

INTRODUCTION

CANTON PLAYED A VERY SPECIAL ROLE IN EARLY modern commerce, of which we are only now beginning to understand and appreciate. Foreign traders came from faraway places and China maintained the policy that, if they made the long journey to her shores, the men would be allowed to trade and return with cargos full of merchandise. In fact, the customs superintendents in Canton (Hoppos 戶部, also called *jiandu* 監督 in Chinese) often insisted on ships being completely full before granting them exit permits (Grand Chop 大船牌).

China had a special set of rules that governed such commerce. Ships must have some saleable cargo to trade in order to be allowed upriver. No foreign women were allowed at Canton and foreign officers were restricted to a small area outside of the city in the western suburbs. This area was located along the river and was fronted on the north by the Thirteen Hong Street (十三行街). In fact, the district and the buildings were also called the Thirteen Hong (十三行), even though there were actually more than thirteen of them.

The word *hong* (行) is a Cantonese pronunciation.¹ The term simply meant a licensed firm, and could refer to the buildings in which they were located or the merchants who owned them. From the late 1760s to the fire of 1 November 1822, there were actually seventeen distinct buildings in this district that foreigners could rent. These buildings were referred to as ‘factories’, a common eighteenth-century word for godown, trading station or warehouse. The factories were also called ‘hongs’. The British factory, for example, might also be called the British hong. In Canton these words were interchangeable.

Chinese merchants (called Hong merchants) were the owners and landlords of these buildings. These businessmen were licensed to trade with foreigners. During the time of this study

(1760–1822) there were usually around eight to twelve Hong merchants in operation each year. They competed with each other for a share of the foreign trade. Only about half of them—usually the more affluent—rented apartments to foreigners. Hong merchants were responsible for all of the fees and duties that were owed by each ship that they secured. They were also responsible for the good conduct of foreigners under their charge.

The foreign traders who did business in Canton were called ‘supercargos’ (*daban* 大班).² This term was actually an official post within the ranks of the various East India companies, but the term was also applied to private traders from India, the Americas and elsewhere. These men were in charge of the buying and selling of the cargos. Sometimes the captains of privately owned ships served in dual posts as both the master of the ship and supercargo. The large East India companies’ ships often had three to six supercargos assigned to each of them, whereas small ships might only have one or two. The chief supercargo was in charge, and then the 2nd and 3rd supercargo, and so on. As supercargos gained experience, they gradually moved up the ranks, which earned them more privileges and pay. Some of these men made many voyages to China, and spent several years in Canton and Macao taking care of their company’s affairs. Supercargos and their assistants were the main occupants of the factories in Canton.

Each supercargo was given responsibility for one part of the trade. For example, supercargos No. 1, No. 2 and their assistants might be put in charge of purchasing and packing all of the tea; supercargo No. 3 might be put in charge of receiving and selling all of the imports; supercargo No. 4 might be responsible for purchasing and packing all of the silks; and supercargo No. 5 might handle

1 In Mandarin the character 行 would be pronounced *hang* but everyone in Canton used *hong* so that is what we call them today.

2 The Cantonese pronunciation for *daban* 大班 is Taipan. Sometimes supercargos were called Taipans, but that term did not become widely used until after the East India companies ceased sending their ships to China in 1833.

all the chinaware, and so on. If there was only one supercargo to a ship then he and his assistants did everything. Companies that had many ships in China each year, and kept supercargos in residence, might assign officers to specific ships, rather than to specific cargos. For example, supercargos No. 5, No. 6 and their assistants might be assigned to handle the cargos of the first two ships that arrived, which included selling all imports and purchasing all exports. Supercargos No. 3 and No. 4 might be assigned to the third and fourth ships that arrived and so on.

The workload was distributed out between the supercargos and their assistants, but the way in which this was done varied between companies and from one year to the next. The directors in Europe might assign the posts and duties of every man before the ships left for China. Or, in the case of the private traders, those decisions might be made by the sponsors of the voyage and/or the owners of the ships. In some cases, the chief supercargo of a ship or company might hand out the assignments himself. In others, the supercargos of one company in China might meet together as a committee and decide as a group who should do what work.

