

Linguists, state, and commerce
in the Pearl River Delta, 1500–1700.



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Abstract

This thesis examines the rise and beginning of the decline of the Portuguese-speaking linguists of the sixteenth and seventeenth century Sino-European trade in the Pearl River Delta. As interpreters and translators but also negotiators, brokers, and mediators, these linguists were at the centre of the Pearl River Delta frontier zone, where multiple states mingled and mixed with powerful mercantile families, commercial houses, joint-stock companies, and individuals for whom it was source of profit and opportunity. But the burden of nineteenth and twentieth century scholarship, as well the modern ideal of the neutral and disinterested translator, have meant that they have often been understood as corrupt and self-serving, symptomatic of an official unwillingness to engage deeply with foreigners and foreign languages. This thesis uses Portuguese, Chinese, and English sources to rethink these assumptions. It argues that the linguists arose in the Portuguese private trade between Melaka and South China, and were then co-opted into the governance of the Pearl River Delta, without losing their original status as commercial brokers. This created a tension between state and commerce that has often been read as evidence of corruption, but was in fact precisely how the Chinese state expanded its reach in the Delta, integrating the linguists into a form of frontier management reliant on the motivation of private commercial interest rather than modern ideals of public office as a trust. Over the seventeenth century, officials increasingly asserted the boundaries of acceptable conduct for the linguists using threatened and actual violence, allowing them to manage foreigners at arm's length by restricting their linguists' freedom of action. But the effectiveness of this system was its undoing, and the end of the century saw a new concern for 'freedom' in the trade, as English merchants sought alternative bilingual contacts. Here, the story comes full circle: this marked the beginning of the decline of the linguists as the primary mediators of the trade, and this decline was also the source of the image of them as mere customs clerks that was projected backwards to the seventeenth century by twentieth-century scholarship to create the inaccurate picture that the preceding chapters have argued against.

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Conventions

All quotes from all languages use modernised orthography, except for manuscript titles in citations, which are given exactly as they are written. The Chinese sources abound in variant characters, particularly for the names of Macau, which I have standardised. All translations of quoted text are my own unless otherwise noted.

Although some places in the Pearl River Delta later developed separate names in English and Portuguese, in this period English writers tended to use the Portuguese names (which were sometimes borrowings of Cantonese or Malay names and are themselves interesting for the multilingual connections they reveal). For each place I give both the most common seventeenth-century Western name in a standardised orthography and the Chinese equivalent. In this way, for the city of Guangzhou 廣州 in a historical context, I have preferred ‘Canton’. The term is dated in English, although current in Portuguese (*Cantão*), but it is normally used in the literature when discussing the Canton trade. In bibliographic citations of modern texts published in the city, however, I have retained the modern *pinyin* name. To avoid confusion, I still refer to the province as ‘Guangdong 廣東’ and not ‘Canton’.

I have translated *yi* 夷 as ‘foreigner’ rather than ‘barbarian’, although neither term is entirely satisfactory. Contemporary translations of Chinese documents do sometimes use the term ‘barbarian’ (e.g. *bárbaros de cabelos vermelhos*, red-haired barbarians, as a translation for *hongmaoyi* 紅毛夷), but this equivalence was never universal.

Personal names in the seventeenth-century Pearl River Delta were complicated. Not only did Chinese speakers have multiple names, many bilingual people also had often completely unrelated names in two languages. This was particularly the case for the linguists, who often had a Chinese name and a Portuguese name, the latter of which was also used by the English. As with placenames, I have given both the name used most in Western sources and the most common Chinese name. I have given this in a standardised form, such as ‘Paulo Neretti (*Li Yerong* 李葉榮)’, who is sometimes known in the English-language secondary literature as

‘Paolo Norette’, and also appears as ‘Paul Duretti’, ‘Paulo Norejt’, ‘Paulo Nerete’, etc. ‘Neretti’ is the standard modern spelling used to refer to the Florentine family from whom his surname derives.

In other cases, particularly for merchants, we only know the transliteration of their Chinese name as it appears in Western sources, often based on Cantonese or Hokkien pronunciations, and it is impossible to know how to write these names in Chinese characters. For these, I have only been able to give the transcription as it appears in Western sources, such as the merchant Hunshunquin or the linguist Quiqua.

Translations of Chinese official titles are taken from Charles Hucker’s dictionary, or, in the rare case of a title not in his dictionary, attempt to approximate his system.¹ The exception is the Canton Customs Superintendent (*Yuehaiguan Jiandu* 粵海關監督), for whom I have used the more familiar English term ‘Hoppo’.

In this period, the Portuguese used the Gregorian calendar, the English used the Julian calendar, and the Chinese used the lunar calendar, reckoning years according to era names (*nian hao* 年號) that often overlapped during the Ming-Qing transition. For simplicity, all references to dates in the thesis use the Gregorian (New Style) dates with the new year beginning on the 1st January.

¹ Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford, 1985).

Abbreviations

AHU - Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino [Overseas Historical Archive, Lisbon]

AM – Arquivo de Macau [Archives of Macau, Macau]

ANTT - Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo [Torre do Tombo National Archive, Lisbon]

ASF - Archivio di Stato di Firenze [State Archives of Florence, Florence]

BA – Biblioteca da Ajuda [Ajuda Library, Lisbon]

BodL – Bodleian Library, Oxford

BL – British Library, London

ZY – Zhongyang Yanjiuyuan 中央研究院 [Academica Sinica, Taipei]

Introduction

Linguists in the Early Modern Pearl River Delta

Who hath ever been able to get with one speech the friendship of sundry nations? How many are there become rich without the knowledge of diverse languages?

*Quem pode jamais alcançar com uma linguagem a amizade de diversas nações? Quantos puderam enriquecer-se sem notícia de muitas línguas?*¹

Languages mattered for the early modern merchant. To trade was to communicate, and in many parts of the world merchants saw speaking more than one language as an essential skill of their line of work.² Generations of European merchants learnt their Dutch, Portuguese, Spanish, and other languages of commerce from conversation manuals such as the one quoted above, one of the most widely studied and reprinted, which reinforced in their readers the importance of being ‘languaged’.³ In maritime Asia, Chinese merchants, particularly those sojourning abroad, learnt languages such as Malay and later Portuguese and Dutch.⁴ Not all multilingual environments could be navigated by merchants alone, however. Particularly when faced with complex legal and political cultures or distantly-related languages that were difficult to learn, merchants turned to specialist translators.⁵ This was the case in the Pearl River Delta, perhaps the most important and certainly the longest-lived site of Sino-Western encounter.⁶

¹ *Colloquia et dictionariolum septem linguarum, belgicæ, anglicæ, teutonicæ, latinæ, italicæ, hispanicæ, gallicæ* (London, 1701), 13.

² Pierre Jeanen, ‘Distinction des compétences et niveaux de qualification : les savoirs négociants dans l’Europe moderne’ [Distinction of skills and levels of qualification: merchant knowledge in modern Europe], in Jacques Bottin and Marie-Louise Pelus-Kaplan, eds, *Marchands d’Europe : Pratiques et savoirs à l’époque moderne* [Merchants of Europe: Practices and knowledge in the modern age] (Paris, 1995), 324.

³ John Gallagher, *Learning Languages in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2019), 101.

⁴ See Chapter One of this thesis.

⁵ Peter Good, ‘Merchants, Mediators and Mannerly Conduct: The East India Company and Local Intermediaries in the Western Indian Ocean 1700–1750’, *Renaissance Studies*, 37/5 (2023), 737.

⁶ See John E. Wills, Jr, ed., *China and Maritime Europe, 1500–1800* (Cambridge, 2011).

With the establishment of Macau as a settlement of Portuguese merchants in the mid-sixteenth century, the Pearl River Delta had become China's key trading emporium with the Western world.⁷ Later, from the early seventeenth century, English joint-stock companies such as the Courteen Association and the various iterations of the East India Companies began to break the Portuguese monopoly, sending ships laden primarily with silver as well as domestic manufactures such as woollen cloth in yearly cycles driven by the Asian monsoon.⁸ In exchange, great chains of inland production, packaging, marketing, and distribution converged on Canton to supply foreign merchants with a huge variety of Chinese goods.⁹ Tea, later the totemic export of the Canton trade, was becoming more popular in England, but in the seventeenth century it was still other products that were most closely associated with China in the English market.¹⁰ There were of course silks, either produced locally or, for the best quality, shipped down the coast from Nanjing (南京); porcelain, the best transported from Jingdezhen (景德鎮) in the east; miraculous *materia medica*, such as China root, said to cure syphilis, along with rhubarb from the north; and a whole host of other fashionable commodities such as sugar, fans, lacquerware, screens, and many others.¹¹ Flows not just of goods but also of people came together in Canton and Macau, giving rise to new articulations of identity, new creoles—so-called Indian Portuguese, Pidgin English, and Macanese Patois—and new forms of cross-ethnic kinship.¹² Here, where the world met on the South China coast,

⁷ Luís Filipe Barreto, *Macau: Poder e Saber, Séculos XVI e XVII* [Macau: Power and Knowledge, Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries] (Lisbon, 2006), 96.

⁸ Rogério Miguel Puga, *The British Presence in Macau, 1635–1793* (Hong Kong, 2013), 11–66.

⁹ Ronald C. Po, 'Consuming China in Early Modern England and Beyond: A Survey and Reexamination', *Asian Review of World Histories*, 11/2 (2023), 183–192.

¹⁰ Chris Nierstrasz, 'The Popularization of Tea: East India Companies, Private Traders, Smugglers and the Consumption of Tea in Western Europe, 1700–1760', in Maxine Berg, Felicia Gottmann, Hanna Hodacs, and Chris Nierstrasz, eds, *Goods from the East, 1600–1800: Trading Eurasia* (Basingstoke, 2015).

¹¹ Anne Gerritsen and Stephen McDowall, 'Material Culture and the Other: European Encounters with Chinese Porcelain, ca. 1650–1800', *Journal of World History*, 21/1 (2012), 88; Sucheta Mazumdar, *Sugar and Society in China: Peasants, Technology, and the World Market* (Cambridge, MA, 1998), 60–106 passim; Ronald C. Po, 'Tea, Porcelain, and Silk: Chinese Exports to the West in the Early Modern Period', in David Ludden, ed., *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Asian History* (Oxford, 2018); Anna E. Winterbottom, 'Of the China Root: A Case Study of the Early Modern Circulation *Materia Medica*', *Social History of Medicine*, 28/1 (2015), 22–44.

¹² Elsa Penalva, 'Mercadores, Jesuítas e Jurubaças em Macau (1600–1627)' [Merchants, Jesuits and Jurubaças in Macau (1600–1627)], in Luís Filipe Barreto and Wu Zhiliang, eds., *Macau: Past and Present*

Mandarin (*guanhua* 官話) was spoken alongside Cantonese, Hokkien, Manchu, Portuguese, Malay, English, French, Italian, and many other languages. And at the heart of all of this were translators and interpreters known as ‘linguists’ in English, *tongshi* 通事 in Chinese, or *jurubacas* in the Portuguese of Macau, without whom it has been argued the flourishing of the trade would have been impossible.¹³

Normally mixed-race bilingual speakers of Chinese and Portuguese, they served as translators for both the merchants of the Delta and the state institutions of Canton and Macau. Visiting merchants would engage a particular linguist to serve them throughout their stay, normally lasting several months until the arrival of the monsoon brought the trading season to an end, but the linguists were also representatives of the state, responsible to Chinese and Portuguese officials both for their own conduct and that of the merchants whom they served. Not only was their role a broad one ranging across the boundary of state and commerce, but their real importance went far beyond what we might assume given modern views of translation. Like many early modern translators, they were understood as responsible not just for communicative transfer, but also for acting as brokers, mediators, and thanks to unusual bicultural backgrounds, personal sources of intercultural competence that was yet to be institutionalised. They possessed a level of power to influence events rarely attributed to translators today: on the one hand, the use of oral and gist translation necessitated dialogue directly with translators and gave them prominence in place of the modern ideal of invisibility; on the other hand, their engagement by a particular principal to perform a wider

(Lisbon, 2005); A. J. R. Russell-Wood, *The Portuguese Empire, 1415–1808: A World on the Move* (Baltimore, 1992), 192–3.

¹³ Liao Dake 廖大珂, ‘Qingdai haiwai maoyi de tongshi chutan 清代海外貿易的通事初探’ [A preliminary investigation of the linguists in Qing maritime commerce], *Haiyangshi Yanjiu* 海洋史研究, 7 (2015), 258.

range of services on his behalf meant that they were not assumed to be impartial and were often suspected of using their power in their client's or their own interests.¹⁴

The trade in which they played such an important role had far-reaching consequences. In China, where silver helped to fuel a commercialising economy, the influx of foreigners permanently changed the social makeup of the Pearl River Delta, and domestic production grew and adapted to the demands of export markets.¹⁵ In Europe, Chinese wares created new fashions and tastes, altering and sometimes destroying domestic industries, and, some historians have argued, laying the foundations of the industrial revolution.¹⁶ And, above all, for historians of China, the Canton trade has taken on a particular significance as the source of much of what has been thought about how late imperial China experienced and understood its relations with the wider world.¹⁷ But while this points to the importance of the Canton trade and the linguists at its heart, traditional interpretations of this history have had a deleterious effect on the understanding of the linguists. In the influential work of scholars such as John Fairbank, faced with what they saw as the overarching question of whether China could modernise, China was seen as historically closed off, anti-commerce, caught up in a mode of foreign affairs dominated by a tributary framework, and unwilling to engage seriously with foreigners due to what Fairbank called an 'intellectual complacency about the barbarian world'.¹⁸ This meant that the Canton trade was read as corrupt and ineffective, reflective of a supposed Chinese indifference towards European commerce that made the

¹⁴ Henrietta Harrison, 'A Faithful Interpreter? Li Zibiao and the 1793 Macartney Embassy to China', *The International History Review*, 41/5 (2019), 1076–1077.

¹⁵ Richard von Glahn, *Fountain of Fortune: Money and Monetary Policy in China, 1000–1700* (Berkeley, CA, 1996), 113–141; Iona Man-Cheong, 'Macao: an early modern cosmopolis', in C. X. George Wei, *Macao – the Formation of a Global City* (Abingdon, 2014), 143–155; Hui Tang, "'The finest of Earth": The English East India Company's enamelled porcelain trade at Canton during the eighteenth century', *Artefact*, 8 (2018), 69–88.

¹⁶ Maxine Berg, 'In Pursuit of Luxury: Global History and British Consumer Goods in the Eighteenth Century', *Past & Present*, 182 (2004), 86; Robert Finlay, *The Pilgrim Art: Cultures of Porcelain in World History* (Berkeley, 2010), 140; Gerritsen and McDowall, 'Material Culture', 90.

¹⁷ Evelyn S. Rawski and Susan Naquin, 'Review: A New Look at the Canton Trade', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 78/2 (2018), 492.

¹⁸ John King Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast: The Opening of the Treaty Ports, 1842–1854*, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA, 1953), i, 8.

history of the trade one of a series of progressive breakdowns culminating in the Opium War.¹⁹ The enduring legacy of this history, combined with the burden of comparison with modern ideals of translation, has weighed heavily on the Pearl River Delta linguists. When measured against today's standards of the invisible, faithful, and transparent translator, they come up short.²⁰ And the combination of this and the lasting influence of the early twentieth-century scholars of the Canton trade who focussed on corruption, inefficiency, and conflict has handed down to us a whole series of assumptions that have affected our understanding of the linguists, and it is common to see them as unskilled, treacherous, and deceptive.²¹

But in the last two decades a new history of the Canton trade has taken shape in the work of scholars such as Paul Van Dyke, Weng Eang Cheong, and Susan Schopp, prompted above all by the observation that traditional histories of inefficient and corrupt administration were incapable of accounting for the trade's almost continual growth.²² Cheong has criticised both the perpetuation of the biases of early twentieth-century studies by the continued reliance on them as reference works, and the projection of nineteenth-century judgements back to the earlier period. He argues that this has naturally resulted in a picture of a static trading environment incapable of evolving, in which merchants were passive figures weighed down by an extractive state and their own lack of finance.²³ Similarly, van Dyke has argued that an excessive reliance on Chinese official sources has presented a distorted view of the Canton trade because of the gap between what the sources describe and the actual functioning of the trade, and that the neglect of sources in European languages other than English has given an

¹⁹ Rawski and Naquin, 'Canton Trade', 492; Wang Hui 汪暉, *Xiandai Zhongguo Sixiang de Xingqi* 現代中國思想的興起 [The Rise of Modern Chinese Thought], 4 vols (3rd edn, Beijing, 2015), i, 2–23.

²⁰ Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London, 1995), 1–17.

²¹ E.g. Lawrence Wang-chi Wong, "'Chouban yiwu'" (Handling the Affairs of the Barbarians): Translators in the Translation History of the Eighteenth to Nineteenth Century China', in Uganda Szepui Kwan and Lawrence Wang-chi Wong, eds., *Translation and Global Asia: Relocating Networks of Cultural Production* (Hong Kong, 2014), 61–3, drawing on early scholarship such as Hosea Ballou Morse, *The Chronicles of the East India Company Trading to China, 1635–1834*, 5 vols (Oxford, 1926–29), i.

²² Paul A. Van Dyke, 'From the Open Seas to the Guangzhou System', *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Asian History* (Oxford, 2020), no pagination.

²³ Weng Eang Cheong, *The Hong Merchants of Canton: Chinese Merchants in Sino-Western Trade, 1684–1798* (Richmond, 1997), 16–17.

incomplete view of the European perspective. Instead, he has advocated a 'bottom-up approach', focussed on extrapolation from a vast quantity of data on the actual functioning of the trade derived from the journals, registers, and other records of those directly involved in it.²⁴ Examining primarily on the merchants of the eighteenth century, these scholars have challenged many of the old orthodoxies, arguing that the Pearl River Delta was an open and effective trading environment based on flexible but predictable procedures, which explained how the trade was able to grow consistently for nearly a century and a half, while also playing a broader role in the development of global commerce.²⁵ This came about because Chinese officials approached the trade balancing both accommodation and control, reflecting their desire not for isolation from but to engage the growth of long-distance trade on their own terms, and their openness to trade made China central to the rise of a global economy.²⁶ In this view, the Canton trade was, on the whole, well-managed and not an obstruction to the growth of commerce; and, as will be seen in Chapter Four, this was the view of contemporary English merchants as well.²⁷

This thesis draws on this scholarship to rethink the traditional assumptions about the linguists, arguing for taking them seriously as minor frontier officials and commercial agents who often possessed a degree of diplomatic and linguistic skill that has been underestimated. Shifting the historical lens to focus on the linguists, their origins in the sixteenth century and the ongoing debates over their conduct in the seventeenth century, it examines the practices and ideas that shaped both the Pearl River Delta trading environment and the terms of encounter between Chinese and European officials and merchants. Contrary to the assumption that late Ming and early Qing China was profoundly unreceptive to deep

²⁴ Paul A. Van Dyke, *Merchants of Canton and Macao: Success and Failure in Eighteenth-Century Chinese Trade* (Hong Kong, 2016), xix–xxix.

