the port of Moçambique, Madagascar and the islands Mauritius and Réunion, where the "Stadt Oostende" got involved in one of the biggest acts of piracy of the 18th century (Rijksarchief, Gent).

commodities at the level of the French and Ostend prices. Besides Milner was exempted to pay the traditional exuberant export taxes the local Muslim government normally demanded.

Unfortunately the Portuguese textile-orders arrived rather late in Banquibazar. The "*Nossa Senhora d'Adjuda*", not wanting to miss her passage to Europe, left the Ganges-delta without this large cargo. Tempest Milner on the other hand, stayed in Bengal waiting for his textiles. A few weeks later he finally managed to ship these products, valued at 60,000 rupees, on the Swedish Bengalman "*Ulrica Eleonora*" to Göteborg⁵⁰. Milner accompanied his cargo to Sweden. After a real Odyssey - the "*Ulrica Eleonora*" was haunted by an English man-of-war in the Indian Ocean - the Swedish frigate arrived in Göteborg on the 15th of February 1735. The auction-list of this ship revealed that 5,452 pieces of cotton and silk belonged to Tempest Milner⁵¹.

During his first stay in Bengal Milner got acquainted with François de Schonamille and he saw a possibility to revive the Imperial factory. While still being in Sweden he made up a plan to start a new company based in Lisbon. He proposed to the former directors of the Ostend Company to become the mayor financiers of this enterprise. Milner suggested the yearly outfitting of one ship bound to the Coromandelcoast and Bengal. The Indian textiles and the saltpetre would be sold in Brazil or in Europe. The Englishman George Snow, the first mate of the "*Ulrica Eleonora*", would be engaged as captain while the commercial aspects of the expeditions would be controlled by Milner himself. The reactions in Antwerp and Ghent were adverse because the Flemish merchanthouses thought that the relations with the two big maritime nations were still too vulnerable to give this new project financial support⁵².

Tempest Milner was not a man to give up so easily for in October 1737 he returned to Bengal with the Portuguese vessel "*Nossa Senhora da Conceicam ê St. Francisco Xavier*". The maritime command of this frigate was in the hands of the Portuguese captain Joseph da Costa Ribeira. The ship left the port of Lisbon on the 12th of March, called at Brazil and Moçambique, to moor in September at Porto Novo (Coromandelcoast). In this small, but very active trade-centre, the "*Nossa Senhora*" left behind two Portuguese supercargoes to purchase chintz. In Bengal, Tempest Milner followed the same procedure to acquire the main cargo. The Dutch in Bengal looked at these Portuguese activities with Argus' eyes and they reported to Batavia that

⁵⁰ 1 rupee = 22 Flemish "stuivers".

⁵¹ Rigsarkivet København, Vestindisk - Guin. Komp., A3 Ch. Barrington's rejse.

⁵² J. PARMENTIER, *De holle compagnie*, p. 61 - 63.

Milner had the intention to stay one year in the Ganges-delta. Furthermore the outward-cargo of the Portuguese vessel consisted of English cloth, liquor, Swedish iron, cochineal -probably from Brazil - and a lot of Spanish-American silver⁵³. All these data gave us the assumption that Milner's second voyage was very well arranged and probably sufficiently funded.

In January 1738 the "*Nossa Senhora*" made a "country-trade"-trip to the Coromandelcoast, on account of Dupleix and de Schonamille, to transport ca. 630,000 kilos of rice. Two months later, the Portuguese ship returned to Banquibazar loaded with salt and spelter. This intra-Asian trade was certainly very profitable because a famine disabled daily life on the Coromandelcoast for a number of years already⁵⁴. On the other hand, we have reasonable doubts that Milner's Bengal trade proved not to be so successful this time as expected. According to the Dutch servants in Bengal the Anglo-Portuguese supercargo "apparent eenige banqueroutes te hebben omtrent de leverantie van zijn aanbesteede goederen" (Milner failed to get all his orders delivered on time, due to a few bankruptcies of native merchants). Of course the Dutch side of the story was possibly exaggerated⁵⁵.