The supercargos and their assistants received all the cargos and oversaw their proper handling and packaging. The writers (secretaries) kept the books and recorded all of the transactions. Sometimes companies required that documents be kept in duplicate or triplicate. Writers might serve as scribes as well and make hand written copies of those documents. In addition to these men, there were often pursers (treasurers) assigned to each ship. They made sure that each ship's account books were balanced. For example, the value of the imported cargo (according to the selling price) and money (usually Spanish dollars), minus expenses incurred in China, must equal the prime cost (purchase price) of the export cargo. The purser and captain were often the last persons to board the ships before they departed on their passage home. Sometimes writers or other officers doubled as pursers. The supercargo and/or captain of a small ship might do all of these duties himself.

All of these officers stayed in the factories in the foreigner quarter. The companies usually assigned eight to twelve men to stand guard, which they would do 24 hours a day. The factory doors were closed every evening around 10 o'clock and no one was admitted after hours. The guards were in charge of the raising and lowering of the flag each day and making sure no one entered the

factory who was not supposed to be there (such as Chinese women or other foreigners).

A Chinese comprador (*maiban* 買辦) was assigned to each factory and provided all the food and other necessities. He hired Chinese servants to help take care of the foreign guests. Supercargos, captains, assistants, writers, pursers and other officers did not clean or cook themselves. They depended on their house servants to provide for all their needs. Chinese cooks prepared the meals. Chinese servants served the meals, and did all the washing and cleaning—which included emptying out the chamber pots each morning. They also cleaned the spittoons, scrubbed the floors, delivered fresh drinking and washing water to the rooms, and anything else that was needed. Senior supercargos often had their own servants and/or slaves who attended to them as well, so these men were usually very well taken care of. In fact, at times when the trade was stopped and the Chinese servants were ordered to leave the factories, the supercargos often complained of not knowing how to cook or handle all of the other daily duties.

Foreign ships were required to anchor 20 kilometres downriver at Whampoa (Huangpu 黃埔). The three-masted square-sailed ships that went to Asia were called East Indiamen (regardless of whether they were company or privately owned). Each ship had a Chinese linguist and a ship comprador assigned to it. The linguists took care of ordering all of the permits for the vessel and corresponding with Chinese officials. The compradores supplied all of the daily provisions needed for the crew. The East India companies' ships usually had 100 to 150 seamen aboard whereas small ships might only have a few dozen men. All of these sailors needed food every day, which the ship compradores provided. The washing of clothes at Whampoa was taken care of by the myriad of sampan ladies who hovered about the ships every day.

Captains went back and forth regularly between Whampoa and Canton, monitoring the movement of cargos and ensuring that peace and harmony was maintained aboard the ships. It took upwards of four or five months to unload and load the large East India companies' vessels. During this time, the supercargos, assistants and writers spent most of their time at the factories in Canton. The ships of private traders from India and the United States were usually much smaller and might be unloaded and loaded within a few weeks.

After the imports were unloaded, supercargos would inspect the ships to ensure they were in good enough condition to receive their return cargos. If repairs were needed, this was the time to do it. Supercargos also went to Whampoa to inspect the ships after they were loaded to ensure everything was stowed properly. The captains and chief officers of the ships would, of course, monitor the receiving of cargo constantly, so everyone had a hand in its proper stowage.