²⁵ Paul A. Van Dyke, *Whampoa and the Canton Trade: Life and Death in Chinese Port, 1700–1842* (Hong Kong, 2020), 1–11; John D. Wang, *Global Trade in the Nineteenth Century: The House of Houqua and the Canton System* (Cambridge, 2016), 5.

²⁶ John M. Carroll, *Canton Days: British Life and Death in China* (Lanham, MA, 2020), 4–5.

²⁷ Susan E. Schopp, *Sino-French Trade at Canton, 1698–1842* (Hong Kong, 2020), 2.

engagement with foreigners, least of all on a commercial basis, it finds a distinct mode of engagement with European trade, constructed through a productive marriage of state, commercial, and private forms, seen most clearly in the person of the linguists. It examines how these linguists emerged in the circumstances of the founding of Macau as a project of private mercantile initiative, which co-opted them into the state without erasing their original identity as commercial brokers. It argues that this led to a debate over their loyalties and motivations, situated against the backdrop of changing ideas about the role of profit and private interest in officeholding. This was the cause of much of the violence against the linguists, which was used by Chinese officials to indirectly manage the presence of foreigners by strictly enforcing the boundaries of acceptable conduct for the linguists and holding them responsible for the behaviour of foreign merchants. But the effectiveness of this system was its undoing, and by the end of the seventeenth century the English merchants began to chafe at the restrictions imposed on them by the officials linguists. In this way, they began a search for alternative bilingual contacts that would, in the long run, cause the downfall of the linguists from their position as the primary mediators of the trade. In order to make this argument, this thesis draws on an understudied body of Portuguese sources as well as the more widely studied English and Chinese sources. The next section discusses the importance of using these sources and of the two centuries of reliance on Portuguese-speaking linguists that they reveal.

Focus and sources

Unlike most studies, this thesis focusses not on the eighteenth-century heyday of the Canton System or the later breakdown into the conflicts of the Opium Wars in the nineteenth century, but on the first two centuries of European trade with China, beginning with the Portuguese attempts to open the 'road to China' (*caminho da China*) from Melaka in the early sixteenth century. Chinese historians of the linguists have already noted that the distinctiveness of the period between 1500 and 1700, which they call the 'period of the Lingnan linguists' (*Lingnan*

tongshi shiqi 嶺南通事時期).²⁸ The defining characteristics of this period were the monopoly of the European trade by Macau until the 1630s, the relative weakness of the English joint-stock companies in their attempts to break the monopoly from the 1630s until the end of the seventeenth century, and the dominance of the linguistic landscape throughout this period by Portuguese-speaking linguists closely tied to the governments of Macau and Canton. From 1700 onwards, the trading and linguistic environment would begin to shift: Portuguese would slowly give way to English as the *lingua franca* of commerce; many other European nations besides the English and Portuguese would enter the trade; Macau would recede in importance as both the gatekeeper of the China trade and the training-ground of the linguists; and the unprecedented commercial freedoms of the early Qing would give way to the more regulated environment of the Canton System.²⁹ But the era of Portuguese-speaking linguists was more than just a prelude to the eighteenth century. These were the formative years of the Canton trade, when many of the ideas and practices that underpinned the later trade came into being, and it is only in their light that we can understand the Canton trade not as an inefficient anachronism but on its own terms.

But this story is not told just in the English-language India Office Records, normally the most important source for histories of the Canton trade. There are extensive Portuguese-language sources on the sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth centuries, created by the Senate of Macau, the Jesuits, who were present in Macau almost from the beginning, and the institutions of the Portuguese *Estado da Índia*, the State of India to which Macau nominally belonged. However, these have hardly been used by scholarship in English and Chinese. A contribution of this thesis is to put these sources in dialogue with the more widely-studied journals and diaries in the India Office Records, as well as a wide variety of material in Chinese,

²⁸ Xin Quanmin 辛全民 and Yao Dong 姚東, 'Zhongguo fanyi shi de tongshi shiqi chutan 中國翻譯史的通事初探' [Preliminary investigation of the linguists in Chinese translation history], *Qinghai Minzu Daxue Xubao (Jiaoyu Kexue Ban)* 青海民族大學學報(教育科學版), 3 (2010), 78.

²⁹ Van Dyke, 'From the Open Seas to the Guangzhou System'; Puga, *British Presence*, 67–78.

primarily memorials to the throne and essays written by local officials, along with local gazetteers and other publications about life in the Pearl River Delta. Using the Portuguese sources is important because the linguists came into being through the Portuguese trade, and, as this thesis argues, this context is crucial to understanding what the linguists were and what was at stake in the debates over their conduct.

Without Portuguese sources, historians of the linguists often proceed either etymologically by tracing the descent of the term *tongshi* 通事 in Chinese sources from ancient times, or begin the story in the middle, taking the existence of the linguists as a given.³⁰ But this approach situates the linguists within a Chinese state framework that begins in the Han heartlands and extends outwards with the expansion of dynastic rule, assuming an automatic continuity between the linguists of, say, the Han dynasty and those of the seventeenth-century Canton trade. In this way, it follows the methodology of Chinese institutional history, a tradition of scholarship based on the careful analysis of regulations, edicts, and other descriptions of the state produced within the state itself.³¹ This methodology is invaluable for understanding the late imperial state, but it has also been criticised for failing to take full account of the gap between the idealised representation of the state in its written regulations and the reality of how institutions worked and were experienced by those who lived within and under them.³² The argument of this thesis is the opposite: the linguists of the Pearl River Delta arose largely outside the state and were then co-opted not just by the municipal government of Macau but

³⁰ For the problem with history based on an assumption of common ground between otherwise unconnected instances of translation, see Christopher Rundle, 'Translation as an approach to history', *Translation Studies*, 5/2 (2012), 237.

³¹ For an excellent example of this methodological tradition, see Fang Zhiyuan 方志遠, *Mingdai Guojia Quanli Jiegou Ji Yunxing Jizhi* 明代國家權力結構及運行機制 [The Structure of Ming State Power and its Mechanism of Operation] (Beijing, 2008). Studies of linguists drawing on this methodology include: Xin and Yao, 'Tongshi shiqi chutan 通事時期初探'; Xu Xuemei 徐雪梅 and Ding Weiguo 丁維國, 'Qianyi Qingchao de "tongshi" 淺議清朝的"通事"' [Brief discussion of the 'linguists' of the Qing dynasty], *Heihe Xueyuan Xuebao* 黑河學院學報, 2/1 (2011).

³² Michael Szonyi and Zhao Shiyu, 'State institutions, local society, and historical continuity: Ming military institutions from the perspective of historical anthropology', in Michael Szonyi and Zhao Shiyu, eds, *The Chinese Empire in Local Society: Ming Military Institutions and Their Legacy* (Abingdon, 2021), 15–16.

into the Chinese state as well. Co-option in this way entailed assimilation to the vocabulary of an ancient institution of tribute linguists, but the focus on a constructed institutional continuity hides what was new and different about these linguists. Above all, this was that their origins in the sixteenth-century private trade—that is, trade by merchants operating outside of the Portuguese Crown’s attempts at monopolisation—prior to co-option into the state made the linguists simultaneously state and commercial actors, the central tension to which most debates over the linguists in the seventeenth century and beyond were responding.

But if the Portuguese sources are able to provide a new perspective, this thesis nevertheless does argue that the Chinese state archives are of great value for understanding the linguists. But, as will be discussed more fully in Chapter 2 in examining the topic of corruption, rethinking the history of the linguists requires engaging critically with how the linguists are made visible in the Chinese archives. This is a ‘negative archive’, produced by the central state as a record of the moments when it is required to judge the conduct of individual linguists at moments of tension.³³ This means that these sources are not representative of the day-to-day work of the linguists, but they provide an important window into debates over the nature and conduct of the linguists that are central to this thesis.

As will be clear by now, this question of the relationship between state and the new long-distance commerce of the early modern period is at the heart of this thesis. In what follows, I explain in more detail how the historiography of this problem has evolved in relation to China, Portugal, and England, and suggest what this means for the study of the linguists.

State and maritime commerce

In England, the emergence of a formerly peripheral nation as a maritime power around the early seventeenth century was conditioned by the long Elizabethan wars and public finances

³³ I am grateful to William A. Callahan for this formulation.

that depended ever more heavily on commercial duties, both of which spurred state support for seaborne trade through the widespread understanding that shipping was vital to both the country's defence and its economic prosperity.³⁴ This growing recognition of trade as central to the nation's economic and international standing raised what Perry Gauci has called the 'public and even patriotic profile' of the merchant.³⁵ Thriving coastal shipping, which served as a training-ground for long-distance sailors, a large merchant fleet trading on a global scale, and a standing navy became the key elements of English maritime expansion by the mid-1620s.³⁶ State support manifested itself in judicial tolerance towards mariners, the protection of wages and food supplies, although not always successful, and an attempt to shelter English shipping from a loss of manpower to other nations.³⁷ Long before the more famous financial revolution of the end of the seventeenth century, the early emergence of an 'investing public' financed long-distance trade and created the social networks out of which the joint-stock companies grew, part of London's existing commercial society rather than a new creation by fiat.³⁸ At the same time, the corporation and enfranchisement by state charters provided a legal form and state backing for commercial ventures that combined public and private to such an extent that, from the very beginning, they acted overseas both as mercantile ventures and also in ways that resembled states in their own rights and would become central to the development of the eventual British empire.³⁹

³⁴ Perry Gauci, *Emporium of the World: The Merchants of London 1660–1800* (London, 2007), 85; Eleanor Hubbard, *Englishmen at Sea: Labor and the Nation at the Dawn of Empire, 1570–1630* (New Haven, CT, 2021), 24–25.

³⁵ Gauci, *Emporium of the World*, 85, 165.

³⁶ Hubbard, *Englishmen at Sea*, 276.

³⁷ Hubbard, *Englishmen at Sea*, 247, 252, 259.

³⁸ Edmond Smith, 'The Social Networks of Investment in Early Modern England', *The Historical Journal*, 64/4 (2021), 912–939.

³⁹ Edmond Smith, *Merchants: The Community That Shaped England's Trade and Empire, 1550–1650* (New Haven, CT, 2021), 211; Rupali Mishra, *A Business of State: Commerce, Politics, and the Birth of the East India Company* (Cambridge, MA, 2018); Philip J. Stern, *The Company-State: Corporate Sovereignty and the Early Modern Foundations of the British Empire in India* (Oxford, 2011); Philip J. Stern, *Empire, Incorporated: The Corporations that Built British Colonialism* (Cambridge, MA, 2023).

But although this shows the close state backing for maritime expansion and the entanglement from the beginning of state and commerce, it can tend to overstate the power of these joint-stock companies once they reached Asia. In fact, a wider imperial historiography emphasises the relative weakness of Europeans in early modern maritime Asia, including the English joint-stock companies. It is true that in some ways these companies acted like states in their own right, empowered through the grant of charters and a new set of ideas about the political authority of incorporated bodies. But this new scholarship argues that the East India Company and other European initiatives depended at least partially for their success on subordination to more powerful Asian empires, adaption to and insertion into existing structures and configurations of power, and the cultivation of local ties and alliances, rather than representing the cataclysmic advent of irresistibly powerful imperial forces.⁴⁰ In this way, the East India Company spread throughout Asia not as an outward expansion directed by a monolithic and powerful centre, but as an irreducibly plural number of colonial and commercial projects deeply rooted in particular local conditions and the interests of the Company's agents on the ground.⁴¹ This approach is not limited, however, to joint stock companies. In fact, these developments arose first in the history of the Portuguese empire, as historians questioned straightforward narratives of an epoch-making 'Age of Discovery' driven by the Portuguese crown and central state. Domestically, historians of Portugal questioned the supposedly precociously absolutist, centralising, and monolithic nature of the Portuguese state, seeing instead a complex and varying constellation of local, regional, and national powers, identities, and interests.⁴² At the same time, connected histories flourished

⁴⁰ Zoltán Biedermann, 'Portuguese Diplomacy in Asia in the Sixteenth Century: A Preliminary Overview', *itinerario*, 29/2 (2005), 13–37; Stern, *The Company-State*; Stern, *Empire, Incorporated*; J. C. Sharman, *Empires of the Weak: The Real Story of European Expansion and the Creation of the New World Order* (Princeton, 2019); David Veevers, *The origins of the British Empire in Asia, 1600–1750* (Cambridge, 2020).

⁴¹ Stern, *Empire, Incorporated*.

⁴² António Manuel Hespanha, *As Vésperas do Leviathan: Instituições e poder político. Portugal – séc. XVII* [The Eve of Leviathan: Institutions and political power. Portugal – 17th century] (Coimbra, 1994); António Manuel Hespanha, *Caleidoscópio do Antigo Regime* [Kaleidoscope of the Antigo Regime] (São Paulo, 2012); Pedro Cardim, Antonio Feros, and Gaetano Sabatini, 'The Political Constitution of the Iberian Monarchies', in Fernando Bouza, Pedro Cardim, and Antonio Feros, eds., *The Iberian World 1450–1820* (Abingdon, 2020).

in the fertile ground of Iberian Asia, part of a historiographical tradition of breaking down national boundaries and received geographies in maritime Asia that goes back to Denys Lombard and found its most definitive expression in the work of Sanjay Subrahmanyam.⁴³ These two strands of thought have come together in what Zoltán Biedermann has called the ‘Luso-Asianist’ approach, which studies the *Estado da Índia*, the Portuguese State of India to which Macau belonged, not as a Portuguese polity transplanted to Asia, but as a porous, multipolar, and multi-layered co-production arising out of European and Asian commercial and political entanglements.⁴⁴

East Asia was also capable of producing seagoing trade partnerships that acquired the attributes of a state and exercised territorial sovereignty, most notably the Zheng clan of the mid-seventeenth century, which even briefly acquired the support and recognition of the waning Ming state.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, this was not the dominant form in which the Chinese state engaged with maritime commerce. But this does not mean that the state was disengaged from the world of seagoing commerce. New scholarship has attempted to understand maritime Asia on its own terms, freeing it from an interpretive framework that appeared to use European ideas about an entrepreneurial seaborne trade backed by powerful naval might as a benchmark and attributed East Asia’s failure to develop along these lines to authoritarian continental regimes that peripheralized the maritime realm and held it back.⁴⁶ But this new

⁴³ Denys Lombard, *Le Carrefour Javanais : Essai d’histoire globale* [The Javanese Crossroads: Towards a Global History], 3 vols (Paris, 1990); Sanjay Subrahmanyam, ‘Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia’, *Modern Asian Studies*, 31/3 (1997).

⁴⁴ Zoltán Biedermann, *(Dis)connected Empires: Imperial Portugal, Sri Lankan Diplomacy, and the Making of a Habsburg Conquest in Asia* (Oxford, 2018), 15–16. See, for example, Ângela Barreto Xavier, *Religion and Empire in Portuguese India: Conversion, Resistance, and the Making of Goa* (Albany, NY, 2022); Jorge Flores, *Unwanted Neighbours: The Mughals, the Portuguese, and Their Frontier Zones* (Oxford, 2018).

⁴⁵ For a discussion of Zheng state formation, see Xing Hang, *Conflict and Commerce in Maritime East Asia: The Zheng Family and the Shaping of the Modern World, c. 1620–1720* (Cambridge, 2015), 12–16.

⁴⁶ Xing Hang, ‘The evolution of maritime Chinese historiography in the United States: towards a transnational and interdisciplinary approach’, *Journal of Modern Chinese History*, 14/1 (2020), 152–7. For an example of the view that China was ideologically isolationist, see Chen Shangsheng 陳尚勝, ‘Huaiyi’ yu ‘Yishang’: Mingdai Haiyang Liliang Xing-Shuai Yanjiu “懷夷”與“抑商”: 明代海洋力量興衰研究 [‘Cherishing Foreigners’ and ‘Repressing Commerce’: The Rise and Fall of Ming Maritime Power] (Jinan, 1997).

scholarship does not claim that Chinese officials were always open to maritime commerce. Rather, it aims to understand attitudes to overseas trade and navigation not in light of inherent cultural biases or by comparison to the European path of development, but as the result of multiple factors such as security, fiscal challenges, diplomatic goals, and social and economic changes. The picture that emerges is quite different and far from static.

At the beginning of the period studied in this dissertation, the defining features of maritime Asia are argued to be the dominance of China due to its sheer size and the widespread use by multiple states of maritime prohibitions (*haijin* 海禁).⁴⁷ This latter had typically been taken to mark a period of isolation that would be blamed for China's apparent failure to modernise.⁴⁸ But it is now seen as part of a broader 'foreign trade prohibition regime', used to strengthen newly established dynasties in both China and Korea. They consolidated their authority not just by controlling the border tightly and asserting a monopoly on trade and diplomatic contacts, but also by enhancing their control over coastal populations in encouraging them to register as farmers.⁴⁹ But this close control of seaborne contacts was not seen as entirely anti-trade; in fact, in the early Ming it was argued that it increased the state's revenues by ensuring that trade only took place in locations and ways legible to the state.⁵⁰

By the early sixteenth century, the effect of these maritime prohibitions was that, although the coasts were tightly if never completely controlled, at sea there was an 'extreme vacuum' of state power.⁵¹ This power vacuum, combined with the incentive of enormous profits from the growing silver trade and economic hardship on the coasts of Fujian and Guangdong

⁴⁷ Tonio Andrade and Xing Hang, 'Introduction: The East Asian Maritime Realm in Global History, 1500–1700', in Tonio Andrade and Xing Hang, eds, *Sea Rovers, Silver, and Samurai: Maritime East Asia in Global History, 1550–1700* (Honolulu, 2016), 3–5.

⁴⁸ Yiu Siu, 'Maritime Exclusion Policy in Ming China and Chosŏn Korea, 1368–1450: Dynastic Authority, National Security, and Trade', DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, Oxford, 2022, 1.