About the last Bengal expedition initiated by Tempest Milner in 1740, we are scarcely informed. We only know that during this stay in Banquibazar he joined a partnership with Dupleix, de Schonamille and the director of the Dutch factory Chinsura (Bengal) Jan Albert Sichterman, who earned in these years a fortune with private trade. Among other projects, they financed for certain two country-trade-ventures to Mocha and Moçambique⁵⁶.

Piracy at the Mascarenes

Browsing through the maritime history of the Ostend voyages to the East we encountered only one casual contact between an Imperial and a Portuguese East-Indiaship in a troubled atmosphere. In February 1721, the Flemish Indiaman "*Stadt Oostende*", returning from the Coromandelcoast and Mergui, nowadays Myeik in Myanmar, with mainly chintz as cargo, missed her passage to round the Cape due to a tempest. The ship made water and needed

⁵³ A.R.D.H., V.O.C. nr. 2427, Missive of the Council of Hughli to Batavia, 25/11/1737.

⁵⁴ S. ARASARATNAM, *Merchants, Companies and Commerce on the Coromandelcoast, 1650 - 1740*, Delhi, 1986, p. 178 - 179.

⁵⁵ A.R.D.H., V.O.C. nr. 2427, Missives of the Council of Hughli to Batavia, 30/11/1738.

⁵⁶ Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, Fonds Français nr. 8982, correspondence of J.F. Dupleix, 13/1 & 22/1/1740.

to be repaired urgently. Captain Andreas Flanderin decided to call at the island Bourbon (Réunion), one of the Mascarenes⁵⁷. Unfortunately, after a short stay of eight days, the Ostenders were ambushed on the 21st of April by two pirate ships under the command of the notorious captains Olivier La Buze and John Taylor⁵⁸. According to Flanderin the “*Stadt Oostende*” was an easy prey, for the sea-robberships were armed with 36 to 40 guns and had a complement of 700 men. The Flemish Indiaman was plundered and about 50 members of the Ostend crew were forced to become pirates, except 14 sailors who volunteered to serve Taylor. Of the cargo only 160 bales of Indian cottons, which had already been discharged and stored on Bourbon before the private attack, were salvaged⁵⁹. Two weeks earlier Taylor and his companions were even more lucky, while heading towards their major settlement on Madagascar they made a landfall at Bourbon and found on their arrival a Portuguese vessel at anchor, of 70 guns, but most of them thrown over board. This ship named “*Nossa Senhora do Cabo*” was not seaworthy anymore - her masts were lost - and so much disabled by the violent storm the “*Stadt Oostende*” met, that she became a prize to the pirates with very little or no resistance.

The company on board of the “*Nossa Senhora do Cabo*” was very distinguished. One of her passengers was Dom Luis Carlos Ignacio Xavier de Menes, Count of Ericeira and Marquis of Lourical, who was returning to Portugal after many years of service as Viceroy of Goa. Further captain Flanderin mentioned also that the archbishop of the Portuguese capital in India, the highest catholic leader in Asia, accompanied Dom Luis. The Portuguese vessel was not only carrying her own rich cargo of Oriental silks, spices and porcelains, she was also bringing home the Viceroy’s personal fortune : chests, brimming with diamonds, exotic Indian art, and precious illuminated manuscripts. The diamonds alone would command a worth of more than £ 500,000 Sterling, an enormous sum in purchasing power of the 18th century. The art treasures and manuscripts were beyond price.

Dom Luis was made a prisoner by the pirates and obliged to ransom ; but in consideration of his great loss, they agreed after some demurrings, to accept a small ransom of £ 400 Sterling - advanced by the French governor of Bourbon - and to set him and the other prisoners ashore, with empty promises

⁵⁷ Rijksarchief Brugge (R.A.B.), Not. F.J. Van Caillie, Depot 1941, nr. 14, akte 51, 6/4/1722.