In the early decades of the eighteenth century, supercargos often came and left with the ships each year. This meant that they only occupied the factories in Canton for four or five months, while their ships were in port. By the 1760s, most of the East India companies were keeping a few supercargos and assistants in China year-round. They were allowed to stay in Canton a few weeks after their last ship departed in order to purchase cargos for the upcoming season. They were then required to remove themselves to Macao, until their next ship arrived. It was typical for supercargos to spend six to eight months in Canton each year and four to six months in Macao. The summers were actually much more bearable in Macao than in Canton (which is still true today). Even if a company had ships in port during the off-season, senior supercargos would usually go to Macao to pass the summer and leave the loading of those vessels to junior supercargos. By the 1760s, the East India companies were renting apartments in both cities for the entire year, so that there was no fear of others occupying the buildings before they returned.³

When the chief officers arrived at Canton each year, they raised their national flag in front of their factory each morning at sunrise. They lowered the flag each evening at sunset. If one of the chief officers should happen to die in Canton, then the flag would be lowered to half mast, until the body was interred. Even though many chief officers died in Canton, no paintings of the factories showing a flag at half-mast have been found.

Most of the ships arrived and departed with the change of the monsoon winds each year. They arrived between June and September and departed between November and February. As time went on, however, more and more ships began sailing to

China by going east of the Philippines. This route enabled them to arrive and depart at any time of the year.⁴ This meant that some foreigners, such as the British and Americans, often had ships at Whampoa year-round. Beginning in the 1780s, Spanish ships from Manila began making several voyages to China each year, when previously they had only made one voyage. As long as they had a ship in port, supercargos were free to stay in Canton and did not need to move to Macao.

Foreign sailors at Whampoa were responsible for manning the boats that carried all the supercargos, captains, assistants, writers, pursers and other officers to and from Canton. They were responsible for delivering all the imports, including all the money chests (stocked with Spanish silver dollars). The Hong merchants might also transport imports in their own lighters called 'chop boats'. Exports were usually shipped to Whampoa in the chop boats at the expense of the sellers. A couple of foreign guards would be assigned to accompany the shipments to ensure no pilferage or damage occurred en route. These seamen spent most of their nights aboard the ships at Whampoa, but sometimes they stayed overnight in the factories, where there was special accommodation for them.

A couple of weeks before the ships were ready to depart the crews were given their salaries and allowed a few days for shore leave in Canton. Shore leave was usually divided out so that only about a dozen to twenty or so men went at a time. However, it was not uncommon to assign half the crew (upwards of 50 or more men) to go on shore leave together. One or more of the ship's officers were assigned to each batch of men on leave to ensure that they behaved themselves. While the seamen were at Canton, they stayed in the factories. The small alley between the buildings called Hog Lane (Plates P1b and P1d) was home to dozens of small Chinese shopkeepers who catered to the common seaman. James Johnson was in Canton in 1804 and described Hog Lane as follows:

Hog-lane, the general rendezvous of sailors, and the *Wapping* [a district in London known for its drinking establishments that catered to seamen] of

³ For a summary of how the trade operated on a daily basis, see Paul A. Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade: Life and Enterprise on the China Coast, 1700–1845* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005; reprint, 2007).

⁴ Paul A. Van Dyke, 'New Sea Routes to Canton in the 18th Century and the Decline of China's Control over Trade', in *Studies of Maritime History* 海洋史研究, ed. Li Qingxin 李慶新, Vol. 1 (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2010), 57–108.

Canton, open at the corner of the British factory; and here *Jack* [a common term for seamen] gets eased of his dollars, and drunk into the bargain, very soon after his arrival.⁵

The origin of the name ‘Hog Lane’ is unknown. Foreign sailors often congregated in this alley where they could find food, drink, clothing, and about any type of small souvenir or trinket they could dream of. By the late eighteenth century, there were upwards of 50 or more ships at Whampoa each year. Considering that some ships were large and others were small we might estimate there being an average of about 80 men about each one. This comes to about 4,000 men—from various nations—who spent two or three days at Hog Lane each year. At the close of the season (November to January) there might be hundreds of seamen frequenting the narrow alley at the same time. As might be expected, Hog Lane was a place acquainted with frequent quarrels and disputes. Chinese guards, stationed at each end of the alley, did their best to maintain order.