⁴⁹ Li Kangying, *The Ming Maritime Trade Policy in Transition, 1368 to 1567* (Wiesbaden, 2010); Gang Zhao, *The Qing Opening to the Ocean: Chinese Maritime Policies, 1684–1757* (Honolulu, 2013), 19; Yiu Siu, 'Maritime Exclusion'.

⁵⁰ Yiu Siu, 'Maritime Exclusion', 159–164.

⁵¹ Andrade and Hang, 'East Asian Maritime Realm', 22.

pushing men off the land and into the maritime realm, meant that a vigorous maritime trade arose beyond the purview of the state.⁵² This meant that a distinctive feature of maritime Asia was that most of the institutions of long-distance trade emerged *outside* of the state, in the ‘space in between’ where Chinese, Japanese, European, and other actors joined in partnerships whose activities crossed and recrossed the ever-shifting boundary between trade and piracy.⁵³ As this trade flourished despite—or because of—the maritime prohibitions, officials began to rethink their attitude towards commerce. Detailed work by intellectual historians working on Chinese debates over maritime policy amongst provincial and central officials has found that there was a decisive shift in the mid-sixteenth century towards a new belief that excessive state control of trade was causing the growth of aggression on the coast driven by the legitimate grievances of those excluded by the prohibition, and that a new openness to trade would both pacify the coast and increase revenue.⁵⁴

This openness remained the mainstream position throughout the seventeenth century, except for the initial decades of the Qing conquest, when the infamous ‘coastal clearance’ (*qianjieling* 遷界令) was implemented, initially to combat the threat of the Zheng regime in Taiwan and then maintained beyond its period of usefulness by the militarised feudatories that governed the south, both as means of self-enrichment and as a justification for continued military rule.⁵⁵ But following the re-opening of the seas in 1684, the Qing attitude was overwhelmingly one of openness to trade, and even the restrictions later imposed from the early eighteenth century onwards represented an attempt to regulate the trade more effectively and not to hinder its growth.⁵⁶ In fact, a re-examination of the Qing state’s

⁵² Andrade and Hang, ‘East Asian Maritime Realm’, 6–7.

⁵³ Michael Laver, ‘Neither Here nor There: Trade, Piracy, and the “Space Between” in Early Modern East Asia’, in Tonio Andrade and Xing Hang, eds, *Sea Rovers, Silver, and Samurai: Maritime East Asia in Global History, 1550–1700* (Honolulu, 2016), 28–37.

⁵⁴ Li, *Ming Maritime Trade Policy*, 181.

⁵⁵ Dahpon David Ho, ‘The Burning Shore: Fujian and the Coastal Depopulation, 1661–1683’, in Tonio Andrade and Xing Hang, eds, *Sea Rovers, Silver, and Samurai: Maritime East Asia in Global History, 1550–1700* (Honolulu, 2016), 260–89.

⁵⁶ Van Dyke, ‘From the Open Seas to the Guangzhou System’; Zhao, *Qing Opening*.

relationship with commerce more broadly has revealed how much the state valued the ability of commerce to mobilise resources, using merchants to make up for the state's deficiencies in handling military logistics, turning to customs taxes (*guan shui* 關稅) as a much more elastic and flexible source of revenue than the traditional land tax (*tian fu* 田賦), and using merchants as brokers in frontier campaigns and imperial expansion.⁵⁷ Such was the extent of entanglement between state and commerce that it has been argued that commerce and merchants should in fact be understood as an integral part of the Qing imperial project.⁵⁸

This story of the rise of the institutions of Asian long-distance trade outside of the state and their co-option into the state in parallel with the insertion of European states and merchants into these networks, seeking local collaborators, legitimization and enfranchisement amidst a changing Chinese engagement with commerce, is the context for this thesis's study of the linguists. Approaching the linguists in this way detaches their story from pure institutional history, examining how their changing role and the debates over their legitimacy, loyalties, and the boundaries of their actions as state and commercial agents reflected the growth of a way of engagement with European commerce that was both globally connected and specific to the Pearl River Delta.

Global and local

This is therefore both a local and a global story. It is global not as the geopolitical clash of empires or, worse, civilisations, but because of the flow of people and ideas that converged in the Delta. And it is local because it was in the daily work of managing the Canton trade that these ideas were worked out and transformed, creating a form of frontier governance that was particular to the Pearl River Delta.⁵⁹ In telling this story, I draw above all on the

⁵⁷ C. Patterson Giersch, 'Commerce and Empire in the Borderlands: How do Merchants and Trade Fit into Qing Frontier History?', *Frontiers of History in China*, 9/3 (2014), 361–83; Yingcong Dai, 'The Qing State, Merchants, and the Military Labor Force in the Jinchuan Campaigns', *Late Imperial China*, 22/2 (2001), 35–90; Ni Yuping, *Customs Duties in the Qing Dynasty, ca. 1644–1911* (Leiden, 2017), 3.

⁵⁸ Patterson Giersch, 'Commerce and Empire', 363–4, 370.

⁵⁹ For the clash of civilisations, see Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York, 1996).

experiences of individuals. Linguists such as Paulo Neretti, Quiqua, and Rosário, together with merchants such as Orazio Neretti, John Weddell and Robert Douglas, and officials such as Regional Commander Chen Qian or the Manchu Hoppo, Solbi, all give a human face to what is normally told as a grand narrative of Sino-Western relations. Changing the scale in this way reveals how together global flows and specific contexts came together in individual experiences.⁶⁰

Although they inhabited a globally-connected world, the seventeenth century predated the emergence of what has been called ‘geo-modernity’, and none of the Chinese, English, or Portuguese participants in the story told in this thesis thought about the Pearl River Delta in terms that we would consider recognisably geopolitical, that is, conceived on the scale of nation-states and foreign policies.⁶¹ At the same time, however, these local contexts were not disconnected from a wider world, and were shaped by vocabularies, ideas, and experiences brought to bear by merchants and officials whose own mobility took them far beyond the Delta itself.⁶² Through the incremental and accumulative process of grappling with the day-to-day problems they were called to solve, officials and merchants came to form particular ways of construing problems and solutions in light of their experience.⁶³ As Leigh Jenco has observed, knowledge does not come into being or travel by itself, but must be constituted in communities formed around it.⁶⁴ Although systematic theorisation of translation is a modern conceit, what formed gradually in the Pearl River Delta was a community that shared at least some ways of understanding and talking about what the nature, purpose, and boundaries of the work of the linguists ought to be in this local context. Many people involved in this only

⁶⁰ Cf. John Paul Ghobrial, ‘Introduction: Seeing the World like a Microhistorian’, *Past and Present*, 242 Supplement 14 (2019).

⁶¹ Shellen Xiao Wu, *Birth of the Geopolitical Age: Global Frontiers and the Making of Modern China* (Stanford, 2023).

⁶² See Nandini Das, *Courting India: England, Mughal India and the Origins of Empire* (London, 2023), xxii, 16, for a similar point about Britain in India.

⁶³ For a discussion of this cumulative process within bureaucracies, see Diana S. Kim, *Empires of Vice: The Rise of Opium Prohibition across Southeast Asia* (Princeton, 2020), 217.

⁶⁴ Leigh K. Jenco, *Changing Referents: Learning Across Space and Time in China and the West* (Oxford, 2015), 22–23.

spent a few years or even months in the Delta, and much of what they understood about it was gleaned from the advice of their predecessors, from what they could learn about local rules and customs, including from the linguists themselves, and from the growing circulation of manuscript and printed material on the Delta and its trade. At the same time, these merchants and officials, often travelling from far-off places, brought with them vocabularies and ideas that linked the Pearl River Delta with a global context. Over time, these global flows of ideas were themselves reshaped in this local context, generating new understandings in the process.⁶⁵

In telling this story, this thesis begins in Chapter One with the origins of the linguists, some 1,500 miles away from Canton in Melaka. It argues that the linguists arose first in the private Portuguese trade between Melaka and the Fujian coast, with the emergence of a group of ‘masters of language’, or *jurubahasa*, initially speaking Malay and Chinese and then replacing Malay with Portuguese or a Portuguese-based creole. The subsequent transformation of Portuguese merchants of this private trade from a group of illicit Southeast Asian traders on the outlying islands of the Chinese coast to a political community settled in Macau both placed the linguists at the heart of the government of the Pearl River Delta and created the conditions for new forms of kinship and servitude that engendered a large community of mixed-race bilingual people. Fluent in Chinese and Portuguese, they not only worked in Macau’s official hierarchy of linguists, but also served Chinese officials in Canton. Many of them would go through years of formal education in Macau to become literate in both Chinese and Portuguese, and eventually the Senate also issued regulations to create a formal hierarchy of linguists and to provide rules for their work and training. At the same time, Chinese officials actively supported the linguists as playing an essential role in keeping the peace and supporting the trade of the Pearl River Delta. Portuguese, then, became firmly

⁶⁵ Leigh K. Jenco and Jonathan Chappell, ‘Introduction: History from Between and the Global Circulations of the Past in Asia and Europe, 1600–1950’, *The Historical Journal*, 64/Special issue 1 (2021), 1–16.

established in the Pearl River Delta, and served as a pivot language for English merchants, who lacked the means of the city of Macau to acquire Chinese translators of their own, but were generally conversant with the Portuguese language.

This co-option of a group of linguists who had arisen from private trade into the state also created a tension. The entanglement of state and commerce was essential to how the linguists worked but also opened up a series of questions about their loyalties and motivations. How this tension played out in the English trade is taken up in more detail in Chapter Two, which examines the first English-led trading voyage to reach China, the Weddell Expedition of 1637. Through studying a debate over the conduct of the linguist Paulo Neretti (Li Yerong 李葉榮), who was accused of corruption and deliberate mistranslation, it argues that the discourse of corruption prioritised by archival practices was part of a fuller, more contested debate over what constituted legitimate activity for a state actor. It suggests that notions of public interest and office, and of the ethical value of private interest and the pursuit of profit, were in flux against the backdrop of commercialisation and the Ming-Qing transition. Linguists such as Neretti acted simultaneously as officials, commercial brokers, and private traders, enabled by an understanding of office that tolerated private interests insofar as they did not triumph over state interests. It argues that this allowed the Ming state in the Pearl River Delta to act through semi-official agents motivated by their own interests rather than modern trust-based notions of public office. This balancing of interests proved lucrative but also dangerous for linguists.

Chapter Three further develops the themes of the previous chapter, examining Chinese officials' response to the problem of how to manage and discipline the linguists in light of their position between state and commerce. Why did officials choose to enforce the boundaries of conduct discussed in the previous chapter by threatened and actual violence against their own linguists, while leaving foreign merchants untouched? It follows the voyage of the *Defence* in 1689, several decades after the Weddell Expedition due to the Ming collapse interrupting the trade, attempting to make historically contextualised sense of this use of

violence as an act that was considered meaningful and accepted as part of commercial life. Following the twists and turns of a whole voyage rather than isolated incidents of violence, this chapter emphasises how violence was made meaningful within a longer process of dispute and later reconciliation. For the Qing, establishing clear circumstances in which violence could be legitimately used was, perversely, a way of keeping the broader peace in the Delta, preventing foreign merchants from using violence towards each other or Chinese officials and merchants, and avoiding provoking disputes by targeting linguists rather than merchants directly. These moments of violence were symbolically powerful and forced a process of reconciliation on changed terms, preventing foreign merchants from exceeding the boundaries of acceptable behaviour at relatively low cost to the Qing state.

But the effectiveness of this method of managing the foreign presence would eventually be its undoing. Examining the voyage of the *Macclesfield* in 1700, Chapter Four shows how English merchants began increasingly to attribute their troubles in the Pearl River Delta to excessive official interference in the trade, particularly their close control of the linguists. They began to be concerned with the 'freedom' to choose whom they might deal with, seeking to circumvent official control through a growing network of local contacts who could serve as alternatives to the linguists. They began to judge linguists against the dual standards of courage and honesty in the face of official pressure, and articulated an understanding of the Pearl River Delta's trading environment couched in the early modern vocabulary of mutual obligation: friendship, service, kindness, enmity. In 1700, the merchants were not successful, but this was the beginning of the end of the linguists' position as the primary mediators of the trade.

Chapter One

Macau and the emergence of the linguists, 1500–1630

Would that it had pleased God that the ardour of youth and the desire to see new countries and people had never made me leave Tuscany! It has already been thirty-eight years, some of which I spent in the East Indies in the service of the King of Spain, others I spent in this furthest part of the world in China and Japan, and finally, laden with years, and lame in one leg from an arquebus shot fighting at sea with the Moors of Malabar, I remained a citizen in this city of Macau, port of China, with house, wife and children.

Avesse piaciuto a Dio che l'ardore giovanile e il desio di vedere paesi e gente nuovi non m'avessi mai fatto lasciare Toscana! Sono già trentotto anni, dei quali consumai alcuni nelle Indie Orientali nel servizio del Re di Spagna, altri passai in questa ultima parte del mondo nella Cina e Giappone, e finalmente, carico di anni, e inutile di una gamba a causa di una archibugiata, combattendo in mare con i mori Malabari, restai cittadino in questa città di Macao, porto della Cina, con casa, moglie e figlioli.¹

Orazio Neretti, an elderly merchant of Macau, found much to regret as he looked back on his eventful life in 1617, two years before his death. But his experience of royal service and commerce across the Portuguese empire in Asia, ending with his establishment as one of Macau's leading citizens, provides a revealing window into the early history of the linguists. Although he was born into a leading family of Florentine nobility, his thirst for adventure had driven him, like many Tuscans of his background, to seek his fortune in the trading world of early modern maritime Asia.²

¹ ASF, Mediceo del Principato 5080, fo. 464^r.

² Brian Brege, *Tuscany in the Age of Empire* (Cambridge, MA, 2021), 119–134.

Arriving in Macau as a private trader in 1598 after decades primarily in the Portuguese pepper trade, he quickly established himself as a member of the city's merchant elite.³ In 1600 he was named *capitão-mor* of the Japan voyage, one of the most senior and lucrative offices in Macau, and in 1613 he was the city's ambassador to the Shogun Tokugawa Hidetada.⁴ But in all of this he did not work alone. Following his name through the archives of Macau, we find at least four Portuguese-speaking linguists sharing his surname: a Korean slave purchased in Nagasaki known in the archives as António Neretti, and three Chinese interpreters living in Macau, known as Horácio Neretti, Ventura Neretti, and Paulo Neretti. All of them were multilingual and came to work as translators from either Chinese or Japanese into Portuguese and sometimes Latin, and together they formed what was known as a *parentela*, or kinship group, said to move 'in the shadow' (*à sombra de*) of a senior merchant such as Neretti. These non-consanguineous relations, largely formed on the basis of bond-servitude, adoption, and marriage, were a means for the merchants of Macau to obtain collaborators who spoke local languages and understood local cultures, but it is only recently that their history has begun to be recovered from state archives that have little to say about these mercantile groups.⁵

The story of Orazio Neretti and the three linguists of Macau points to a significant gap in our understanding of the linguists. How did a European merchant come to be a leading figure of the government of a city on the coast of China, and how did this in turn place the linguists who moved 'in his shadow' at the heart of the politics and commerce of the Pearl River Delta? The fact that the Canton trade was mediated by Portuguese-speaking linguists for two centuries is normally taken for granted in the historiography, but the process by which this came into being is crucial to understanding the debates over the linguists in this period. This chapter traces the story of the merchants of Portuguese Asia and their linguists through the Portuguese and Chinese archives, making a different argument to scholarship that has normally situated the linguists in a long

³ Penalva, 'Mercadores, Jesuítas e Jurubaças', 93.

⁴ 'Adnotationes Historicae P. Gabrielis de Matos S.J. annos 1600–1614 complectentes', in Josef Franz Schütte, ed., *Monumenta historica Japoniae I: Textus catalogorum Japoniae aliaeque de personis domibusque S.J. in Japonia informationes et relationes, 1549–1654* (Rome, 1975), 360; Elisabetta Colla, '16th century Japan and Macau described by Francesco Carletti (1573?–1636)', *Bulletin of Portuguese-Japanese Studies*, 17 (2008), 135–6.

⁵ Barreto, *Poder e Saber*, 335; Penalva, 'Mercadores, Jesuítas e Jurubaças'.

institutional history of Chinese frontier management, arguing that they arose first out of the private Portuguese trade from Southeast Asia and were co-opted into state institutions in the Pearl River Delta. It argues that the initial attempt by the Portuguese Crown to create a nominally monopolistic trade to China failed so dramatically that the trade became almost entirely a private affair carried out on the margins of the Portuguese and Chinese states for most of the sixteenth century. Initially, these private traders sailed in mixed groups of Southeast Asian merchants, relying on bilingual merchants who could translate between Chinese and Malay or a trading creole. But as first encounters turned into repeated contacts, the Portuguese language began to spread on the south China coast, and a first small group of Portuguese-Chinese interpreters arose, seemingly specialists known as ‘masters of language’ (*jurubahasa*) and treated with respect as *laoye* 老爺 in Chinese. Permanent settlement on land in what would become Macau led to the formation of a political community, integrating and legitimising the linguists at the centre of the Chinese and Portuguese structures of government in the Pearl River Delta. The linguists were no longer purely commercial brokers, but state actors as well, and the Macau state invested significant resources in their education and upbringing. This resulted in a group of linguists who, contrary to the assumptions of much scholarship on the Canton trade, were fluent bilinguals, educated in written Chinese and Portuguese, specialised in the task of commercial and political translation, and relied on in both Macau and Canton as the primary mediators of European trade. It also created a situation in which state and commerce were inextricably intertwined in the person of the linguists, a tension that the following chapters will show was central to discussions about how the Pearl River Delta trading environment should be managed.