⁵⁸ C. GREY, *Pirates of the Eastern Seas (1617 - 1723)*, London, 1993, p. 323.

⁵⁹ R.A.B., Not. F. J. Van Caillie, Depot 1941, nr. 14, akte 51, 6/4/1722.

to leave a ship that they might transport themselves, because the island was not thought in a condition to maintain a few hundred stranded people⁶⁰.

In the meantime Taylor and La Buze decided to send the "*Stadt Oostende*" with a mixed crew of Ostenders, Portuguese and sea-robbers to Madagascar, to spread the news of their success and to prepare masts for the "*Nossa Senhora do Cabo*". The main body of the outlaws would follow soon after, without regard to the sufferers, carrying 200 Moçambique slaves with them in the Portuguese ship. But the intoxication of victory proved to be an advantage to the Ostenders. Just arrived in Madagascar, the brave second mate of the "*Stadt Oostende*", John Freeman organised a mutiny and was able to overmaster the handful corsairs, who had to guard the Flemish-Portuguese crew on the 22nd of July. Before Taylor and the others anchored there the "*Stadt Oostende*" set sail towards the Portuguese colony of Moçambique, a port the pirates would not dare to attack openly⁶¹. The governor of this East-African trading-station confiscated the Ostend Indiaman and forced the crew, now under Portuguese command, to return to Goa. On the 20th of December 1720 Michel de Febure, the chaplain of the Imperial frigate "*Sint-Pieter*", saw the unfortunate "*Stadt Oostende*" lying on the wharf of Goa. The ship was refitted and would soon sail again under Portuguese colours. All the seamen of this ship were placed on different Portuguese vessels⁶².

The wandering of the "*Stadt Oostende*" ended on the coast of Java in August 1723. Under the Portuguese name "*Nossa Senhora d'Adjuda Santo Christo*" she made a journey to Timor, a centre of sandalwood-trade in the east of the Malay Archipelago. On the homebound-voyage the ship was wrecked near Sumanap (north east Java), but most of the mariners were saved. Two of the rescued men, Jan de Waal from Dendermonde and the Londoner John Bertram, formed a part of the original crew which left Ostend in February 1720. They retailed the Dutch in Batavia their adventures and were allowed to return to Europe in V.O.C.-service⁶³.

⁶⁰ One of our main sources describing the dramatic story of the "*Nossa Senhora do Cabo*" is the vivid narrative of Daniël Defoe, which he published in 1724 under the pseudonym Captain Charles Johnson, *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pirates*, London, 1724, p. 99 - 101.

⁶¹ A.R.B., Admiraliteit nrs 868 & 872 and A.R.D.H., V.O.C. nr. 1986, Generale Missiven, 3/12/1723, f° 770 - 771.

⁶² U.B.G., Hs. nr. 929, Journal of the "*Sint-Pieter*" (1721 - 1722).

⁶³ A.R.D.H., V.O.C. nr. 1986, Generale Missiven, 3/12/1723, f° 770.

What happened with the dazed seamen stock on the island Bourbon? Captain Flanderin first tried, with the help of the local French governor, to recover the complete cargo of the “*Stadt Oostende*”. For this plan the French governor even invited “*diversche van de zeeroovers t’sijnen huysen aen tafel*” (several pirates to have dinner in his home), but restitution of the Imperial goods was never granted⁶⁴. At a loss what to do Flanderin, accompanied by the chaplain, three supercargoes, one sailor and his young son Andreas Jacobus took a passage in November 1721 with the French Company-ship “*Triton*”⁶⁵. On the Island St. Helena they changed to a returning English Mochaman, which sailed them to Dover.