In addition to Hong merchants, there were a hundred or so smaller ‘outside merchants’ who also sold goods to foreigners. The larger portion of these men were porcelain and silk dealers, but there were dozens of other traders, including picture painters, glass blowers, sculptors, calligraphers, sign board and lantern makers, limners, weavers, embroiderers, silk fabric painters, herb and tea specialists, hatters, furniture makers, furriers, tailors, shoemakers, fishmongers, moneychangers, copper smiths and silver smiths. Shops selling dried fruits and meats, fans, lacquer ware, rattan mats, baskets, pewter and tin ware, fragrant woods, incense, bamboo blinds, jewellery, carvings (ivory, wood, bone, etc.) and numerous others could be found in the Thirteen Hong district. There were also chow chow shops (novelty stores) where one could find a little bit of everything.⁶ Charles Tyng was in Canton in the 1810s, and gave the following description:

The shops in China Street were large, and almost everything the country produces was to be found for sale there. The stores were apparently all open on

the street, so that one could see in, what was for sale. There was always one standing at the door beckoning us to come in and buy. The first thing in the trade was a “kumshaw,” that is a gift, a silk handkerchief, or something of the kind, and if you accepted the gift and did not buy anything, and went on to another store, you would not receive a kumshaw, as notice would be given that you already had one.⁷

Before 1760, these shops were scattered throughout the western suburbs. In Chinese fashion, they tended to congregate in one location. For example, one street had silk weavers, another street housed porcelain dealers, and another street had furniture makers, and so on. Foreigners wandered around to all these different shops picking out the things they wanted. Many of these transactions were done privately, and were not part of the companies’ trade. Companies also purchased items from these outside men. Some Americans actually bought a good part of their cargos from them, rather than from the Hong merchants.⁸

In order to bring the shopkeepers under tighter control, a new street was established in the factory area in 1760. Because this street appears in almost all of the paintings discussed in this book, it is perhaps appropriate to point out its basic features. The porcelain dealers were relocated to this new street, which foreigners logically called ‘New Street’, ‘Porcelain Street’, or ‘China Street’ (‘China’ being a reference to chinaware). In Chinese, it was given the auspicious name of ‘profoundly tranquil street’ (Jingyuan Jie 靖遠街 or 靜遠街 or Qingyuan Jie 清遠街, Plates P1b and P1c). By the early nineteenth century, this new avenue was often referred to by foreigners as China Street (see Chapter 9).

From 1760 to the fire of 1 November 1822, Hog Lane and China Street were the two main shopping avenues in the Thirteen Hong district. However, there were also many shops located on Thirteen Hong Street, which connected these two streets and ran parallel to the river at the north end of the factories. A popular U-shaped jaunt was to go up China Street to the end, turn right

5 James Johnson, *An Account of a Voyage to India, China, &c. in His Majesty's Ship Caroline, Performed in the Years 1803–4–5, Interspersed with Descriptive Sketches and Cursory Remarks* (London: J. G. Barnard, 1806), 71.

6 For a nice catalogue of all the different shops in Canton, see the three albums of Chinese trades in the British Museum, 1877.0714.401–818.

7 Susan Fels, ed., *Before the Wind: The Memoir of an American Sea Captain, 1808–1833*, by Charles Tyng (New York: Viking Penguin, 1999), 34.

8 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), 10–12 (hereafter this book will be referred to as MCM 1).

onto Thirteen Hong Street, and then return to the quay via Hog Lane (see Chapter 9 for details).

It is commonly believed by historians, curators, collectors, and China trade buffs that there was a third street in the factory area called 'New China Street'. In fact, almost any book or article about the China trade, that includes a description of the foreign quarter, will likely mention that there were three streets, New China Street, Old China Street and Hog Lane. We will not go into detail about these streets here, but because this idea is so commonly accepted, it is perhaps appropriate to mention that the new data presented in Chapter 9 clearly show that New China Street (which was called Tongwen Jie 同文街 in Chinese) was created in 1823. This avenue did not exist before that year.