The ‘Caminho da China’

The story of the Pearl River Delta linguists begins not in Canton but in the Malay Sultanate of Melaka in Southeast Asia. By the early sixteenth century, Melaka had become the most important transshipment centre for the Southeast Asian trade with China, helped by its favourable geography

and relative freedom from piracy.⁶ Although its resident Chinese community was not yet large, it had a long history of sustained commercial ties with the South China coast, and it was quickly realised that this would be the ‘way to China’ (*caminho da China*), as the Jesuit Francis Xavier later described the city.⁷ In 1508, King Manuel I ordered Diogo Lopes de Sequeira, a *fidalgo* and future governor of the *Estado da Índia*, to sail for Melaka and make contact with the Chinese, giving him a long list of information that he was to obtain on China’s trade with Southeast Asia, its military prowess, its customs and beliefs, its treatment of people of different cultures, and its geography.⁸ Lopes de Sequeira fell almost immediately into conflict with the Melakan authorities and failed to establish a factory. This failure led directly to the Portuguese conquest of Melaka two years later after the governor of the *Estado da Índia* concluded that the sultanate could only be brought into the Portuguese commercial network by force.⁹ But the attempt to begin collecting information about the China trade proved much more fruitful, and Lopes de Sequeira’s voyage marked the first deliberate Portuguese contact with Chinese merchants. In Melaka, on the ‘island of the Chinese’ (*ilha dos Chins*), where trade was conducted, and in the ‘Chinese village’ (*kampung Cina*) where the resident community lived, the Portuguese encountered a prosperous and cosmopolitan world of Cantonese, Fujianese, Malay, and Tamil merchants trading to the South China coast despite the official maritime prohibition.¹⁰ These were generally well-disposed to cooperation with the

⁶ Anthony Reid, ‘Flows and Seepages in the Long-term Chinese Interaction with Southeast Asia’, in Anthony Reid, ed., *Sojourners and Settlers: Histories of Southeast Asia and the Chinese* (Honolulu, 2001), 32–3; Sanjay Subrahmanyam, ‘Commerce and Conflict: Two Views of Portuguese Melaka in the 1620s’, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, XIX/1 (1988), 66.

⁷ Paulo Jorge de Sousa Pinto, ‘A China pelos Olhos de Malaca. A Suma Oriental e o conhecimento europeu do Extremo Oriente’ [China through the Eyes of Melaka: The Suma Oriental and European knowledge of the Far East], in Roberto Carneiro and Guilherme d’Oliveira Martins, eds., *China e Portugal: cinco séculos de relacionamento: uma leitura académica* [China and Portugal: five centuries of relations: an academic reading] (Lisbon, 2014), 12. Sustained Chinese commercial interaction with the Malay world was continuous from the tenth century: Derek Heng, *Sino-Malay Trade and Diplomacy from the Tenth through the Fourteenth Century* (Athens, OH, 2009), 21.

⁸ ‘Regimento de D. Manuel a Diogo Lopes de Sequeira, 13 de Fevereiro de 1508’ [Regulation of D. Manuel to Diogo Lopes de Sequeira, 13 February 1508], in Henrique Lopes de Mendonça and Raymundo Antonio de Bulhão Pato, eds., *Cartas de Afonso de Albuquerque seguidas de documentos que as elucidam* [Letters of Afonso de Albuquerque followed by documents that explain them], 7 vols (Lisbon, 1898–1935), ii, 416.

⁹ A. R. Disney, *A History of Portugal and the Portuguese Empire*, 2 vols (2009), ii, 131.

¹⁰ Barreto, *Poder e Saber*, 43–4; de Sousa Pinto, ‘A China’, 18.

Portuguese, and the following years saw a period of intense cultivation of contacts and gathering of information that laid the groundwork for the Portuguese China trade.¹¹

From the beginning, interpreters played a key role in this process. They were largely merchants with unusual life experiences that had allowed them to become fluent in the languages of Southeast Asian commerce.¹² One who stood out in these early years was João Viegas, who had been a captive in Tetouan, Morocco, and so could speak very good Arabic, an important *lingua franca* of trade in maritime Asia.¹³ This allowed him to deal closely with local merchants, and he was instrumental in forming the widely-studied Portuguese partnership with the great Tamil merchant Nayinar Chettu, which also resulted in him proposing what would have been the first Portuguese voyage to China in 1512.¹⁴

In these first few years, it seemed that the planned China trade would shortly become a reality under a Portuguese Crown monopoly. Portuguese historians have seen this initial period as a brief moment in which the Crown and its service nobility won out in a conflict of interests with private traders, leading temporarily to the ‘exclusion of the soldier, private merchant, interpreter, and mixed-race people’ (*exclusão do soldado, mercado privado, intérprete e asiaticizado*).¹⁵ This may be overstating the case: it is hard to describe these voyages as entirely state-sponsored, given the confluence of mercantile interests that made them possible in the first place; and the eventual

¹¹ Barreto, *Poder e Saber*, 45; Roderich Ptak, ‘Reconsidering Melaka and Central Guangdong: Portugal’s and Fujian’s Impact on Southeast Asian Trade (Early Sixteenth Century)’, in Peter Borschberg, ed., *Iberians in the Singapore-Melaka Area and Adjacent Regions (16th to 18th Century)* (Wiesbaden, 2004), 11–12.

¹² For the role of unusual backgrounds, see Harrison, ‘A Faithful Interpreter?’.

¹³ Philip D. Curtin, *Cross-cultural trade in world history* (Cambridge, 1984), 132.

¹⁴ The classic study of this partnership is Luís Filipe Thomaz, ‘Nina Chatu e o Comércio Português em Malacca’ [Nina Chatu and the Portuguese Trade in Melaka], *Memórias do Centro de Estudos de Marinha*, 5 (1975). New evidence suggests that Nayinar Chettu was forced by a rather complicated set of circumstances, having found himself among a group of Tamils who had requested charge of some Portuguese captives in Melaka, including Viegas, as a bargaining-chip to exchange for their family members, who had been captured in turn by the Portuguese. But the hostage exchange did not happen, and Nayinar Chettu seems to have thrown his lot in with the Portuguese, with his own daughter aiding and financing Viegas’s escape; Viegas then strongly recommended Nayinar Chettu to the King of Portugal. Cf. Jorge M. dos Santos Alves, ‘Nayinar Kuniyappan: Un Tamoul, *syahbandar* de Samudera-Pasai au début du XVI^e siècle’ [Nayinar Kuniyappan: A Tamil, *shahbandar* of Samudera-Pasai in the early sixteenth century], *Archipel*, 62 (2001), 132–4. Some sources give his name as Nina Chatu, the Portuguese transcription. For the proposed voyage, see ‘The Letter of Joam Viegas to the King D. Manuel I dated Malacca November 8th 1512’, in Ronald Bishop Smith, *A projected Portuguese voyage to China in 1512 and new notices relative to Tome Pires in Canton* (Bethesda, MD, 1972), 5–6.

¹⁵ Barreto, *Poder e Saber*, 51, 56.

Portuguese embassy made use of local Melakan Chinese merchants as interpreters, as well as an enigmatic multilingual figure called Khoja Hassan, who may have been either Melakan Chinese or a Malay Muslim.¹⁶ Nevertheless, it is certainly true that the late 1510s saw a pronounced shift towards a much greater involvement of the Crown in the China trade. But the situation was to change dramatically after a failed attempt to send an embassy under Tomé Pires, an apothecary and author of the most important compilation of information about Asia in Portuguese, the *Suma Oriental*.¹⁷ The embassy ended in violent conflict, perceived by Ming officials as another manifestation of criminal, piratical activities on the coast, and the Portuguese were officially banned from trading in the Pearl River Delta.¹⁸

The result of this was that, by 1525, the seeming trend of increasing Crown control of the China trade was entirely reversed, with important consequences for the eventual founding of Macau.¹⁹ The Portuguese China trade passed almost entirely into private hands, carried out illicitly on the margins further up the Chinese coast in Fujian and Zhejiang, with multilingual mixed-race merchants playing a key role as intermediaries.²⁰ Explicit evidence is scant, but it seems that the initial language used in mediation between Portuguese-speaking and Chinese-speaking merchants was Malay or, perhaps more likely, a Malay-based creole with an increasing element drawn from Portuguese.²¹ The Portuguese, of course, were trading from Melaka, initially often in Malay and Tamil junks, aboard which they communicated with their crewmates in Malay.²² On board these ships, the ability to coexist with a multitude of languages and cultures was important, particularly

¹⁶ James Fujitani, 'The Ming Rejection of the Portuguese Embassy of 1517: A Reassessment', *Journal of World History*, 27/1 (2016), 92. For the debate over the identity of Khoja Yassan, see Cheah Boon Kheng, 'Ming China's Support for Sultan Mahmud of Melaka and Its Hostility towards the Portuguese after the Fall of Melaka in 1511', *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 85/2(303) (2012), 62–66.

¹⁷ John E. Wills, Jr., 'Maritime Europe and the Ming', in John E. Wills, Jr., ed., *China and Maritime Europe 1500–1800* (Cambridge, 2010), 27.

¹⁸ Fujitani, 'Ming Rejection', 87–102.

¹⁹ Rui Manuel Loureiro, *Fidalgos, Missionários e Mandarins: Portugal e a China no Século XVI* (Lisbon, 2000), 679.

²⁰ Wills, 'Maritime Europe', 32.

²¹ Umberto Ansaldi, *Contact Languages: Ecology and Evolution in Asia* (Hong Kong, 2013), 54, 75; Claudine Salmon, 'Contact Languages on the South China Sea and Beyond (15th–18th Centuries)', *Asian Culture*, 43 (2019), 20–43; Yin Qun 尹群, 'Wan Ming he Qingchao qianqi Zhong-Ou jiaowang de yuyan meijie 晚明和清朝前期中歐交往的語言媒介' [Linguistic intermediaries in late Ming and early Qing Sino-European interaction], *Xue Hai 學海*, 5 (2007), 104.

²² Salmon, 'Contact Languages', 33.

given the relatively weak position of the Portuguese merchants. A set of documents surviving from a voyage of Jorge Alvares and another Portuguese factor, Pero Pais, in one of Nayinar Chettu's junks, although it was not a voyage to China, show clearly this importance. In his *regimento*, or instructions to the factors, Tomé Pires ordered them to place great importance on harmonious coexistence with the mostly-Malay and Peguan crew, obeying local customs and the recommendations of the *nakhoda*, or Malay captain, who, under the maritime laws of Melaka, was said to be 'as a king on board his ship'.²³ This was one reason why many Chinese officials initially saw the Portuguese as what James Fujitani has called a Southeast Asian 'mixed merchant group' rather than a distinct nation.²⁴ The vocabulary of the China trade also bore the imprint of Malay influence. Even into the seventeenth century, many places in the Pearl River Delta were referred to by the Portuguese using Malay names, including the offshore 'trading island' known as *ilha da veniaga* (cf. Malay 'berniaga', to trade) and 'Pulo Canton' (cf. Malay 'pulau', island).²⁵ In these voyages we see mention of translators called by a Malay title, 'jurubahasa' ('master of language'), reflecting the titles given to other skilled crew members on Malay junks, such as the 'jurubatu', responsible for the anchor and depth soundings, the 'jurusampan', in charge of the ship's boat, and the 'jurumudi', the helmsman.²⁶ Again, documentation is scarce, but the rise of a specific term denoting mastery of translation may suggest that the job of a linguist were beginning to be understood as a separate role, rather than an *ad hoc* task given to a bilingual merchant.

Over time, as Portuguese trade grew in quantity and frequency, and began to stand out apart from the Malay trade, a small but increasing number of people began to learn Portuguese. There are no sources for how this linguistic competence was acquired, although it was almost certainly through informal means as formal schooling in Portuguese would not begin for many decades. What we do know is that these Portuguese-speaking figures were immediately recognised as vital to trade. One

²³ Luís Filipe Thomaz, *De Malaca a Pegu: viagens de um feitor português, 1512–1515* (Lisbon, 1966); Richard Winstedt and P.E. De Josselin De Jong, 'The Maritime Laws of Malacca, edited, with an outline translation', *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 29/3 (1956), 51.

²⁴ Fujitani, 'Ming Rejection', 92–3.

²⁵ Salmon, 'Contact Languages',

²⁶ 'Juru-' refers to an expert or master in a domain. 'Bahasa' means 'language'. For these titles see Winstedt and De Josselin De Jong, 'Maritime Laws of Malacca', 51, 56.

Portuguese observer wrote that, in recognition of their ‘service’ (*serviço*) and ‘skill’ (*habilidade*)—and, no doubt, of the rarity of these skills—they would be addressed respectfully as ‘*loutia*’ (*laodie* 老爹), such as in the case of a young man given this title ‘for being able to speak Portuguese’ (*por saber falar português*).²⁷

So, by the mid-sixteenth century, the first specialist Portuguese-speaking translators had begun to appear, not as a product of any official initiative but from amongst commercial communities trading illicitly on the coasts of Fujian despite the maritime trade ban.²⁸ But for the Portuguese merchants and their *jurubahasas*, or *jurubacas* as they came to be known in Portuguese, to emerge from the margins required a fundamental change: the legalisation of the trade and the right to settle in the Pearl River Delta. From the middle of the century, Fujian became an increasingly hostile environment for the Portuguese trade due to anti-piracy campaigns targeting offshore anchorages and merchant ships.²⁹ Gradually, a group of traders led by the mixed-race merchant Diogo Pereira shifted down the coast back to Guangdong, originally trading from the island of Lampacau (*Langbaiao* 浪白澳), but over time beginning to use Haojing Bay (*Haojing’ao* 濠鏡澳), the site of what would become Macau.³⁰ Initially, these merchants stayed temporarily in huts built at these locations, destroying them at the end of each season when they left.³¹ Exactly how they obtained an official grant of settlement is a debated topic: some argue that it was won through bribery, others suggest that it was a reward for military assistance to the Ming.³² This debate is beyond the scope of this chapter, but the main point is that by the early 1570s the merchants of Macau had obtained an officially-recognised right to settle in the Pearl River Delta in return for paying a ground rent to Chinese officials.

²⁷ Gaspar da Cruz, *Tratado em que, se contam muito por extenso, as cousas da China* [Treatise in which are recounted in great detail the affairs of China] (Évora, 1569, repr. Macau, 1996), 101. In the Chinese translation appended to this volume, *loutia* is translated as *laoye* 老爺, but it is more likely to refer to *laodie* 老爹, also used in the late Ming as a term of respect.

²⁸ Souza, *Survival of Empire*, 16–17.

²⁹ Souza, *Survival of Empire*, 17.

³⁰ Barreto, *Poder e Saber*,

³¹ Barreto, *Poder e Saber*,

³² Tang Kaijian 湯開建, ‘Aomen Kaibu Shijian Kao 澳門開埠時間考 [Investigation of the Time of the Opening of the Port of Macau]’, in Tang Kaijian 湯開建, *Aomen Kaibu Chuqi Shi Yanjiu 澳門開埠初期史研究 [The History of the Early Period of the Opening of the Port of Macau]* (Beijing, 1999).

This official recognition of the Portuguese merchants' right to settle changed everything, integrating Macau into the wider state-building processes that were ongoing in the Pearl River Delta, turning merchants into municipal officials and placing their linguists at the service of the new municipal government. This was possible because the Pearl River Delta itself was still undergoing a process of fuller integration into the Ming state. David Faure has argued convincingly that what would later come to be seen as the traditional society of the Delta was in fact only just coming into being in this period.³³ This was therefore no 'clash of civilisations' between a Western power and an unchanging China based on ancient institutions of government, but the precarious integration of a merchant community into a wider ongoing process of settlement, state-building, and commercialisation that was transforming the political and social geography of the Delta. In creating a political community that was enmeshed within Ming as well as Portuguese structures of governance, the linguists were placed at the heart of the government of the Delta region as well as its commerce.

Central to this process was the act of settlement on land and its legitimisation and registration in the eyes of the state. Beyond Macau, the primary manifestation of this was in the household registration system and the creation of lineage organisations. The Ming state began the process of household registration (*lijia* 里甲) in the early Ming, but legislation and implementation were two different problems, and it took over a century for this to become widespread in the Delta.³⁴ Initially, this registration implied service obligations in the *corvée* (*yaoyi* 徭役). But by the mid sixteenth century, with the monetisation of the tax system, eventually culminating in the famous 'single-whip' tax reform (*yi tiao bian fa* 一條鞭法), the focus of registration shifted from the calculation of labour service obligations on the basis of a co-residential household unit to becoming what David Faure has called a 'tax account'.³⁵ This went hand-in-hand with the formation of single-surname

³³ David Faure, *Emperor and Ancestor: State and Lineage in South China* (Stanford, 2007), 10.

³⁴ Faure, *Emperor and Ancestor*, 71.

³⁵ Faure, *Emperor and Ancestor*, 8, 107–8; Liu Zhiwei 劉志偉, *Zai Guojia Yu Shehui Zhi Jian: Ming-Qing Guangdong Diqu Li-jia Fuyi Zhidu Yu Xiangcun Shehui* 在國家與社會之間：明清廣東地區里甲賦役制度與鄉村社會

lineage organisations (*zongzu zuzhi* 宗族組織), based on an often heavily-manipulated narrative of shared descent and acted out in the ancestral temple (*citang* 祠堂) using the Confucian rituals promoted by the state.³⁶ This was a form of incorporation that has been seen as playing a role in commerce similar to the Western company, enabling collective property-holding, the pooling of capital for investment, and a form of internal structure for social and commercial relationships.³⁷ The flexibility of the new tax-based registration meant that these lineages could take advantage of it as a means of acquiring what Helen Siu has called ‘a respectable place in a Han-dominated political hierarchy’: registration implied recognition by the state and transformation from non-Han ethnic identities such as the Dan into that of a loyal Han subject (*bian hu qi min* 編戶齊民), legitimising claims to land and enabling social mobility through means such as access to the imperial examination and officeholding.³⁸ What this meant was that by the Jiajing 嘉靖 reign in the mid-sixteenth century, settlement, registration, lineage, and ritual had become the building-blocks by which the Ming state extended its reach throughout the Delta, incorporating alien people and unregistered land. At the same time local populations adopted the legitimating language of imperial state-building for their own ends and promoting it through the Delta with the spread of land registration and powerful lineages.

Macau was not external to this process. Of course, on the one hand, the monetisation of the tax system was only possible because of the global trade in silver, in which Portuguese merchants played a pivotal role as the intermediaries in the silver trade between Japan and China.³⁹ But far more importantly, the location of Macau amidst the sands meant that it was in an area that was being incorporated into the Ming state through the reclamation of land and its physical transformation by the construction of a dyke-pond landscape on the one hand, and the registration

[Between State and Society: The Lijia and Corvée and Rural Society in the Guangdong Area during the Ming and Qing Dynasties] (expanded ed., Beijing, 2021), 6–13.

³⁶ Faure, *Emperor and Ancestor*, 8–11.

³⁷ Faure, *Emperor and Ancestor*, 217–232.

³⁸ Helen F. Siu and Liu Zhiwei, ‘Lineage, Market, Pirate, and Dan: Ethnicity in the Pearl River Delta of South China’, in Pamela Kyle Crossley, Helen F. Siu and Donald S. Sutton, eds, *Empire at the Margins: Culture, Ethnicity, and Frontier in Early Modern China* (Berkeley, 2006); Helen F. Siu, *Tracing China: A Forty-Year Ethnographic Journey* (Hong Kong, 2016), 166.