Thirteen other seamen, who took part in the mutiny set up by Freeman, arrived in 1723 on the roads of Ostend. They reclaimed one third of the proceeds of the salvaged cargo, because Flanderin brought 160 bales of Indian cottons with him to Flanders⁶⁶. Furthermore, another part of the freight was auctioned by the Portuguese in Goa, on behalf of the Flemish shipowners Maelcamp and Soenens⁶⁷. Finally on 17 February 1730, the Council of Flanders, the supreme court in the Austrian Netherlands, decided to award a small allowance to the unfortunate sailors or to their heirs⁶⁸.

The Brazilian Connection

Sailing from Asia to Flanders, the Imperial vessels had to tackle a similar problem as on the outward-voyages; crossing the Atlantic to Europe without calling at the cape or at the English fort on the island St. Helena, which was certainly a place to be avoided. The first Ostend Indiaman “*St. Mattheus*” tried in 1716 to buy at St. Helena two dozens of lemons to cure some of the sailors suffering from scurvy, instead this ship was regaled by the English with cannon-balls which costed the life of the captain. After this incident the first mate, Richard Gargan, did not panic and headed directly for Pernambuco (Recife) in Brazil, where the Portuguese gave the necessary assistance.

⁶⁴ R.A.B., Not. F.J. Van Caillie, Depot 1941, nr. 14, akte 51, 6/4/1722.

⁶⁵ The captain's son, aged 13 in 1721, made a successful career as supercargo with the Ostend Company and the Swedish East India Company, before he settled in Ostend as a well-respected merchant (C. KONINCKX, *Andreas Jacobus Flanderin. Een achttiende eeuwse middelgrote koopman*, in: *Bijdragen tot de Geschiedenis*, LV1 (1973), p. 243 - 290).

⁶⁶ A.R.B., Admiraliteit nr. 872 and R.A.B., Not. F.J. Van Caillie, Depot 1940, nr. 27, akte 68, 4/12/1728.

⁶⁷ Stadsarchief Antwerpen (S.A.A.), Insolvente Boedelskamer nr. 1672, correspondentie J. De Pret aan Maelcamp & Soenens, 28/7, 2 & 4/8/1723.

⁶⁸ Rijksarchief Gent, Raad van Vlaanderen nr. 34557

Gargan wrote about this episode "et qu'en quatre jours de tems les malades du vaisseau presque désespérés ne pouvant remuer ny pieds ny mains, ont esté rétablis parfaitement par l'usage des chistrons et autres légumes"⁶⁹.

With this negative experience in mind, the traditional return-journey for the Flemish East-Indiamen was to round the Cape of Good Hope before the end of the north east monsoon - otherwise they had to winter near Madagascar or on the Mascarenes - and to look for the indispensable refreshments on the inhabited island Ascension, renowned for its turtles. But drinking-water was difficult to find there, so seldom ships made a call⁷⁰.

About two third of the Ostend ships made a detour to the Brazilian ports Rio de Janeiro, Bahia and Pernambuco, although it lengthened the voyage with two or three weeks⁷¹. A few ships tried to sail non-stop from Asia to Ostend, but they encountered serious problems in reaching the home port. The Indiaman "*Stadt Ghendt*" (1721) made an attempt to complete the return journey in this way, though she had to call at Falmouth, in Cornwall, after more than six months at sea, because half of the men on board were suffering from scurvy. The captain had to muster new sailors to reach the roads of Ostend⁷².

For most seamen sailing with the Imperial East-India ships, Brazil became a rather attractive refreshment-station and an interesting spot for smuggle and illicit trade. This situation was already since the 17th century unintentionally stimulated by the Portuguese themselves. Portugal pursued orthodox economic policies towards her empire, restricting the growth of manufacturing and reserving trade to her own ports and nationals. Such conditions offered other European nations attractive opportunities for trade⁷³. Furthermore it already was a common habit since the 1660s that Portuguese Indiamen, the "*Carreira da India*", on the home bound-voyage put in at Bahia to sell Asian goods⁷⁴.