The large East India companies primarily dealt with the licensed Hong merchants. It was, in fact, a requirement of Chinese customs that they do business only through those men. However, owing to the smaller volumes of the private traders, Hoppo often turned a blind-eye to them purchasing cargos from outside men. This tolerance varied from one year to the next, but in general, there were many private traders who dealt with these small shopkeepers. The sales were supposed to be channelled through one of the Hong merchants, who then became guarantors for the export duties. If the small shopkeepers failed to pay the duties, then the assigned Hong merchant had to pay them. The latter received a commission for this service. Hoppo and Hong merchants were quite diligent in insisting that the larger East Indiamen purchase the majority of their cargos from the licensed houses.

Hong merchants had warehouses throughout the western suburbs and across the river on Honam (Henan 河南) Island, where they kept their merchandise. They also had a main factory in the Thirteen Hong area, where they had living quarters and where foreigners could go to examine their wares. Sometimes Hong merchants lived in the same buildings with their foreign customers. Most of the Portuguese supercargos, for example, anchored their ships at Macao, but went to Canton to obtain their cargos. The Hong merchants provided them with accommodation, which meant that they did not usually have their own factory or flag flying.⁹ Prior to 1788, this situation was true of Spanish

supercargos as well. However, in that year the Spaniards established a permanent factory in Canton and then began to display their flag out front.

The factories were actually much deeper than they were wide, with a sequence of four, five, six or more blocks. Each block was in fact a separate unit with a separate roof, but the blocks of each factory were all connected together and might share a common wall with another block. The renting of one block was usually deemed sufficient to service the officers of one large East Indiaman, but one block could service several small ships, depending on the size of their crews.

The rents were based on the number of blocks occupied, and whether the block was in the front facing the river or at the rear near Thirteen Hong Street. By the 1760s, the French, English, Dutch, Swedish and Danish companies tended to rent all of the blocks in their hong. If they had extra apartments that they did not need, then they might sublet those rooms to private supercargos or captains. The owners of the buildings paid no attention to this subletting. In fact, they seemed to have preferred that foreigners provide accommodations for these private individuals, so they would not have to deal with them. Gradually, this subletting gave rise to foreigners actually taking control of certain buildings and opening inns and taverns. By the early 1800s, there were several of these establishments in operation. All of this activity was illegal but tolerated by Chinese officials. These foreign-run hotels helped to accommodate trade by meeting the needs of the small private traders.

There is some confusion in the usage of the terms factory or hong which should be clarified. If the blocks of a factory were rented out to different persons, then each block could also be called a hong. We will present examples of several Americans running inns and taverns in the Danish factory. In the 1810s,

showing a Portuguese flag displayed on the quay, but it is possible. Most of the Portuguese traders stayed in apartments provided by the Hong merchants and did not maintain their own factory. The Portuguese ships anchored at Macao and the merchandise was sent downriver to them. There were, however, a few Portuguese ships that went upriver and loaded at Whampoa. They displayed a Portuguese flag. The years in which we can confirm that there was a Portuguese ship at Whampoa include: 1720, 1725 and 1780. British Library (BL): India Office Records (IOR) G/12/71, p. 78, L/MAR/B/42A, L/MAR/B/36C, L/MAR/B/285LL, L/MAR/B/408A, L/MAR/B/490C, L/MAR/B/469G, L/MAR/B/172G.

⁹ The Portuguese sometimes rented a building in Canton. The Swedish map from 1748 that is reproduced in Figure F27 shows the location of the Portuguese factory (葡國商館). We have found no paintings

this building consisted of four blocks, and each one might be run by different persons. One block might be called Megee's hong, another block Dobell's hong, and so on, but they were all located within the Danish hong or factory. In the 1810s, there were no Danish company supercargos in Canton doing business, so the name of the building had no connection to its occupants.