³⁹ Li, *Ming Maritime Trade Policy*, 69–75.

and creation of lineages legitimating settlement by the landholders on the other hand, who were transformed from boat-dwelling Dan into powerful ‘magnates’ (*haoyou* 豪右).⁴⁰ Granting the Portuguese merchants the right to settle permanently on land and to pay taxes, both on the land itself and on their trade, rather than the previous practice of seasonal trade either staying on board their ships or constructing temporary huts on Lampacau (*Langbaiao* 浪白澳), was the critical step in their evolution in Chinese official discourse from a criminal infestation on the outlying islands, areas only nominally under Chinese control, into a roving southeast Asian merchant group, and finally a legitimate settled part of the Ming world.⁴¹ For Chinese officials, in one sense, this was not the alienation of Ming territory, but the greater incorporation of a previously marginal part of the coast into a structure of indirect Chinese rule.

This new community grew rapidly. As one official wrote in 1564,

In the last few years, they began to enter the bay of Haojing and construct houses in order to trade. In less than a year, there were several hundred houses, and now there are probably over a thousand. The foreigners and the Chinese assist each other on a daily basis, seeking great annual profits and making uncountable gains, such that the entire country hastens there in droves, bringing their elderly and children. Now the houses constructed are innumerable and the foreigners probably number ten thousand.

近數年來，始入濠鏡澳築室，以便交易，不逾年多至數百區，今殆千區以上。日與華人相接濟，歲規厚利，所獲不貲，故舉國而來，負老攜幼，更相接踵，今築室又不知其幾許，而夷衆殆萬人矣。⁴²

As the community grew, it became clear that previous methods of organising themselves as a group, probably based on shipboard ranks and hierarchies, were no longer enough. They had to find a way of organising themselves into a political community, capable of pooling and managing finances, settling disputes, taking decisions, and acting collectively, including in relation to the Chinese state, which expected to be able to deal with the merchants as a group represented by their leaders (*yimu*

⁴⁰ Faure, *Emperor and Ancestor*, 137.

⁴¹ Cf. Fujitani, ‘Ming Rejection’, 87–102.

⁴² Pang Shangpeng 龐尚鵬, ‘Fuchu Haojing’ao yi shu 撫處濠鏡澳夷疏 [Memorial on pacifying the foreigners in Haojing Bay], in *Ming-Qing Shiqi Aomen Wenti Dang’an Wenti Huibian* 明清時期澳門問題檔案文獻匯編 [Compilation of Archival Documents on Macau in the Ming and Qing Dynasties], 6 vols (Beijing, 1999), v, no. 104.1.

夷目). The paradoxical result of this integration into the Chinese state was that Macau also came to be integrated gradually into the Portuguese state, now within a bottom-up process driven by private initiative and largely on the merchants' terms rather than the failed top-down approach of the 1520s. The most substantial merchants, who naturally led the community, chose a form of incorporation based on a Portuguese municipal model, explicitly copied from the city of Évora, and dominated by an elected council known as the Chamber of the Senate (*Câmara do Senado*). They quickly sought recognition of this by a royal grant.⁴³ Originally a simple ad-hoc settlement (*povoação*) or trading-post (*feitoria*), Macau now became a municipality in Portuguese law. But the king's grant acknowledged that he was not creating a city *ex nihilo* by mere royal writ but was confirming in law what the merchants had already done in practice.⁴⁴

The result of this was the creation of a city dominated by mercantile interests to an extent not seen even in Goa or many other cities of the Portuguese empire.⁴⁵ To be part of what historians refer to as Macau's 'merchant elite' entailed recognition by one's peers as one of the city's leading householders with political rights.⁴⁶ In legal terms, this was accomplished by being recognised as an '*homem-bom*', literally a 'good man', one of the men with the right to vote and stand for the elected offices known as the 'officers of the chamber' (*oficiais da câmara*)—the aldermen (*vereadores*), magistrates (*juízes ordinários*), and procurator (*procurador*) who dominated Macau politics.⁴⁷ The men who were recognised as *homens-bons* by being summoned to the elections and other meetings of the 'people' (*povo*) were obliged by law and custom to accept their responsibility, and the *homens-bons* were not above expelling from the city those of their number who were unwilling to take part in government.⁴⁸ These *homens-bons* were inevitably *casados*, married heads of household, which is one of the most frequent terms used to refer to them. They were also *moradores*, 'residents', with a fixed abode in the city. To have a wife and family, a house with servants and other dependents, and

⁴³ C. R. Boxer, *Portuguese Society in the Tropics: the Municipal Councils of Goa, Macao, Bahia, and Luanda, 1510–1800* (St Paul, MN, 1965), 44.

⁴⁴ Barreto, *Poder e Saber*, 153.

⁴⁵ Boxer, *Portuguese Society in the Tropics*, 49–50.

⁴⁶ Penalva, 'Mercadores, Jesuítas e Jurubaças', 93.

⁴⁷ Boxer, *Portuguese Society in the Tropics*, 5–7.

⁴⁸ *Arquivos de Macau*, i-3-2, 59.

to meet the tax obligations and other financial outlays implied by residency also required substantial capital. It was universally recognised in Macau—and also in Chinese official discourse—that this meant active involvement in commerce, the city’s only source of wealth.⁴⁹ To claim to belong to the elite of Macau, then, meant an active stake in the commerce that was the city’s lifeblood, marriage and headship of a household permanently settled in the city, and active participation in municipal self-government. This meant that the city’s government was almost entirely in the hands of resident merchants.

Orazio Neretti provides a good example of the process by which merchants could place themselves at the centre of the municipal government. Despite arriving in the city late in life, he was particularly successful in quickly establishing a claim to be among this group. He was still active in commerce and clearly possessed substantial wealth: in 1604, he was recorded as loading a cargo in partnership with one other merchant, a significant investment given that cargoes were normally shared among many merchants.⁵⁰ We do not know if he was ever elected as an alderman because the records of the Senate do not survive for most of these years, but in 1600 he was already named *capitão-mor* of the Japan voyage, a post which also entailed acting as a representative of the King and notional leader of the city during the period between the monsoons. Although he held the position on behalf of the absent D. Paulo de Portugal rather than in his own right, it nevertheless signalled his access to one of the most lucrative and important employments in Macau.⁵¹ He was a member of the brotherhood of the *Santa Casa de Misericórdia*, the Holy House of Mercy, important not just for its religious and social function, but also as a source of credit for trade.⁵² By 1610 he had not only been elected by his peers to its governing board (*Mesa*), but had also been elected in turn by the board to serve as the *Misericórdia*’s secretary (*escrivão*), one of its two leadership roles alongside the president (*provedor*).⁵³ It might also be noted that his acting as secretary was a sign of

⁴⁹ Boxer, *Portuguese Society in the Tropics*, 56.

⁵⁰ ASF, Carteggio Universale Mediceo, filza 926, carte 69.

⁵¹ ‘Adnotationes Historicae P. Gabrielis de Matos S.J. annos 1600–1614 complectentes’, in Schütte, *Monumenta historica Japoniae*, 360.

⁵² Isabel dos Guimarães Sá, ‘Charity, Ritual, and Business at the Edge of Empire: The Misericórdia of Macau’, in Liam Matthew Brockey, ed., *Portuguese Colonial Cities in the Early Modern World* (Abingdon, 2008), 149–150.

⁵³ AM, SCM/302, fo. 3^v; Elsa Penalva and Miguel Rodrigues Lourenço, eds., *Fontes para a história de Macau no século XVII* (Lisbon, 2009), 19; Russell-Wood, *Fidalgos and Philanthropists*, 21.

his fluency in the Portuguese language after so many years in service to the Portuguese crown.⁵⁴ In 1613, he was again given office by the Senate, sent to Nagasaki as ambassador to the Shogun Tokugawa Hidetada, successfully seeking the reopening of trade between Macau and Japan.⁵⁵

In this way, merchants like Orazio Neretti had transformed themselves into governors, aldermen of a legally-constituted municipality in the eyes of the Portuguese state, and into ‘foreign leaders’ (*yimu* 夷目) accountable for their community in the eyes of the Chinese state. The effect of this for the linguists was twofold. Firstly, it brought the linguists out of the shadows along with the merchants that they represented. No longer on the margins, they found themselves employed by officials of both Macau and, increasingly, of Canton to handle the daily work of relations between the two. The second consequence was that settlement and the formation of resident households created new opportunities for acquiring bilingual speakers who could serve as linguists. It also created the possibility of a lengthy process of linguistic education to equip them for the daunting task of handling relations between Macau and Canton on a formal, bureaucratic basis. The next section deals with these two developments together.

Linguists in the new city

Right from the beginnings of Macau, linguists played an essential role in dealings with Chinese officials. Both merchants and Jesuits made many explicit references in their letters to speaking through ‘*jurubaças*’, attesting to their importance. Manuel Teixeira, for example, wrote in 1565 that ‘the father stood before the mandarins with his *jurubaça*... he answered through his *jurubaça*...’ and that ‘the ambassador and [the merchant] Diogo Pereira made known to the mandarin through their *jurubaças* that they wished to go and see him with the captain-major...’.⁵⁶ But not only did permanent settlement in the Pearl River Delta make the use of linguists ever more important, it also provided new opportunities for the growth of a bilingual population. How this happened is

⁵⁴ AM, SCM/302, fo. 3^v is an example of his writing in Portuguese.

⁵⁵ Colla, ‘16th century Japan and Macau’, 136.

⁵⁶ ‘Carta de João de Escobar ao Pe. Manuel Teixeira (Cantão, 22 de Novembro de 1565)’ [Letter of João de Escobar to Fr. Manuel Teixeira (Canton, 22 November 1565)], in João de Escobar, ‘Comentarios’, 158.

hinted at by the *jurubaças* mentioned at the start of this chapter, who all shared a surname with Orazio Neretti.

In fact, many linguists in this period shared a surname with a senior merchant of Macau.⁵⁷ This was because one of the most important ways in which Portuguese merchants obtained bilingual collaborators was through kinship. The existence of multiethnic kinship groups, or *parentelas*, was long ignored in the historiography of Macau. They operated in conditions of only partial visibility to the state and there is therefore little discussion of them in state-sponsored archive materials, which consists mainly of official correspondence. Luís Filipe Barreto and Elsa Penalva have worked to rescue these groups from obscurity, noting the large numbers of primarily Chinese people taking the surname of members of the Macau merchant élite, along with the existence of a semantic field of words related to kinship repeatedly used throughout a range of primary sources to describe the relationship between these people. Those ‘of Chinese birth’ were described as having been ‘*aparentado*’, from the verb ‘*aparentar*’, to establish kinship or family relations. Others with the same surname were referred to as ‘*parentes*’, meaning ‘kin’ or ‘relations’. The collective of these persons was referred to as a ‘*parentela*’, which I translate here as a ‘kinship group’. The members of a kinship group were said to move ‘in the shadow of’ (‘*à sombra de*’) a particular merchant, normally Portuguese or mixed-race, referred to as the ‘head’ (‘*cabeça*’), who was inevitably a member of the Macau elite described above.⁵⁸

The kinship referred to by these terms was not necessarily simple biological fact, but rather what has been called ‘fictive kinship’, created through means such as adoption, godparenthood or spiritual kinship (*cognatio spiritualis*), or bond-servitude within a household whose scope extended far beyond the modern narrow definition of the family.⁵⁹ In the case of adoption and godparenthood,

⁵⁷ The following discussion is based on Barreto, *Poder e Saber*, 335 and Penalva, ‘Mercadores, Jesuítas e Jurubaças’, 154–5 n. 10.

⁵⁸ Penalva, ‘Mercadores, Jesuítas e Jurubaças’, 93.

⁵⁹ Kristin Elizabeth Gager, *Blood Ties and Fictive Ties: Adoption and Family Life in Early Modern France* (Princeton, 1996); Ann Waltner, *Getting an Heir: Adoption and the Construction of Kinship in Late Imperial China* (Honolulu, 1990); António Manuel Hespanha, ‘Carne de uma só carne: para uma compreensão dos fundamentos histórico-antropológicos da família na época moderna’ [Flesh of one flesh: towards an understanding of the historical-anthropological foundations of the family in early modern times], *Análise Social*, 28/123–124 (1993), 958–9; Tang Kaijian 湯開間 and Yan Xuelian 晏雪莲, ‘Ming-Qing shiqi Aomen Putaoyaren de hunyin 明清時期澳門

perhaps the most common way of creating kinship, the Chinese *parentes* were generally bond-servants sold as young children in time-limited servitude to the Portuguese. Indeed, when the traveller Ye Quan 葉權 visited Macau, probably sometime in the 1560s, and saw a child crying in a Portuguese house, it was a linguist who explained that the child had been ‘kidnapped and sold from Dongguan this year, and is crying thinking of his parents’ (是今年人從東莞拐來賣者，思父母哭耳).⁶⁰ This practice was rampant throughout the Pearl River Delta despite repeated attempts by Chinese officials to prohibit it, and by 1635 one Portuguese observer wrote that the average Macau household had six slaves.⁶¹ This form of fictive kinship, along with the birth of children resulting from mixed marriages, was probably the most common origin of bilingual individuals in Macau and therefore the most common source of linguists. So closely did these individuals become identified with the task of translation that eventually the term *jurubaça* would come to designate all Chinese Christians of Macau.⁶²

As we have seen, Orazio Neretti had at least four linguists ‘in his shadow’. These were a Korean slave purchased in Nagasaki named António Neretti, who was fluent in Japanese, Portuguese, and Latin, and remained in Nagasaki as the ‘interpreter of the Portuguese’; a Hokkien Chinese Christian named Horácio Neretti, who served the Senate as a linguist in the 1620s and accompanied Gonçalo Teixeira Corrêa on his mission to provide artillery support to the Ming court; Ventura Neretti, who also served the Senate; and Paulo Neretti, who had been a linguist at the Canton fairs and whom we will meet in the next chapter as the linguist for the first English-led trading expedition in the Pearl

葡萄牙人的婚姻’ [Marriage Among the Portuguese of Macau during the Ming-Qing era], in Zhao Dianhong 赵殿红 and Ma Zhanjun 马占军, eds, *Aomen Shi Yu Zhong-Wai Guanxi Shi Yanjiu* 澳門史與中外關係史研究——慶賀湯開建教授七十華誕學術文集 [Studies on the History of Macau and Sino-Foreign Relations: An Academic Anthology to Celebrate the Seventieth Birthday of Professor Tang Kaijian] (Macau, 2019), 188–9. For a fuller discussion of this, see Jacob Fordham, ‘The long shadow of Orazio Neretti: creating and using kinship in early modern Macau and beyond’ (forthcoming).

⁶⁰ Ye Quan 葉權, ‘You Lingnan Ji 遊嶺南記’ [Record of Travels in Lingnan], in Tian Yingxia 田映霞, ‘Ming-Qing shiqi de Aomen youji 明清時期的澳門遊記’ [Records of travels in Macau during the Ming and Qing], *Wenhua Zazhi* 文化雜誌, 33 (1997), 181.

⁶¹ António Bocarro, *Livro das plantas de todas as fortalezas, cidades e povoações do Estado da India Oriental* [Book of Plans of all the Fortresses, Cities and Towns of the Eastern State of India] (Goa, 1635), 25.

⁶² Maria Manuela Gomes Paiva, ‘Mediadores Linguísticos e Culturais: O 1.º Regimento do Língua da Cidade de Macau’ [Linguistic and Cultural Mediators: The First Regulation of the City Linguist of Macau], *Administração*, 94/24 (2011), 1263 n. 1.

River Delta.⁶³ But simply being brought up in a bilingual environment was not enough to acquire the skills needed by a linguist, not least the ability to read and write fluently. This required formal language teaching, a fact underestimated in the literature on the Canton trade, which has not recognised the degree of financial and human investment put into the education of bilingual linguists from the early days of Macau's founding.

Formal language teaching began in the 1570s at the behest of Gonçalo Álvares, a Jesuit who held the office of 'father-visitor of the oriental missions'. Álvares spent a year in Macau in 1572–3, charged with inspecting the Jesuits' activities in the city.⁶⁴ He found the city disobedient and worryingly Sinicised, claiming exaggeratedly that for every ten Christian converts, 'one hundred Christian boys of the Portuguese become gentiles and flee to the mandarins' (*cem moços cristãos dos portugueses se fazem gentios e fogem para os mandarins*).⁶⁵ This is almost certainly an inaccurate description, but speaks to the degree of cultural mixing that was already taking place. Among his recommendations to solve this was the foundation of a school to teach the Portuguese language.⁶⁶ The school was built in 1572 next to the Church of the Mother of God—what would later become the Church of St Paul, but was then still a small thatched building.⁶⁷ The Jesuit Jácome de Fonseca was appointed as the first schoolmaster, and the next year, in 1574, António Vaz was able to report that 'we have a school of reading and writing, which the father-visitor ordered there to be here' (*temos escola de ler e*

⁶³ Lúcio de Sousa, *The Portuguese Slave Trade in Early Modern Japan: Merchants, Jesuits, and Japanese, Chinese, and Korean Slaves* (Leiden, 2019), 106, 162–163, 180; Reinier H. Hesselink, *The Dream of Christian Nagasaki: World Trade and the Clash of Cultures 1560–1640* (Jefferson, 2016), 193–6; 'Couzas que nesta jornada de Pekim acontecerão entre gente que nella vay com o capitao Gonsalo Teixeira Correa [Things that this day happened in Beijing between the people who went there with Captain Gonçalo Teixeira Corrêa], BA, JA, 49-V-8, fo. 405'; 'Por rol todos os Jurubças bons, e maos que ha na Cidade, para dali escolher, e occupar quando for necessario [For a roll of all the good and bad linguists that there are in the City, from which to choose and employ when it may be necessary], BA, JA, 49-V-6, fo. 460'; ANTT, Livros das Monções [Monsoon Books], liv. 41, fo. 132'.

⁶⁴ For the office of visitor and its importance in Jesuit administration in Asia, see Liam Matthew Brockey, *The Visitor: André Palmeiro and the Jesuits in Asia* (Cambridge, MA, 2014), 11–16.