⁶⁹ A.R.B., Raad van Financiën nr. 8603.

⁷⁰ The crew of the Ostend Chinaman "*St. Franciscus Xaverius*" caught several turtles of 400 to 500 lb. on Ascension. Remarkable was that they found a bottle with a letter written by captain Becque of the Imperial ship "*St. Joseph*", who visited this island on the 7th of March 1720. Captain Philip de Moor of the "*St. Franciscus Xaverius*" also left behind a message in a bottle (Private collection Baron de Brouwer, log of the "*St. Franciscus Xaverius*", f^o 170).

⁷¹ K. DEGRYSE and J. PARMENTIER, *Maritime Aspects*, p. 155 - 156.

⁷² A.R.B., Admiraliteit nr. 663 - 664, log of the "*Stadt Ghendt*" (1721 - '22).

⁷³ H.E.S. FISHER, *The Portugal Trade*, p. 8.

⁷⁴ S. SUBRAHMANYAM, *The Portuguese Empire*, p. 183 - 184.

The most extensive data on the Ostend smuggling affairs in Brazil were found in the diary of Servatius Varrée, the chaplain of the Indiaman "*Concordia*" (1719 - '20), who originated from Bruges. At the beginning of December 1720 the "*Concordia*" anchored near Rio de Janeiro, according to Varrée a port only seldom attended by foreign ships. Varrée, a Franciscan monk, was asked by the captain to put his habit on to accompany the supercargoes for the first contacts with the local government. This frock, the Ostenders believed, would make a good impression on the very religious Portuguese, and they hoped the Brazilian authorities would consider them as honest people. The first visit to the governor of Rio was a success and the Ostenders could freely purchase supplies. They were also allowed to spend some extra time for repairing the ship, but selling some of the cargo was strictly forbidden. Varrée's reaction on this prohibition showed very well the intentions of the Imperials: "hadde de Captain deze conditiën geweten wij en souden sekerlijk naer dese staet niet gecommen hebben" (if the captain had known that trade was forbidden he would surely not have called at this town). Meanwhile several Portuguese civil servants visited the "*Concordia*" and controlled her cargo. Five days after their arrival, four of the mayor Ostend officers, while walking in the streets of Rio, were arrested and put into jail, because the Brazilians suspected illicit trade. The chaplain had to use all his diplomatic skills - with a long visit to the bishop of Rio de Janeiro and the use of a recommendation letter of the bishop of Bruges - to obtain the release of his unfortunate friends. This incident was settled and the Flemish captain, Joseph de Gheselle, even got the permission to sell six slaves - a very odd cargo for an Indiaman - originated from Goa and Calicut to the Portuguese governor. In spite of the prohibition many members of the crew still succeeded in disposing of a large quantity of their private goods, the "*pacotilles*", in Rio.

After this adventure the "*Concordia*" left for Pernambuco, where captain de Gheselle knew customers to buy a part of the Indian textiles on board. Strange enough this transaction was instructed by the shipowners from the start of the journey⁷⁵. Most likely this fact explains why the expedition of the "*Concordia*" only gave a meagre benefit of less than 2 percent to the other financiers of this voyage⁷⁶.

⁷⁵ K.B.B., Hs. II - 161, Journal of the "*Concordia*" (1719 - '20).

⁷⁶ J. PARMENTIER, *De handelaars en supercargo's in de Oostendse Moka- en Indiahandel (1714 - 1735)*, in: *Handelingen van het Genootschap voor Geschiedenis te Brugge*, CXXII (1985) 3 - 4, p. 202.

The above-described example of illegal trade in Brazil was not an isolated case during the private East-India enterprises from Ostend. In the company-period, the directors tried to embank this problem, which costed the G.I.C. a lot of money, by giving specific instructions to the captains. In 1725, the Ostend Company forbade captain De Winter, commander of the Bengalman "*Carolus Sextus*", to negotiate in Brazil otherwise the Company would confiscate his wages and his belongings. The directors even advised him to provision in Benguella, at the coast of Angola, above Bahia or Pernambuco⁷⁷.