The Chinese names for these hongs were usually different from those the foreigners used. The Danish factory, for example, was called the 'Yellow Flag Factory' (Huang Qi Hong 黄旗行) and the Danes were known as the 'Yellow Flag People'. This is a bit confusing because in later years, the Danes always displayed a red flag with a white cross. The 'Yellow Flag' distinction could have originated from the first encounter with the Danes in 1731, when they may have displayed a flag with a yellow background.¹⁰

The Present Study

In recent years, the dating of Canton factory paintings has become more accurate. Carl Crossman, in his monumental study *The China Trade* (1972), provided one of the earliest chronologies of the factory scenes. While knowledge of the factories was still very premature at the time of his writing, Crossman nonetheless began to make efforts to carry out dating with more precision.¹¹ More recently, Kee Il Choi Jr. (1998), William Shang (2001), Johnathan Farris (2004), Jiang Yinghe (2007) and Susan Schopp (2014) have advanced the work significantly.¹² Together, these new studies have

assembled an enormous amount of new data about the factories, especially relating to the period between the early and mid-nineteenth century.

As far as the dating of the factory scenes is concerned, no one has contributed more to this research than Patrick Conner. Conner's studies have advanced this work far beyond anything previously written. His many references in the Martyn Gregory Gallery catalogues and, more recently, his book *The Hongs of Canton* (2009), have provided the foundation upon which this present study is based. From his research into British, French and American sources, Conner has successfully narrowed the dating windows from as much as a couple decades for some paintings, to within a couple of years.¹³ Without his help and guidance, both personally and through his published books and articles, it would have been very difficult to establish a foundation upon which to begin this study.

We focus specifically in this study on drawings and paintings of the factories made between the 1760s and the great fire of 1822. The closing of other Chinese ports to foreign trade in the late 1750s and the establishment of the Co-hong (公行) in 1760 laid the foundation for the development of the Canton factories. In the late 1760s, inland production had expanded to keep up with the growing foreign demand for more Chinese wares. By this time, most of the foreign companies were maintaining year-round residency in Canton and Macao. Private traders were also staying in China year-round.¹⁴

With the increase in long-term foreign residents in China came a parallel increase in demand for more spacious and comfortable apartments. By the late 1760s, there was an extreme shortage of apartments in the foreign quarter, which led to many more rooms being added. By 1769 (and possibly earlier), there were

10 The first Danish ship in China in 1731 was the *Cron Printz Christian*. It was a small warship under royal commission to try out the China trade. Erik Gobel, 'Asiatisk Kompagnis Kinafart, 1732–1833. Besejling af Bemanding' (PhD diss., University of Copenhagen, 1978), 3–5; and Kaptajn J. H. Schultz, ed., 'En Dagbog ført paa en Kinafarer 1730–32 af Kadet Tobias Wigandt', in *Tidsskrift for Søvesen*, by G. L. Grove (Copenhagen: Hovedkommissionær Vilhelm Tryde, Thieles Bogtrykkeri, 1900), 183–211. These men may have displayed the Danish National Coat of Arms on the ship and/or at the factory. It showed three blue lions on a golden background. If this is true, it would account for why the Chinese called the Danes the 'Yellow Flag People'.

11 Carl L. Crossman, *The China Trade: Export Paintings, Furniture, Silver and Other Objects* (Princeton: The Pyne Press, 1972); and Carl L. Crossman, *The Decorative Arts of the China Trade: Paintings, Furnishings and Exotic Curiosities* (Suffolk: Antique Collectors' Club, 1991).

12 Kee Il Choi Jr., 'Carl Gustav Ekeberg and the Invention of Chinese Export Painting', *The Magazine Antiques* 153, no. 3 (Mar 1998): 426–37; William Shang, *Historical Pictures of Qing Period China: Western Perspectives* (Tokyo: Taishukan Shoten, 2001); Johnathan Andrew

Farris, 'Dwelling on the Edge of Empires: Foreigners and Architecture in Guangzhou (Canton), China' (PhD diss., Cornell University, 2004); Jiang Yinghe 江滢河, *Qingdai yang hua yu Guangzhou kouan* 清代洋畫與廣州口岸 [Western painting and Canton port during the Qing period] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007); and Susan E. Schopp, 'The French as Architectural Trendsetters in Canton, 1767–1820', *Review of Culture*, International Edition, no. 45 (2014): 79–87.