⁶⁵ P. Gundisalvus Alvares S. I., Visitator, P. Francisco Borgiae, Praep. Gen. S. I., Macao 17 Iunii 1573', in Joseph Wicki, ed., *Documenta Indica VIII (1569–1573)* (Rome, 1964), 666. This section of the letter is written in a cryptographic system. For decipherment, see Giuseppe Marino, 'Cifra nova indiae orientalis: sistemas criptográficos inéditos y secretos de la correspondencia con Asia oriental' [Cifra nova Indiae Orientalis: new cryptographic systems and secrets in the correspondence with East Asia (XVI–XVII)], *Hispania. Revista Española de Historia*, 83/274 (2023), 14.

⁶⁶ António Rodrigues Baptista, 'Entre Xavier e Valignano. A Missão do Padre António Vaz' [Between Xavier and Valignano: The Mission of Padre António Vaz], *Revista de Cultura*, International Edition 19 (2006), 129–30.

⁶⁷ Fernando António Baptista Pereira, 'A Conjectural Reconstruction of the Church of the College of Mater Dei', in John W. Witek, ed., *Religion and Culture: An International Symposium Commemorating The Fourth Centenary of the University College of St. Paul, Macau, 28 November to 1 December 1994* (Macau, 1999), 207.

escrever que o Padre Visitador ordenou que aqui houvesse).⁶⁸ These ‘schools of reading and writing’ (*escolas de ler e escrever*) were founded by Jesuits throughout Asia and played an important part in the spread of the Portuguese language. In Goa, for example, the school of reading and writing attracted both ‘honoured Brahmin boys’ (*meninos brâmanes honrados*) as well as ‘some sons of Portuguese men who reside in this island’ (*alguns filhos de portugueses que nesta ilha moram*), with five hundred students reported in 1572; likewise, in Malacca, there was a ‘boy’s school of reading and writing and arithmetic’ (*escola de meninos de ler e escrever e aritmética*), and the same in Cochin with two hundred students.⁶⁹ These schools were well regarded by the Jesuit missionaries, whose letters frequently talk of ‘obtaining much fruit from [the schools]’ (*do que se tira muito fruto*) or of the schools ‘bearing fruit’ (*em que se faz fruto*).⁷⁰ Macau was no different, and by 1586 Alessandro Valignano reported that ‘there is there a school of reading and writing to which all the boys of the city go’ (*tem aí uma escola de ler e escrever onde andam todos os meninos da cidade*).⁷¹ From 1599, the school passed into the hands of Francisco Carvalho, a Jesuit from Lisbon. Carvalho served as master for two decades, expanding the school to include a second teacher of reading and writing, two Latin teachers, a teacher of Chinese, and a teacher of Japanese.⁷² The school lasted throughout the period studied in this dissertation and was always open to a wider group of students than just those with futures in the Jesuit mission. As a Chinese Jesuit, Lu Xiyao 陸希言, wrote towards the end of the seventeenth century,

They have also set up a charitable school, which is not specially for teaching the talented; even herdsmen and servants can all receive primary

⁶⁸ ‘Catalogus patrum et fratrum provinciae Indicae, [Goae Decembri 1574]’, in Joseph Wicki, ed., *Documenta Indica IX (1573–1575)* (Rome, 1966), 479; ‘P. Antonius Vaz S. I. P. Francisco Borgiae, Praep. Gen. S. I. [Macao] 18 Novembris 1573’, in Wicki, *Documenta Indica IX*, 284. António Rodrigues Baptista states that ‘it is a fact’ that Vaz was the first schoolmaster, but in fact the Jesuit archives show he was merely the one who reported the founding of the school (Rodrigues Baptista, ‘Entre Xavier e Valignano’, 129).

⁶⁹ ‘Fr. Sebastianus Fernandes S. I. ex comm. P. Francisco Borgiae, Praep. Gen. S. I., Goa [Novembri exeunte] 1569’, in Wicki, *Documenta Indica VIII*, 66; ‘Fr. Eduardus Leitão S. I. ex comm. P. [Francisco Borgiae, Praep. Gen. S. I.], Goa 5 Novembris 1572’, *Documenta Indica VIII*, 852; ‘P. Christophorus da Costa S. I. P. Francisco Borgiae, Praep. Gen. S. I., Malaca 11 Decembris 1571’, in Wicki, *Documenta Indica VIII*, 458; ‘Fr. Salvator Cortês S. I. ex comm. P. Generali et patribus Europaeis S. I., Cocino 15 Ianuarii 1573’, in Wicki, *Documenta Indica VIII*, 649.

⁷⁰ ‘Fernandes... Borgiae’, 66; ‘da Costa... Borgiae’, 458.

⁷¹ ‘Valignano’s Financial Survey of the Province of India, [Cochin,] December 23, 1586’, in Joseph Wicki and John Gomes, eds., *Documenta Indica XIV (1585–1588)* (Rome, 1979), 493.

⁷² ‘3º Catálogo da Província de Japam, feito em Setembro de 1620’, in Schütte, *Monumenta historica Japoniae I*, 868; ‘Catálogo das Informações Commuas dos Padres e Irmaons do Collégio da Madre de Deos de Macao, renovado no mez de Stembro de 1620’, in Schütte, *Monumenta historica Japoniae I*, 882.

education. Once they are successful in their primary education, they enter the college, where their food and clothing are provided for, and it is hoped that they will make something of themselves. Once they have thoroughly understood their studies, it is still up to them whether they wish to pursue a religious vocation or engage in business.

又設立義塾，不特教其英才，即牧豎廝養，咸得就小學而學焉。小學有成，升入大學，更資其衣食，而望其成材。學既通明，或願修道，或欲經營，仍任其自主焉。⁷³

By the end of the sixteenth century, therefore, Macau had a ready supply of bilingual, literate boys with at least primary education who could go on to work as linguists, presumably learning their craft alongside more senior linguists, which would later be the method stipulated by the Senate. The level of linguistic competence achieved by at least some appears to have been considerable, despite the persistent notion that Sino-Western contact suffered from a serious communication barrier. Cai Ruxian 蔡汝賢's *Portraits and Descriptions of the Foreigners of the East* (*Dongyi Tushuo* 東夷圖說) in particular is often taken as evidence that Portuguese merchants relied on gestures to negotiate and made no written contracts, suggesting the persistence of a significant language barrier.⁷⁴ Along with Ye Quan's *Record of Travels in Lingnan* (*You Lingnan Ji* 遊嶺南記), which gives a much more favourable impression of the linguists but circulated much less widely, Cai's book was one of the two main sources of Ming-era descriptions of the Portuguese, but was considered notoriously unreliable even in its own day, based largely on hearsay and assumptions.⁷⁵ Portuguese sources show clearly that this was an inaccurate depiction of language use in Macau by the 1580s. There are many references to linguists who 'knew how to read and write in the Chinese manner very well' (*sabia ler e escrever a chara china muito bem*), who were 'literate in Chinese writing' (*letrado*

⁷³ Lu Xiyuan 陸希言, '澳門記', in in *Ming-Qing Shiqi Aomen Wenti Dang'an Wenti Huibian* 明清時期澳門問題檔案文獻匯編 [Compilation of Archival Documents on Macau in the Ming and Qing Dynasties], 6 vols (Beijing, 1999), vi, no. 70.1. For the equivalence to *yishu* 義塾, see Sarah Schneewind, *Community Schools and the State in Ming China* (Stanford, CA, 2006), 3, 151.

⁷⁴ Cai Ruxian 蔡汝賢, *Dongyi Tushuo* 東夷圖說 [Portraits and Descriptions of the Foreigners of the East] (1586), 26'. The book is cited by e.g. Jonathan Gebhardt, 'Global Cities, Incoherent Communities: Communication, Coexistence, and Conflict in Macau and Manila, 1550–1700', PhD dissertation, Yale University, New Haven, CT, 2015, 29.

⁷⁵ Qiong Zhang, *Making the New World their Own: Chinese Encounters with Jesuit Science in the Age of Discovery* (Leiden, 2015), 290. Cai's description was repeated in texts such as the statecraft encyclopaedia *Huang-Ming Shifa Lu* 皇明世法錄. See Tang Kaijian 唐開建, 'Xin jian Aomen shiliao liang ti yanjiu 新見澳門史料兩題研究' [Research on two newfound historical sources on Macau], *Wenhua Zazhi* 文化雜誌, 40–1 (2000), 75–92.

nas letras china), who had ‘knowledge and experience of the things of China and their way of speaking’ (*conhecimento e experiencia das coisas dos chinas e em seu modo de falhar*).⁷⁶

Macau was not, of course, the only place in the Pearl River Delta where linguists were employed. Chinese officials in Canton and elsewhere clearly also made extensive use of them. We do not know exactly under what terms the linguists were employed by Canton officialdom—they may have been licensed in the same way as merchants and other brokers, but there are no records. However, it was clear that they played an important role. As early as 1564, the Regional Inspector of Guangdong *Xun'an Guangdong Jiancha Yushi* 巡按廣東監察御史), Pang Shangpeng (龐尚鵬), recognised the importance of the linguists for maintaining stability and preventing conflict.

The Supreme Commander should pay special attention to mediation, using his discretion as may be suitable and not reversing their admiration for China. He should choose the best speakers from among the linguists and treat them with special favour, having them employ the sharp edge of their tongues in persuasion to show [the Portuguese] where their interests lie, in order to surreptitiously break their proud and defiant spirit.

惟督撫軍門，加意調停，從宜酌處，毋逆其向慕中國之心。就於通事中，擇其便給者，優以殊格，使掉其舌鋒爲說客，開示禍福，以陰折其驕悍之氣。⁷⁷

Other descriptions, admittedly from a later period, emphasised the need for the linguists, ‘necessary for the foreigners of Macau’ (*tong shi, Ao yi suo bixu* 通事，澳夷所必需), without whom ‘the virtue of the superiors cannot be proclaimed and the situation of the inferiors cannot be communicated’ (*shang de wu you xuan, xia qing wu you da* 上德無由宣，下情無由達).⁷⁸ That the linguists of Canton were the same people as the linguists of Macau—the bilingual figures drawn from commercial *parentelas* and other merchant families of the Delta—was clearly shown in later records when the Qing government attempted unsuccessfully to replace them with soldiers, and

⁷⁶ Penalva, ‘Mercadores, Jesuítas e Jurubaças’, 93–4, 112. The phrase ‘*a chara china*’ (‘in the Chinese manner’) is a borrowing from Malay (‘*cara Cina*’), another sign of the continued connections with maritime Asia in the language of Macau.

⁷⁷ Pang, *Fuchu Haojing'ao yi shu* 撫處濠鏡澳夷疏.

⁷⁸ Yin and Zhang, *Aomen jilue* 澳門記略, j. 1, 35; Liu Fang 刘芳, ed, *Qingdai Aomen Zhongwen Dang'an Huibian* 清代澳門中文檔案彙編 [Collection of Archive Documents in Chinese on Macau in the Qing Dynasty] (Macau, 1999), no. 656 fn. 1.

the official Zhang Zhentao 張甄陶 wrote in complaint that linguists had always been merchants of Macau in the past.⁷⁹

The result of all of this, then, was that by the beginning of the seventeenth century, there was a large population of literate, bilingual individuals drawn from commercial families to serve both mercantile and state interests in the Pearl River Delta. But if settlement in the Delta made this possible, it also presented problems. As the discussion above of Macau's integration into Chinese and Portuguese state-building processes shows, Macau's position caught between Ming officialdom and the *Estado da Índia* was a precarious one that required delicate negotiation, and this was brought home in the seventeenth century by an increasing number of disputes over power and the 'lordship' of the land. These included a debate over whether Chinese officials had the power to order the city to demolish its walls, and a debate over the contested status of an island near Macau called Ilha Verde (*Qingzhou* 青州). The leading merchants felt keenly the difficulty of their position, arguing in the latter debate that 'if they [the Chinese] permit us to be here it is in consideration of the trade and commerce that we have with the Chinese, and the Mandarins thereof have declared to us at times, saying that this land where we are is of the King of China, and that whenever he may wish to order us to leave, he shall do so (*se nos deixem aqui estar é a respeito do trato e comércio que temos com os chinas, e os Mandarins dela se têm por vezes connosco declarado, dizendo que esta terra em que estamos é d'el-Rei da China, e que cada vez que nos quiser mandar sair dela o fará*).'⁸⁰ Visitors to the city were also struck by its precarious balancing-act: as one Spanish observer wrote, 'One wishes to call it a city

⁷⁹ Zhang Zhentao 張甄陶, 'Zhiyu Aoyi Lun 制馭澳夷論' [Discussion on suppressing the foreigners of Macau], in *Ming-Qing Shiqi Aomen Wenti Dang'an Wenti Huibian* 明清時期澳門問題檔案文獻匯編 [Compilation of Archival Documents on Macau in the Ming and Qing Dynasties], 6 vols (Beijing, 1999), vi, no. 86.1.

⁸⁰ 'Noticias verdadeiras das contendas que houve em Macao sobre a Ilha verde, os Mandarins có a Cidade, e có os Padres começadas no ano de 1621' [Truthful accounts of the disputes that took place in Macau over Ilha Verde, the Mandarins against the City, and against the Fathers, which began in 1621], BA, JA, 49-V-5, fo. 7^r. For an analysis of this debate, which arose out of the construction of houses on Ilha Verde (*Qingzhou* 青州) by the Jesuits in the early 1620s, see Jorge M. dos Santos Alves, 'Os jesuítas e a «contenda da Ilha Verde». A primeira discussão sobre a legitimidade da presença portuguesa em Macau (1621)' [The Jesuits and the "Ilha Verde dispute": The first debate over the legitimacy of the Portuguese presence in Macau (1621)], in *A Companhia de Jesus e a Missão no Oriente: Actas do Colóquio Internacional promovido pela Fundação Oriente e pela Revista Brotéria* [The Society of Jesus and Mission in the East: Proceedings of the International Colloquium promoted by the Fundação Oriente and the Revista Brotéria] (Lisbon, 2000), 423–50.

in the air, for it owns nothing' (*se quiere llamar ciudad en el aire, pues nada tiene*).⁸¹ It was this precarity that led to the final stage in the evolution of the city's linguists, when the Senate recognised that if its survival required engaging with the Chinese bureaucracy on its own terms, it would need to create what Jorge Flores has vividly called a 'combat bureaucracy' (*burocracia de combate*) of specialist and skilled linguists.⁸² In 1627, the Senate passed its first detailed legislation formally establishing a hierarchy of linguists, defining their duties, and stipulating how they were to be educated. This next section examines the effect of this 'Regulation of the city linguist, and of the young *jurubaças*, and the clerks' (*Regimento da língua da cidade, e dos jurubaças menores, e escrevães*).

Macau's Hierarchy of Linguists

At the top of the hierarchy was the principal linguist (*língua principal*), 'in whose charge are all the affairs of this city relating to the mandarins and the Chinese' (*à cujo cargo estão todos os negócios tocantes aos mandarins e chinas da mesma cidade*).⁸³ There were also to be two clerks and a group of more junior linguists. The Neretti linguists were well-represented among this group, with Horácio serving as a clerk and Ventura registered on the roll of linguists, highlighting how the patronage of a senior merchant such as Orazio Neretti gave access to lucrative and important positions within the city's institutions.⁸⁴

The principal linguist was an integral part of the city's government. A seat was reserved for him in the Senate, whose twice-weekly meetings on Wednesdays and Saturdays he was expected to attend without fail, even if he had no business of his own to raise.⁸⁵ At these meetings, his job was to advise

⁸¹ 'Carta a S. M. de Fr. Francisco Manrique, OSA., Prior del convento agustiniano de Macao, haciendo relación del Reino del Japón, de su viaje a China y de lo mal recibido que fue de los portugueses y jesuitas' [Letter to His Majesty from Fr Francisco Manrique, OSA, Prior of the Augustinian Convent of Macau, reporting on the Kingdom of Japan, his voyage to China and how badly he was received by the Portuguese and Jesuits], Archivo General de Indias de Sevilla, Aud. de Filipinas, 79, digitalised in Dolores Folch Fornesa, coord., *La China en España: Elaboración de un corpus digitalizado de documentos españoles sobre China de 1555 a 1900* [China in Spain: Compilation of a digitised corpus of Spanish documents on China from 1555 to 1900], <https://arxiu-web.upf.edu/asia/projectes/che/s16/manr1588.htm>.

⁸² Jorge Manuel Flores, 'Comunicação, informação e propaganda: os 'Jurubaças' e o uso do português em Macau na primeira metade do século XVII' [Communication, information and propaganda: the 'jurubaças' and the use of Portuguese in Macau in the first half of the seventeenth century], *Encontro Português—Língua de Cultura—Actas* (Macau, 1995), 111, 114.

⁸³ 'Regimento da Língua da Cidade, e dos Jurubaças menores, e Escrevaens', BA, JA, 49-V-8, fo. 245^v.

⁸⁴ BA, JA, 49-V-8, fo. 248^r.

⁸⁵ BA, JA, 49-V-8, fo. 247^v–248^r.

on the response to any official communications received from Chinese officials.⁸⁶ He was expected to receive all these documents and file them according to a detailed classification system in his office with the assistance of two clerks, and discuss a proposed response with the *procurador*, the city official with whom he seems to have had the closest working relationship, before bringing the matter to the Senate's attention.⁸⁷ In order to fully understand the situation behind these communications, he was expected to cultivate trustworthy contacts in Canton to advise on events there, particularly the arrival of any communications from the court.⁸⁸

On other days, he might find himself handling visits by Chinese officials.⁸⁹ He would receive minor officials in his own house, which the Senate ordered him to ensure was presentable for this purpose. More senior officials coming down from Xiangshan or Canton would send word in advance in order for the linguist to make the necessary preparations.⁹⁰ Together with the *merinheiro*, a judicial officer who was presumably there to represent the *ouvidor*, he would meet them at the newly-constructed main gate, the Porta de Santo António (*San Ba Men* 三巴門).⁹¹ The precise form of this meeting in the Ming is not known, but later in the Qing it was recorded that the officials would be greeted at the gate with gun salutes from the Fortaleza do Monte (*San Ba Paotai* 三巴礮臺) next to the gate and an honour guard of troops with drums playing and flags flying.⁹² The linguist was to ensure that Chinese officials were treated with respect, and so he would proceed with them in procession, walking next to the official's palanquin 'as the greatest person accompanying him' (*como pessoa mais grave que o acompanha*), preceded by two boys carrying two placards.⁹³ Following the custom of Chinese official processions, they were inscribed with injunctions in Chinese to remain silent and make way (*sujing* 肅靜 and *huibi* 迴避), but these were also repeated in Portuguese 'in large writing'

⁸⁶ BA, JA, 49-V-8, fo. 147^v.