To understand better what was going wrong - especially with smuggling - the G.I.C.-direction already in 1724 put a spy on board of the Chinaman "*S^t. Elisabeth*". This informant, Gerard de Bock, had to look more specifically if illegal private trade by the crew in Canton, Brazil or in other ports of call existed. The result of his investigation affirmed the suspicions of the directors⁷⁸.

In order to solve this issue, the G.I.C. launched in 1725 a realistic project to install a refreshment-station on the deserted island Fernando de Noronho, situated near the north east coast of Brazil⁷⁹. On the return voyage in 1727 two Ostend Chinamen, the "*Marquis de Prié*" and the "*Keyzerinne*" visited this island. Captain Guillaume de Brouwer of the "*Marquis de Prié*" wrote a very positive report on the possibilities to establish there a small settlement⁸⁰. Alas the abolition of the Ostend Company prevented the completion of this promising project.

Already from the start of the G.I.C. the directors fitted out every year one or two small vessels -brigantines, hookerships or galliots - to Brazil or the Azores to bring the latest news on the political situation in Europe, and on the safety of the routes for the returning ships from Asia. In order to guarantee the efficiency of this message-service, the company engaged Manuel de Sao Payo y Freithes as the responsible agent in Bahia. The system was certainly not waterproof. The Portuguese authorities in Bahia always intercepted the messages and once one of the "aviso"-ships "*Dolphin*" 1727, was not allowed to enter the port of Bahia⁸¹.

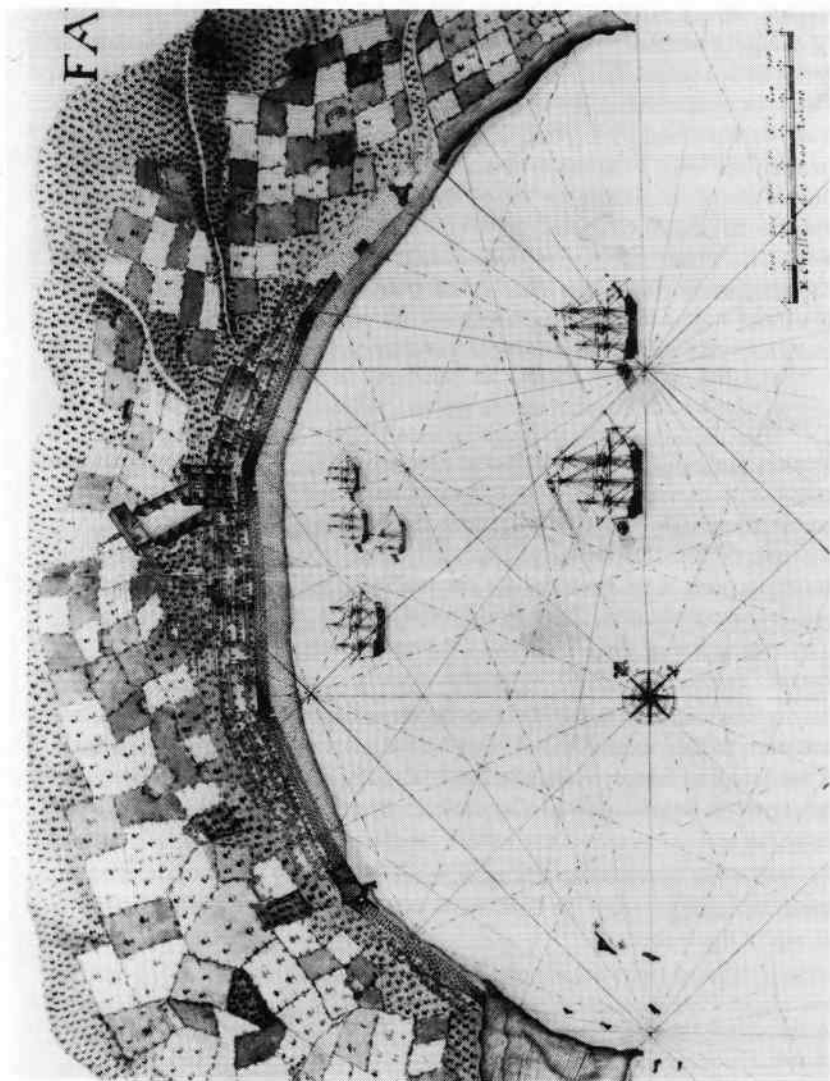
⁷⁷ U.B.G., Fonds Hye-Hoys Hs. 1879.