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

14 For background information about the trade and how it operated, see Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade*.

seventeen distinct buildings in the Thirteen Hong district. These seventeen buildings made up the foreign quarter of Canton up to the fire of 1822.

As the reputation of the China trade became more renowned worldwide, a parallel demand for souvenirs and memorabilia emerged. Foreign merchants and travellers were eager to carry home artefacts from the great Cathay. They proudly displayed these items in their homes as reminders of their involvement in that commerce, and as conversation pieces to show to and discuss with friends and relatives.

Before we delve into the data, we might first rightfully ask why even bother with all of this? If these Chinese export art objects were merely meant to be displayed as items of adoration, interest and conversation, then their historical accuracy could be questionable. Undoubtedly there are many artistic objects that were produced in Canton of this nature. But after many years of collecting data about the factories, and matching that data with views in export paintings and other art works, we would argue that these paintings of the foreign quarter are a very different type of commodity. Factory scenes need to be identified and acknowledged as a genre apart from other more generic export art, such as Chinese life scenes, landscapes, daily activities and images of plants and animals.

Many examples will be presented below to show that paintings of the factories are, with some reservations, rather reliable historical records. A painting might display small inaccuracies, such as a building with incorrect architecture for that year or a wrong flag. Small historical inaccuracies such as these did not seem to matter a lot to some buyers, so long as the parts of the painting that represented them (such as the building that they had lived in or their national flag being displayed) were correct. However, if two or more buildings depicted were out of date, or if it was obvious that the land reclamations on the quay no longer corresponded to the current year, then the artist might find it more difficult to sell his works.

Considering that an item might not sell if it was too out of date, it probably made good business sense for an artist to be careful with all the changes on the quay. Most of the additions to the foreign quarter were done during the off-season (spring and summer). Artists could update their templates, if these were used, to correspond with the alterations that had been made, and then

have accurate paintings to sell while most of the ships were in port during the trading season (August to January). If some paintings were left unsold during any given year, then the artists ran the risk of not being able to sell those items at all if significant changes to the architecture and landscape were carried out during the following off-season.

Selling paintings was the artists' livelihood. It is doubtful that they would want to keep stock from one season to the next. Apart from the rebuilding of the factories, fires had the potential of altering the landscape which could immediately render all stock unsalable. Not only did fires change the buildings, but the quay as well. Rubble from burnt out buildings was pushed into the water and used to extend the shore further into the river. Paintings that were pre-produced and did not show such changes ran the risk of sitting forever in a showroom without a buyer. And the longer they sat, the more outdated they became. Considering that fires occurred quite regularly both in the city and suburbs almost every year, it is very doubtful that any artist would intentionally produce more factory scenes than he could sell that same year.¹⁵

Export artists did not have to worry about more generic pictures, such as life scenes and depictions of plants and animals, becoming outdated. Factory paintings, however, were a type of historical record that buyers wanted to display in their homes to represent their experience in China. If the factory scene in a painting did not accurately show the quay as it looked when the potential buyer was in China, then he might be less inclined to purchase it. Because our interest is on accuracy, we are focusing our discussions on two types of export ware: export paintings and export porcelain punchbowls decorated with factory scenes. It should be said that there are other export art, such as wall paper, lacquer panels and fans which use the factories as subject matter. Paintings and punchbowls, however, are more accessible and also offer a large number of extant examples, which is why they were chosen for study.

As we will show in subsequent chapters, most of the factory scenes analyzed in this study are fairly reliable representations of

15 Paul A. Van Dyke, 'Fires and the Risks of Trade in Canton 1730s–1840s,' in *Canton and Nagasaki Compared 1730–1830: Dutch Chinese, Japanese Relations*, eds. Evert Groenendijk, Cynthia Viallé, and Leonard Blussé, *Intercontinenta* No. 26 (Leiden: Institute for the History of European Expansion, 2009), 171–202; and Patrick Conner, 'The Fires of Canton in "Export" Paintings,' *Arts of Asia* 38, no. 6 (Nov–Dec 2008): 110–23.

the year they were intended to represent. Sometimes a change took place in a certain year, such as an extension of the quay or an addition to a building, which did not get drawn into a painting. Occasionally, we find templates from a previous decade being used, but were then updated to correspond with changes that had taken place.