⁸⁷ BA, JA, 49-V-8, fos. 245^{v-r}.

⁸⁸ BA, JA, 49-V-8, fo. 274^r.

⁸⁹ BA, JA, 49-V-8, fo. 247^v.

⁹⁰ BA, JA, 49-V-8, fo. 248^r.

⁹¹ BA, JA, 49-V-8, fo. 247^v; Harold Kuan Chon Hong 關俊雄, 'Sanbamen lishi yange ji weizhi kao 三巴門歷史沿革及位置考' [Investigation of the location and historical evolution of the Sanbamen], *Wenhua Zazhi* 文化雜誌, 102 (2018), 116–129.

⁹² Yin Guangren 印光任 and Zhang Rulin 張汝霖, *Aomen Jilüe* 澳門記略 [Brief Record of Macau] (1751), j. 2, 28^v.

⁹³ BA, JA, 49-V-8, fo. 247^v.

(*com letra grande*).⁹⁴ Once the Chinese official had been brought to his destination, the linguist would be in charge of interpreting between him and the city authorities.

In addition to dealing with officials from outside the city, he was also expected to work with the *bao-jia* 保甲 heads, known in Portuguese as ‘heads of the streets’ (*cabeças das ruas*) to maintain order among the Chinese population of the city, forming a link between the city authorities and the Chinese state’s methods of local governance.⁹⁵

In all these dealings, the Senate was much concerned that he should be seen ‘as someone who has rank, so that the mandarins respect him’ (*como quem tem grau, para que os mandarins o respeitem*).⁹⁶ They were fortunate that their first choice for the post, Simão Coelho, had been rewarded for his part in the city’s provision of artillery assistance to the embattled court with the honorary official title of ‘linguist-official’ (*tongshiguan* 通事官), ‘the rank of an official of the king, with which he has authority before the mandarins’ (*grau de oficial d’el-rei com que tem autoridade diante dos mandarins*).⁹⁷ They also gave him a parallel honorary title in Macau, ‘head of the native jurubaças’ (*cabeça das jurubaças da terra*), which they said gave him no extra powers, but was simply a reflection of his Chinese title ‘in order to have more authority with the Chinese’ (*para ter mais autoridade com os chinas*).⁹⁸

The Senate ensured he had the material conditions needed to do his job effectively, giving him ‘a well-arranged office, in which there shall be paper and ink for responses, letters, petitions, etc’ (*um cartório bem concertado, em que haja papel e tinta para respostas, cartas, petições, etc.*).⁹⁹ His two clerks were to be ‘loyal people, and Christian as far as possible’ (*peçoas fiéis, e quanto for possível cristãos*).¹⁰⁰ The first head clerk appointed was Leão, possibly He Liangtao 何良濤, a Hangzhou literatus who had converted to Christianity and had published on Western military matters.¹⁰¹ The junior clerk

⁹⁴ BA, JA, 49-V-8, fo. 247^v.

⁹⁵ BA, JA, 49-V-8, fo. 247^{r-v}.

⁹⁶ BA, JA, 49-V-8, fo. 246^r.

⁹⁷ BA, JA, 49-V-8, fo. 245^r.

⁹⁸ BA, JA, 49-V-8, fo. 245^v.

⁹⁹ BA, JA, 49-V-8, fo. 254^v.

¹⁰⁰ BA, JA, 49-V-8, fo. 246^v.

¹⁰¹ BA, JA, 49-V-8, fo. 246^v.

was Horácio Neretti, who has already been discussed above and would join Simão Coelho on the embassy to Beijing the next year.¹⁰² The importance that the city attached to having a team of literate bilinguals who could not only deal with Chinese officials on their own terms but also win their respect was clear. Indeed, the Senate explicitly stated that the linguist and clerks' office was to produce written documents for the city 'as is appropriate to their [the Chinese] fashion, such that our affairs are reasoned, conclusive, authoritative, and serious in the style and manner of being put forward on behalf of a city' (*como convém a seu modo que nossas coisas tenham razão, conclusão, e autoridade, e gravidade no estilo, e modo de propor de parte de uma cidade*), noting that the Chinese officials themselves were willing to pay literate men well to produce the written documents needed to get their way.¹⁰³ This practice continued throughout the seventeenth century and into the eighteenth: the existence of two Chinese (*tangren* 唐人) clerks who could write Chinese characters and handled paperwork between the city and the Chinese authorities was recorded in 1751 in a local gazetteer, the *Brief Record of Macau* (*Aomen Jilüe* 澳門記略).¹⁰⁴

Overall, then, the task of the principal linguist was to 'obtain with the mandarins and the Chinese the peace and quietude of this city' (*procurar com os mandarins e chinas a paz e quietação desta cidade*).¹⁰⁵ Beneath him were two more linguists, who were to handle messages and routine business in Canton and Xiangshan, and the linguists chosen for the Canton fairs by the *homens-bons*.¹⁰⁶ Finally, there was also appended to the *Regimento* an official register of linguists whom the city could call upon, including Ventura Neretti, as we have seen.¹⁰⁷ These linguists with no permanent position in the city's administration represented the lowest rung of the official hierarchy, but there were of course many who were not registered at all in Macau, some of whom may have worked privately and some of whom were employed by Chinese officials. As we have seen, these categories were not fixed, and

¹⁰² Li Changsen 李長森, 'Aomen weiliduo 'Baoxiao shimo shu' tongguan kao 澳門嚙嚙哆《報效始末疏》通官考' [The Principal Linguist in the Procurador of Macau's 'Memorial Relating the Repayment of Favour'], 澳門理工學報, 3 (2013), 20–31.

¹⁰³ BA, JA, 49-V-8, fo. 249^r.

¹⁰⁴ Yin and Zhang, *Aomen jilue* 澳門記略, j. 2, 28^v.

¹⁰⁵ BA, JA, 49-V-8, fo. 244^v.

¹⁰⁶ BA, JA, 49-V-8, fo. 246^v.

¹⁰⁷ BA, JA, 49-V-8, fo. 248^r.

linguists could circulate between different employers in the Delta. Paulo Neretti, for example, who will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, was at one time a linguist for the Canton fairs, but after a dispute over money fled to Canton and gained employment with Chinese officialdom in the late 1630s, and would end up being employed by foreigners again when he served the Dutch Nieuhof embassy in the late 1650s.¹⁰⁸

Alongside the formalisation of the hierarchy was also a formalisation of the education of young future linguists, confirming largely the pre-existing practice. There were to be two or three boys chosen for their good appearance and manners, as well as already having a grounding in Chinese writing, and whose parents had to be willing to sell them to the city.¹⁰⁹ These would be educated by the clerks in ‘Chinese writing and books, and their laws, and customs’ (*as letras e livros dos chinas, e suas leis, e costumes*), with the obligation that in future they would serve as linguists, beginning with small tasks and progressing from there in a form of apprenticeship.¹¹⁰

Read in light of the sixteenth century foundation of Macau, the regulation highlights the extent to which the linguists had emerged from the margins and come to be understood as central to the Pearl River Delta. Contrary to some views of the linguists, it also shows the emphasis placed on ensuring that they received a bilingual, literate education, and that this could be a lucrative career path rather than a marginal and stigmatised employment. It also ensured that, in the seventeenth century, Portuguese and not English would be the language of the Canton trade. The English merchants never obtained the right to settle even a factory, or trading-house, in the Pearl River Delta during this period, and lacked the means of the Portuguese in Macau to make the considerable efforts needed to train their own linguists. But this did not mean that there was a linguistic barrier. English merchants widely learnt Portuguese, and it was this that served as what translation theorists call a ‘pivot language’, allowing interpretation and translation between Chinese and English via this third language. Peter Mundy, for example, who will be discussed in the next chapter,

¹⁰⁸ See discussion in Chapter 2.

¹⁰⁹ BA, JA, 49-V-8, fo. 247^r.

¹¹⁰ BA, JA, 49-V-8, fo. 247^r.

was sent by his father in his youth to Spain and Portugal to learn their languages.¹¹¹ In this, he was not unusual for a merchant, and indeed all the English merchants in this thesis treated their ability to speak and understand Portuguese as unremarkable.¹¹²

Conclusion

How then should we understand this complex history? At its heart is the story of the transformation of the linguists and their merchant patrons from a private mercantile group to an essential part of the governance of the Pearl River Delta. This made possible the existence of a class of linguists who were far less marginalised and far more skilled and educated than has generally been appreciated. The integration of traders such as Orazio Neretti into the merchant *élite*, the oligarchy that represented the real day-to-day power in the city, also gave the linguists who moved ‘in his shadow’ access to lucrative and important positions. They were in fact at the centre of state-building processes and had significant resources invested in them. This has an important consequence for studying the English Canton trade. Typically, the linguists have been understood as marginal figures who were only reluctantly accepted as necessary for mediating between two other uncomprehending cultures. This implied that their very existence was subversive and a problem to be solved, and that this was the source of the trials and tribulations that we shall see they regularly faced at the hands of their superiors. But if, as this chapter suggests, the linguists were not marginal or unwanted, but rather seen as essential to the management of trade and the political harmony of the Delta, then this explanation becomes untenable. Instead, the story of the co-option of the linguists into the Chinese and Portuguese states points to an alternative tension, that of the entanglement of state and commerce. The linguists were always drawn from mercantile families and never entirely left the world of commerce. The problem of how to understand, regulate, and even take advantage of this tension was at the heart of much thinking about the linguists, and was the first problem that the English had to confront on their arrival in the Pearl River Delta in 1637. How we can understand this tension in the English Canton trade is the focus of the next chapter.

¹¹¹ Richard Carnac Temple, ed., *The Travels of Peter Mundy in Europe and Asia, 1608–1667*, 5 vols (Cambridge, 1907–1936), i: ‘Travels in Europe, 1608–1628’, 14.

¹¹² Gallagher, *Language Learning*, 1–2.

Chapter Two

A smuggler or a 'petty mandarin'? The Weddell Expedition, 1637

Orazio Neretti had fostered and trained a group of linguists with the purpose of ensuring Macau's commercial prosperity and political survival. But little did he anticipate that the very same linguists would play a leading role in the first English attempt to break the city's prized monopoly and open the Canton trade to new competition from the joint-stock companies that had begun to challenge Portuguese interests throughout Asia. One afternoon late in August 1637, eighteen years after Orazio's death, Paulo Neretti (*Li Yerong* 李葉榮), once Macau's interpreter at the Canton fairs, led an unusual party through the gates of the residence of the Regional Commander of Guangdong (*Guangdong Zongbing* 廣東總兵), the province's senior military officer. Neretti, robed as a Chinese official, was accompanied by Thomas Robinson and John Mountney, merchants of what has become known as the Weddell Expedition, the first English-led trading voyage to reach China, commanded by John Weddell and financed by a short-lived joint stock company called the Courteen Association.¹ To these Englishmen, Neretti had introduced himself as a linguist in the household of the Regional Commander, Chen Qian (陳謙), who had assigned Neretti to negotiate a truce and trade agreement with them.

The merchants had spent the previous night in a Chinese naval junk anchored under the southern walls of Canton, within sight of the Regional Commander's residence, and Neretti seems to have made good use of the time to instruct the Englishmen in Chinese protocol.² Now, passing through a triple guard of two thousand soldiers stationed in three courts, they came within sight of Regional Commander Chen Qian and his deputy, Regional Vice-Commander (*Guangdong Fuzongbing* 廣東副總兵) Li Yanqing (黎延慶), both seated raised on a dais.³ The scene recalled the theatre of European

¹ 'Memorable passages encountered by ships Dragon etc (capt. Weddell's Fleet)', BL, IOR/G/12/16, fo. 8^v.

² 'Memorable passages', fo. 8^v.

³ 'Bingbu ti wei hongyi wei Aoyi suo ku deng shi 兵部題為紅夷為澳夷所苦等事' [Memorial by the Ministry of War on the red foreigners being troubled by the foreigners of Macau, etc], Chongzhen 崇禎 13/8/24 [10

royal courts; they later wrote of Chen and Li as being seated on thrones in a palace.⁴ At what they described as a 'ship's length' from the dais, Thomas Robinson raised a petition for trade above his head, and they kowtowed on the paving-stones.⁵ Neretti took the petition from Robinson and carried it up to the dais.⁶ Chen and Li already knew of its contents, because Neretti had negotiated the text on their behalf aboard the English ships three days before and had written it up in Chinese.⁷ Indicating his assent, Chen promised to give the English all assistance and dismissed them to await a formal written confirmation of their right to trade.⁸ This came on 31 August, when Neretti returned with an edict that he translated as granting free trade conditional on the payment of customs duties and appointing himself, named in the edict as an assistant vice-prefect of Canton, as their 'queue', or broker.⁹

This first formal meeting of Chinese officials and English merchants has never taken on the same historiographical importance as Lord Macartney's famous audience with the Qianlong Emperor, over a century and a half later, and has been largely ignored even within studies of the Weddell Expedition; but it raises important questions about the role of the linguist Paulo Neretti and the interpretation of the expedition as a whole. Only weeks after the English were granted permission to trade, Regional Commander Chen's newly-appointed superior, the Supreme Commander of the supra-provincial region of Liangguang (*Liangguang Zongdu* 兩廣總督), Zhang Jingxin (張鏡心), arrived in Guangdong. Together with the Regional Inspector of Guangdong (*Xun'an Guangdong Jiancha Yushi* 巡按廣東監察御史), Ge Zhengqi (葛征奇), he immediately prohibited trade with the English, ordered a fire attack on the English fleet, and had the English merchants arrested, their

September 1640], ZY, Lishi Yuyan Yanjiu Suo 歷史語言研究所 (LYYS), Neige Daku 內閣大庫 (NGDK), no. 034914 [no pagination]; 'Memorable passages', 8^v.

⁴ 'Memorable passages', fo. 8^v.

⁵ 'Memorable passages', fo. 8^v.

⁶ 'Memorable passages', fo. 8^v; Peter Mundy, 'Itinerarium Mundii, that is, a memoriall or sundry relations of certaine voiajes, journeies, ettc., passed and performed into some parts of England, Holland, Fraunce, Spain, Italie, Turkey, East India, China, the ilands of St. Laurence, Sumatra, ettc., to the south and east parts of the world, from anno 1611 to 1639; also unto some parts of Denmarck, Prussia, Polonia, and Moscovia or Russia, to the north side of the world, from anno 1639 to 1648; by Peter Mundy', BodL, Oxford, MSS. Rawl. A. 315, fo. 139^r.

⁷ 'Itinerarium Mundii', fo. 139^r; John Weddell on board Ship Dragon off Cannanore, 29 Jan. 1638, BL, IOR/G/12/16, fo. 28^r.

⁸ 'Itinerarium Mundii', fo. 139^r; 'Memorable passages', fo. 8^r.

⁹ 'Itinerarium Mundii', fo. 139^r.

goods impounded, and Neretti imprisoned, beaten, and interrogated.¹⁰ The Portuguese in Macau sent a message to the English accusing Neretti of being a fraud posing as an official and of deliberately mistranslating the edict of 31 August, which they claimed had in fact ordered the English to leave and never to return.¹¹ Who then was Neretti? Was he a smuggler posing as an official? Or was he a legitimate part of the Ming state? And how can we reconcile his claims to official rank with his activities as a broker and his undoubted personal financial interest in trading with the English? These questions are important not just for making sense of the Weddell Expedition, but also because they help us understand how Chinese officials and European merchants grappled with and understood the position of the linguists between state and commerce established in the previous chapter.

At first sight, the archive sources seem to agree in their condemnation of Neretti: Domingos da Câmara, Captain-General of Macau, wrote to the Portuguese Viceroy in Goa that Neretti was a ‘great trickster’; Supreme Commander Zhang and Regional Inspector Ge wrote that he was a ‘wrongdoer’; the English merchant Peter Mundy wrote that he was the ‘instrumental cause of all our troubles’, whose translations were ‘clean contrary and most false’.¹² These descriptions are reflected in modern studies of the Weddell Expedition, which share a view of Neretti as a corrupt, lawbreaking smuggler who deliberately deceived the English. Austin Coates sees Neretti as a ‘well-mannered charlatan’, probably illiterate and with only the most rudimentary linguistic skills, posing as an official for personal gain.¹³ Wan Ming likewise sees the expedition as a case of smuggling deliberately orchestrated by Chen and Neretti, whose deception succeeded because of the foreign merchants’ lack of understanding of China.¹⁴ Lawrence Wong, whose primary concern is to demonstrate the importance of translation to the expedition, argues that Neretti’s deception and self-interest distorted mutual understanding and was the key driving-force in how events unfolded.

¹⁰ ‘Bingbu ti 兵部題’, AS, LYYS, NGDK, no. 034914; ‘Itinerarium Mundii’, fo. 140^r.

¹¹ ‘Itinerarium Mundii’, fo. 143^r; ‘Treslado da Chapa do Aitao, e cumprim q de Cantão veo’ [Translation of the chop of the Haidao and Zongbing which came from Canton], ANTT, GEI/001/0041, fo. 206^v.

¹² ‘Bingbu ti 兵部題’, AS, LYYS, NGDK, no. 034914; Domingos da Câmara to the Viceroy at Goa, 27 Dec. 1637, ANTT, GEI/001/0041, fo. 192^r; ‘Itinerarium Mundii’, fo. 145^r.

¹³ Austin Coates, *Prelude to Hongkong* (New York, 1966), 1–27.

¹⁴ Wan Ming 萬明, *Mingdai Zhong-Wai Guangxi Shi Lungao* 明代中外關係史論稿 [Draft History of Chinese-Foreign Relations in the Ming Dynasty] (Beijing, 2011), 653–77.