⁷⁸ S.A.A., Generale Indische Compagnie (G.I.C.) nr. 5689bis.

⁷⁹ S.A.A., G.I.C. nrs. 5705 & 5740.

⁸⁰ J. PARMENTIER, *Guilielmo de Brouwer (1693 - 1767) En skitse af en kaptajn, handelsmand og rederi i det 18. århundrede.* in : Maritiem Kontakt 14, København, 1990, p. 69 -70.

⁸¹ U.B.G., Fonds Hye-Hoys Hss. 1837, 1852 & 1853.



The roadstead of the island of Faial (Azores) with the Flemish Chinamen "Arent" and "St. Elisabeth" (1724) at anchor (Stadsarchief, Antwerpen).

On the whole, we may assume that during the company-period it became more difficult for the Ostend East-Indiaman to trade in the Brazilian ports. Especially in Bahia smuggling was sometimes impossible. Captain Larmes of the Chinaman "*Leeuw*" (1727) mentioned that shortly after they arrived in Bahia the Viceroy "fit publier par tous les carfours de la ville et fauxbourg, sur paine de mort a tous les habitants de negotier avecq nous"⁸². Nevertheless the smuggle-activities still continued and even flourished in this period on the Portuguese islands in the Atlantic Ocean. The island Faial, one of the Azores, was often frequented. Like on Santiago (Cape Verde Islands) the Ostenders always got a friendly reception and many times they received there the latest instructions from Flanders. The anonymous writer of the "*St. Elisabeth*"-journal noted that during the short stay at Faial a lot of Portuguese came on board to bargain porcelain and tea⁸³. This commerce was confirmed by Gerard de Bock's observations. He noticed that mainly the sailors and not the officers participated in this trade. It was possible to make a handsome profit by selling Indian and Chinese commodities on the Azores, but most of the seamen spent their easy earned money at once on liquor and other pleasures⁸⁴.

Conclusion

We may state that on the whole, the Flemish-Portuguese relations in Asia, Brazil and the Atlantic Islands formed a non-negligible factor in the development of the East-India trade in the Austrian Netherlands during the first half of the 18th century. Especially the Cape Verde Islands and the Brazilian ports were essential for the maritime well-being of the Flemish East-India expeditions. These Portuguese ports of call counterweighted the grim opposition of the Dutch and the English, who wanted to rule out the Ostend "*interlopers*" with all possible means.

The commercial contacts in Asia on the other hand, only became important in relation to the modest Ostend intra-Asian trade and in the survival struggle of the Imperial factory Banquibazar. Indirectly Macau and the Portuguese tea-export to Batavia played a key role in the success of the Ostend China-trade.

The Brazilian connection finally offered interesting opportunities to an extensive smuggle from the Ostenders, from which we have only discerned the top of the iceberg.

⁸² U.B.G., Fonds Hye-Hoys Hs. 1837, Journal of the "*Leeuw*" (1726 - '27).

⁸³ K.B.B., Hs. III-966, Journal of the "*St. Elisabeth*" (1724 - '25).

⁸⁴ S.A.A., G.I.C. nr. 5689 bis.