In general, we show that the factories were indeed fairly accurately represented in export paintings. The boats that are displayed on the river in paintings are a different matter. They were often just added randomly to liven up a painting, and were not even necessarily in the water at the time. In contrast, factory buildings match fairly closely with what we find written in the historical records.

Structure of This Study

We have divided our discussion of the factories into nine chapters. In principle, the chapters are arranged chronologically. Chapter 1 begins with a discussion of the Co-hong (1760–1770) and the changes that took place during those years. This was the period when things became more stable for trade, when foreigners began investing in their buildings and when we start to see Western architecture being introduced. Chapter 2 covers the period following the disbanding of the Co-hong and the opening of trade from 1771 to 1781. There is discussion of the resultant debt crisis that emerged in the late 1770s that had an impact on the owners of the factories.

Chapters 3 and 5 are different from the others in that they are not a chronological survey of the factory buildings. We have inserted these chapters within the chronology in order to clarify some issues raised in other chapters. We explain such things as flawed porcelain, the effects different vantage points had on paintings, onsite observations and multiple perspectives—all of which help to show why factory scenes were made the way they were.

Chapter 4 discusses the ups and downs of the trade in the 1780s. Downturns in the volume of trade might result in changes and alterations to the factories being postponed, which helps explain why the buildings might remain unchanged in the paintings of those periods. Chapter 6 introduces changes that took place in the 1790s—especially the large influx of private traders. Those individuals had a significant impact on the architecture and management of the buildings. Chapter 7 covers the years from 1800 to 1814. This was the period when American entrepreneurs

began taking over parts of the factories and also when the French briefly returned to Canton. Chapter 8 covers the years from 1815 to the fire of November 1822 when all of the factories were burned down. This was the period when the British rebuilt their factories and when the Danes returned to Canton. Chapter 9 is a bit different from all the other chapters. It is a discussion of the establishment of the shopping streets in the foreigner quarter. The Conclusion summarizes the main issues raised in the book and discusses what the scenes of the factories can tell us about the history of Canton in general.

Our study contains two sets of images. One set are Plates and the other set are Figures. Plates are images of the factories placed in chronological order. They are numbered from P1 to P72. We kept all of the Plates confined to one section because that seemed the easiest way to compare and analyze them while also allowing easy reference when following the relevant discussion in the text. The Figures are numbered from F1 to F31. They include a few factory paintings but are mostly images that are discussed in Chapters 3, 5 and 9. Some of the Figures appear only because the supplying museums required that un-cropped and unaltered views of the paintings must be included. In those cases, the full image appears as a Figure and a detail of the image appears in the Plate section. In order to avoid confusion between Plates and Figures the prefixes ‘P’ and ‘F’ are given before their respective numbers.

For some of the Figures and most of the Plates we have inserted dates—in italics—directly beneath each image, which are the dates that we have assigned to the images. Many of the captions also show approximate dates, which do not always correspond with our italicized dates. The dates mentioned in the captions are those that were given in the owner’s records.

Unless otherwise indicated, all of the plates only show partial details of the art work. This allows the architecture to be seen more clearly and to allow for easier comparisons between factory scenes. In a few cases, where cropping is not necessary or where the owners of the items have not allowed cropping, the original photos have been retained. All of the hong bowls, or punch bowls, are Chinese export porcelain decorated in enamels, and all are painted with images of the Canton factories. We will therefore not repeat this information on every caption, unless at the request of the copyright owner. Some plates have had text and/or numbers added to them by the authors to allow important architecture to be more easily identified.