SAMENVATTING

Kort na de Vrede van Utrecht (1713) toonden handelshuizen uit Oostende, Antwerpen, Gent en Brugge een levendige belangstelling voor rechtstreekse handel met Oost-Indië. De Zuid-Nederlandse ondernemers waren verplicht om hun commerciële horizon te verruimen omdat zij hun bevoorrechte positie op de Iberische markt waren kwijtgespeeld. De eerste "Oostendse" uitredingen naar Indië bleken zeer succesvol, wat de grote maritieme naties, de Nederlandse Republiek en Engeland, ongerust maakte. Deze mogendheden wensten geen nieuwe mededinger in Azië en poogden met alle middelen de directe Oost-Indiëvaart vanuit Oostende te fnuiken. Dit noodzaakte de Vlaamse reders bondgenoten te zoeken in deze handelsrichting. Op die wijze groeide er geleidelijk aan een natuurlijke coalitie tussen de Oostenrijkse Nederlanden en Frankrijk, Denemarken en Portugal langs de zeeweg naar Indië. Reeds tijdens de eerste expedities ondervonden de Keizerlijke schepen heel wat moeilijkheden om geschikte en veilige ravitaillingsplaatsen te vinden tussen Vlaanderen en Kaap de Goede Hoop, omdat zowel de Engelsen in St. Helena als de Hollanders aan de Kaap de Zuid-Nederlanders vijandig behandelden. Zij beschouwden de "Oostendenaars" als "lorredraaijers" die hun monopolieposities aantastten. Met Portugese hulp wisten de Zuid-Nederlanders toch geschikte bevoorradingspunten te vinden. Op de heenreizen ankerden de Vlaamse fregatten bijna altijd aan de Portugese Kaapverdische eilanden, waar ze zonder problemen de scheepsvoorraden konden aanvullen. Hierdoor bleek het voor de Keizerlijken mogelijk om zonder halt te houden de Kaap te ronden ; in tegenstelling tot hun Engels-Nederlandse concurrenten, volgden zij een zuidelijke route langs de Tristan da Cunha-archipel, zodat ze konden profiteren van de "westerlies" (sterke westenwinden) om sneller de Indische Oceaan te bereiken. Op de terugreizen maakten de Keizerlijke Oost-Indiëvaarders een omweg langs de Braziliaanse havens Bahia, Rio de Janeiro en Pernambuco, waar men vrijelijk water en voedsel kon aanschaffen. Doch deze Braziliaanse aanlegplaatsen bleken tevens uitgelezen mogelijkheden te bieden om een smokkelhandel op te zetten. Vaak werden er heel wat Aziatische producten op illegale wijze aan de man gebracht, wat af en toe de goede relaties met de Portugezen daar vertroebelde.

In Oost-Indië vonden de Vlaams-Portugese contacten voornamelijk plaats in Macao, Goa en Bengalen. De Portugese kolonie Macao was de poort naar China, waar de Zuid-Nederlanders al hun informatie vergaarden om op optimale wijze thee aan te kopen. Goa vertolkte een sleutelrol in een lastig piratenverhaal, waarbij zowel de Portugezen als de Oostendenaars een schip

verloren. In Bengalen, waar de Keizerlijken tot 1745 de factorij Banquibazar uitbaatden, kwam er een zeer gunstige samenwerking tot stand zowel voor de Euro-Aziatische trafiek als voor de intra-Aziatische handel. De Engels-Portugese supercargo Tempest Milner en de Oostendse factorij-directeur van Banquibazar, François de Schonamille, zorgden ervoor dat beide naties aan de Ganges-delta commerciële activiteiten konden ontwikkelen.

Globaal bekeken betekende de positieve relaties met de Portugezen in Oost-Indië, Brazilië en de Atlantische eilanden een onmisbare schakel in de uitbouw van de Zuid-Nederlandse Oost-Indiëvaart tijdens de eerste decennia van de 18de eeuw.