Although emphasising Neretti's importance, he also believes that Neretti 'indeed held no official post', and shares with Coates a relatively low opinion of Neretti's abilities, arguing that he was ultimately 'of no help' in handling the foreigners.¹⁵ And, most recently, Nicholas D. Jackson has argued that Neretti was 'an agent in an elaborate operation that entailed tricking, robbing, and slaughtering the British' who lied about holding official status.¹⁶

But these studies dwell only briefly on the audience described above, focussing instead on the expedition's sudden spiral into failure. The details of the audience are difficult to reconcile with the image of a corrupt smuggler acting against the Chinese state: Neretti's openly-worn symbols of official status, his participation in a full audience in the presence of two thousand soldiers, his use of naval junks and sailors, and Canton officialdom's full knowledge of his actions all raise challenging questions about his identity and role. And in the archives, there are in fact many indications that the conventional narrative is not the whole story. Many of the English never doubted that he was indeed a 'petty mandarin'; we also find Weddell writing at the end of the voyage of Neretti's 'help', and Regional Commander Chen openly defending allowing the English to trade and praising Neretti's diplomatic and linguistic skill on multiple occasions.¹⁷

This is the focus of this chapter, which reinterprets the Weddell Expedition as a political conflict rather than a straightforward case of the punishment of a lawbreaking smuggler, revealing a debate over Neretti's conduct that allows us to explore the interplay of public, commercial, and private interests in the role of the linguists. Engaging critically with how linguists are made visible in the archives reveals that, although archival practices have prioritised a discourse of corruption, this was part of a much fuller and more contested debate over what constituted legitimate activity for

¹⁵ Wang Hongzhi 王宏志, 'Tongshi yu jianmin: Mingmo Zhong-Ying Humen Shijian zhong de yizhe 通事與奸民：明末中英虎門事件中的譯者' [A Linguist and An Evil Subject: The Bogue Incident Translator, 1637], *Bianyi luncong* 編譯論叢, 5/1 (2012), 41–66.

¹⁶ Nicholas D. Jackson, *The First British Trade Expedition to China: Captain Weddell and the Courteen Fleet in Asia and Late Ming Canton* (Hong Kong, 2022), 117.

¹⁷ 'Bingbu ti 兵部題', AS, LYYS, NGDK, no. 034914; 'Itinerarium Mundii', fo. 139r; Zhang Jingxin 張鏡心, 'Can zhenchen bijian zhi zui shu 參鎮臣庇奸之罪疏' [Memorial impeaching the Regional Commander for the crime of protecting a wrongdoer], in *Yunyintang Wenji* 雲隱堂文集 [Collected Writings of the Cloud-Shadow Hall], comp. Zhang Jin 張潛 (Cizhou, 1672), j. 4, 2–4.

a state actor. Notions of public interest and office, and of the ethical value of private interest and the pursuit of profit, were in flux against the backdrop of commercialisation and the Ming-Qing transition. Within this context, linguists served as minor officials within the state and as commercial agents, while also seeking to use these roles to make a profit themselves, enabled by an understanding of office that tolerated private interests insofar as they did not triumph over state interests. This allowed the Ming state in the Pearl River Delta to act through semi-official agents motivated by their own interests rather than modern trust-based notions of public office, a practice that could prove lucrative for the linguists but also personally dangerous when the political tides turned. The next section of this chapter discusses in greater detail the question raised in the introduction chapter of how to recover the story of these debates from a ‘negative archive’ focussed on judgements couched in quasi-judicial language. The following section constructs a revisionist narrative of the Weddell Expedition as creating a political conflict within Canton officialdom. The final section explores the debate generated by this conflict over the legitimacy and limits of private and commercial interests in public office.

Translation, visibility, and the archives

Modern students of translation theory are familiar with the notion of invisibility, the influential idea that good translation requires the translator to efface as completely as possible the work that he or she has done in producing the translated text, leaving the reader with the impression of being able to access the source text directly without the presence or mediation of any third party.¹⁸ Although this is sometimes presented as a particularly modern concept with troubling ethical implications, it is also problematic for historians reliant on archive sources in which translators are often written out of the historical record, making it difficult to find evidence of the role that they played.¹⁹ However, there are also occasions when the opposite is true and translators are surprisingly visible in the archives, such as in the case of the Weddell Expedition.²⁰ Such visibility

¹⁸ Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London, 1995), 1–17.

¹⁹ Rachel Lung, *Interpreters in Early Imperial China* (Amsterdam, 2011), 10; Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility*, 1.

²⁰ See particularly Wang, ‘Tongshi yu jianmin 通事與奸民’.

has been said to be a key target of translation history.²¹ These cases have opened up important new lines of enquiry into translators as powerful historical actors in their own right. They have shown that, particularly in the early modern period, translators were understood as responsible not just for communicative transfer, but also for acting as brokers, mediators, and thanks to unusual bicultural backgrounds, personal sources of intercultural competence that was yet to be institutionalised. They possessed a level of power to influence events rarely attributed to modern translators: on the one hand, the use of oral and gist translation necessitated dialogue directly with translators and gave them prominence in place of the modern ideal of invisibility; on the other hand, their engagement by a particular principal to perform a wider range of services on his behalf meant that they were not assumed to be impartial and were often suspected of using their power in their client's or their own interests.²²

This argument about the power of these highly visible translators is central to understanding the role of the linguists. However, this chapter also argues for going beyond visibility as a marker of agency or power to examine how it is constructed in the archives and what this implies for narratives relying on these archives. Ann Coldiron, working on literary translation, has examined how translators themselves constructed their visibility in printed works and its shifting cultural value throughout the medieval and early modern era, suggesting that visibility itself has a history, but visibility in relation to the archive remains undertheorised.²³ This requires engaging with the so-called 'archival turn', considering how archives, far from being neutral repositories of information, have been contested sites of power that have shaped and constructed narratives through inclusion and exclusion.²⁴ The early modern era was, after all, the period that historians of Europe have called the age of the information state, when states operated through and were given

²¹ Andrea Rizzi, Birgit Lang, and Anthony Pym, *What is Translation History? A Trust-Based Approach* (London, 2019), 22.

²² Harrison, 'A Faithful Interpreter?' 1076–1077; Henrietta Harrison, *The Perils of Interpreting: The Extraordinary Lives of Two Translators between Qing China and the British Empire* (Princeton, 2021), 8.

²³ AEB Coldiron, 'Visibility Now: Historicizing Foreign Presences in Translation', *Translation Studies*, 5/2 (2012), 189–200.

²⁴ Henrietta Harrison, 'The Qianlong Emperor's Letter to George III and the Early-Twentieth-Century Origins of Ideas about Traditional China's Foreign Relations', *The American Historical Review*, 122/3 (2017), 680–701; Terry Cook, 'The Archive(s) Is a Foreign Country: Historians, Archivists, and the Changing Archival Landscape', *The American Archivist*, 74/2 (2011), 600–32.

form and visibility by their archives, which focussed on producing and organising information of value to their rulers.²⁵ This was no less the case in China, where the state was continually defining itself through archives amidst an increasingly open, contested, and mistrusting information landscape.²⁶ As elsewhere in East Asia, the Ming court was well aware of the political power of archives, seeking to ‘domesticate’ records through official histories, while also disciplining their content by punishing the submission of heterodox or critical memorials.²⁷

The archival turn therefore demands a sensitivity to the archival practices that have shaped the historiography of translators. This is all the more necessary in the case of the Pearl River Delta linguists, who are only accessible to the modern historian indirectly through records written by others whose primary concern was not recording the details of the linguists’ work.²⁸ This is not to suggest that they did not keep their own records: contrary to the assumptions of some studies of the linguists, Chapter One has already shown that they were not illiterate and did in fact maintain their own sometimes extensive records. The regulation of the linguists in 1627 gives a sense of the voluminous flow of paperwork handled by the principal linguist and his clerks, all of which was to be carefully preserved for his reference in advising the municipal authorities, and it seems implausible that linguists serving Canton officialdom, such as Paulo Neretti, would not also have kept records of their work.²⁹ However, these records have not survived, and we are forced to rely on other sources.

²⁵ Randolph C. Head, ‘Records, Secretaries, and the European Information State, circa 1400–1700’, in Ann Blair, Paul Duguid, Anja-Silvia Goeing and Anthony Grafton, eds., *Information: A Historical Companion* (Princeton, 2021); Edward Higgs, *The Information State in England: The Central Collection of Information on Citizens since 1500* (Basingstoke, 2004).

²⁶ Devin Fitzgerald, ‘The Ming Open Archive and the Global Reading of Early Modern China’, PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 2020, 22–222; Peter Ditmanson, ‘Imperial History and Broadening Historical Consciousness in Late Ming China’, *Ming Studies*, 71 (2015), 23–40.

²⁷ Devin Fitzgerald and Carla Nappi, ‘Information in Early Modern East Asia’, in Ann Blair, Paul Duguid, Anja-Silvia Goeing and Anthony Grafton, eds., *Information: A Historical Companion* (Princeton, 2021), 5; Xiangming Zhang, ‘A Preliminary Study of the Punishment of Political Speech in the Ming Period’, *Ming Studies*, 62 (2010), 56–91.

²⁸ This is not to suggest that access to linguists’ own records would be unproblematic, but that approaching the linguists through the mediation of others presents its particular challenges.

²⁹ See discussion in Chapter One.

The most important of these sources in Chinese are memorials, a key channel of communication between the court and the wider bureaucracy.³⁰ These memorials, held originally in central archives, have been preserved because they were considered useful to the early Qing writers of the *Ming History* (明史).³¹ In the case of the Weddell Expedition, in addition to a lengthy joint memorial written by Supreme Commander Zhang and Regional Inspector Ge, held in the Archive of the Grand Secretariat, we also have a small number of other short memorials and texts written by Supreme Commander Zhang, whose works were published after his death.³² Similarly, in Portuguese the most common sources are official correspondence between the city of Macau and either the viceroy of the *Estado da Índia* in Goa or the court in Europe. This correspondence was copied into letter books called ‘monsoon books’ (*livros das monções*) and kept in central archives in Goa and Lisbon.³³ Linguists most frequently appear in both types of sources when they are being accused of corruption or wrongdoing, and these are indeed the source of most modern discussions of the Weddell Expedition.³⁴ But it is important to note that these sources reflect above all central government concerns. Their purpose was to produce information of value in the relationship between the central government and senior officials outside the centre; they are evidence of how the state dealt administratively with the world, rather than evidence of the world itself.³⁵ Paul Van Dyke has argued forcefully that such sources are heavily manipulated and partial, and do not reflect the reality of the Canton trade on the ground.³⁶ This chapter suggests that this does not negate their usefulness. In fact, the way that these sources are constructed is revealing of what narratives Chinese officials were trying to tell and what political purposes these served. However, this chapter does argue that these documents do require particular caution: it argues that, given their nature,

³⁰ Silas Wu, ‘Transmission of Ming memorials and the evolution of the transmission network, 1368–1627’, *T'oung Pao*, 54/4–5 (1968), 275.

³¹ Endymion Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A New Manual* (5th edn, 2018), 897.

³² Zhang Jingxin 張鏡心, *Yunyintang Wenji* 雲隱堂文集 [Collected Writings of the Cloud-Shadow Hall], comp. Zhang Jin 張潛 (Cizhou, 1672).

³³ Cf. C. R. Boxer, ‘A Glimpse of the Goa Archives’, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 14/2 (1952), 299–324.

³⁴ Coates, *Prelude to Hongkong*, 1–27; Wan, 明代中外關係, 653–77; Wang ‘通事與奸民’, 41–66.

³⁵ Head, ‘European Information State’, 121–2.

³⁶ Paul A. Van Dyke, ‘Review of “The Qing Opening to the Ocean: Chinese Maritime Policies, 1684–1757” by Gang Zhao’, *Journal of Asian History*, 48/1 (2014), 124–7.

the moments when linguists appear in them are exceptional, when the well-documented dangers of interpreting have rebounded on them and they find themselves on trial for wrongdoing.³⁷ Visibility in the archives therefore does not simply correlate with power or agency, but instead reflects moments of tension, when the central state is called upon to adjudicate on the conduct of individual linguists. Although the intention here is not at all to suggest that linguists were always scrupulously honest in their dealings, it will be argued throughout this thesis that this archive formed of cases of corruption and malfeasance has given us a distorted view of the day-to-day reality of the linguists' role and work.

But these moments of tension also present an opportunity. Microhistorians have found in criminal cases a way to access the histories of marginal figures whose stories are otherwise difficult to uncover.³⁸ This chapter uses a similar approach, arguing that although these sources represent exceptional, unrepresentative moments of tension, it is possible to use them to uncover a richer debate that shows how the state, commercial, and private aspects of the linguists' work functioned on a daily basis. Particularly useful for this purpose are memorials, which, as was often the case with government documents in the early modern world, were a collaborative enterprise rather than the product of a single author, and contained long quotes from relevant previous documents in a layered structure, often copied indiscriminately by clerks to whom the task was delegated.³⁹ On the one hand, the construction of a memorial imposed on the quoted documents the interpretive framework of the memorial's signatories through the addition of a commentary or opinion at the end of each string of quotes. In the case of the Weddell Expedition, this framework has been uncritically accepted by historians working with Chinese materials, who largely recount Zhang and Ge's view of Neretti as a corrupt smuggler.⁴⁰ But on the other hand, if we read against

³⁷ For the dangers of interpreting, cf. Harrison, *Perils of Interpreting*; Lawrence Wang-chi Wong, "Chouban yiwu", 55–86.

³⁸ E.g. Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, tr. John Tedeschi and Anne C. Tedeschi (Baltimore, 2013); Carlo Ginzburg and Bruce Lincoln, *Old Thieffs, a Livonian Werewolf: A Classic Case in Comparative Perspective* (Chicago, 2020).

³⁹ Ann Blair, 'Secretaries', in Ann Blair, Paul Duguid, Anja-Silvia Goeing and Anthony Grafton, eds., *Information: A Historical Companion* (Princeton, 2021), 771; Chelsea Zi Wang, 'Dilemmas of Empire: Movement, Communication, and Information Management in Ming China, 1368–1644', PhD thesis, Columbia University, 2017, 18–19, 27–8, 32.

⁴⁰ Wan, 明代中外關係, 653–677; Wang '通事與奸民', 41–66.

the grain, removing Regional Commander Chen's quoted reports from Zhang and Ge's interpretive framework, and reading them in the light of a wider range of English and Portuguese sources than has been previously used, we can reconstruct a two-sided narrative of a political conflict over the correct handling of the English and over the legitimacy of Chen Qian and Paulo Neretti's actions as state officials. Reconstructing this narrative is the focus of the next section.

Paulo Neretti and the Weddell Expedition

The Weddell Expedition took place against the backdrop of the English East India Company's failure to match Portuguese and Dutch successes in expanding into maritime south and south-east Asia and the new opportunities afforded by a peace negotiated between the Portuguese viceroy in Goa and the East India Company's president in Surat.⁴¹ The venture was financed by the Courteen Association, a newly-formed challenger to the East India Company, and received royal backing from Charles I, whose commission charged the East India Company with 'supine neglect' leading to 'the daily decrease of our customs' and ordered the expedition to establish trade with Goa, Malabar, China, and Japan.⁴² In command of the Association's fleet of four ships was John Weddell, an experienced former vice-admiral and captain-general in the East India Company who had left his former employer after a series of disputes, complaining that the Company offered only 'fines and undeserved reproaches'.⁴³ His contemporaries' appraisals of him spoke highly of his courage and abilities, but his papers also reveal a man who could be hot-headed and impulsive, which would cause him much difficulty in dealing with both the Portuguese and Chinese in Macau and Canton.

The first stage of the Weddell Expedition in China, beginning with its arrival in the Pearl River Delta on 7 July 1637, had as much to do with the shifting tides of European diplomacy as it did with China's frontier policy. Although Neretti was not involved, the thread of the English relationship with the city of Macau would run throughout the rest of the expedition. The *Estado da Índia* was in a period

⁴¹ Puga, *British Presence*, 23–24.

⁴² Robert Sanderson, ed., *Foedera, Conventiones, Literae, Et Cujuscunque Generis Acta Publica, inter Reges Angliae, Et Alios quisvis Imperatores, Reges, Pontifices, Principes, vel Communitates, ab Ineunte Saeculo Duodecimo, viz ab Anno 1101, ad nostra usque Tempora, Habita aut Tractata; Ex Autographis infra Secretiores Archivorum Regiorum Thesaurarias, per multa Saecula reconditis, fideliter Exscripta* (London, 1735), 146.

⁴³ Richard Carnac Temple, ed., *The Travels of Peter Mundy in Europe and Asia, 1608–1667*, 5 vols (Cambridge, 1907–1936), iii.1: 'Travels in England, Western India, Achin, Macau, and the Canton River, 1634–1637', 431.

of crisis, beset with troubles and increasingly losing ground to the Dutch VOC; its viceroy, the Count of Linhares, had sought to form a common front with the English against the Dutch by extending to Asia the peace signed in Europe between England and the Iberian kingdoms at the end of the Anglo-Spanish War. The English President of Surat, William Methwold, had seen an opportunity to access the Portuguese trading routes and revive the weak English presence in Asia, and in 1635 the Convention of Goa was signed, opening up Portuguese domains to English trade.⁴⁴ Both Weddell and his chief factor, Nathaniel Mountney, had been present at the signing of this convention.⁴⁵ Knowing that Europeans were prohibited from trading directly with China, their initial intention was to open an indirect trade through Macau on the basis of the convention; upon their arrival, they presented the Captain-General of Macau, Domingos da Câmara de Noronha, with a letter from Charles I to this effect.⁴⁶ This was accompanied by a letter from Weddell himself recalling his participation in the signing of the convention and emphasising that the English had been able to trade freely in Portuguese territories *en route* to Macau.⁴⁷

This approach placed the municipal authorities in a difficult position. As the Chapter One has shown, Macau was never a straightforward outpost of Portugal in East Asia. It had always had a complex relationship with Lisbon and Madrid: although founded as an informal settlement, it had gradually become more closely integrated into the *Estado da Índia*, but nevertheless remained dominated by mercantile interests that frequently worked against the Portuguese state.⁴⁸ Indeed, immediately prior to Weddell's arrival, the city had been in mutiny against the Viceroy's continued insistence

⁴⁴ Puga, *British Presence*, 23–5; 'Assento feito em Goa a 20 de Janeiro de 1635, entre o Vice Rei Conde de Linhares, e Guilherme Methwold Presidente da Companhia de Inglaterra, para se haverem de guardar as pazes celebradas em Madrid, em 15 de Novembro de 1630, entre Portugal e a Gram Bretanha' [Agreement made in Goa on 20 January 1635, between the Viceroy the Count of Linhares, and William Methwold, President of the English Company, to keep the peace treaties made in Madrid on 15 November 1630 between Portugal and Great Britain], in José Ferreira Borges de Castro, ed., *Collecção dos Tratados, Convenções, Contratos, e Actos Publicos Celebrados entre a Coroa de Portugal e as mais Potencias, desde 1640 até ao presente* [Collection of Treaties, Conventions, Contracts and Public Acts Celebrated between the Crown of Portugal and the other Powers, from 1640 to the present day], 8 vols (Lisbon, 1856), i, 102–3.

⁴⁵ M. L. Baumber, 'An East India Captain: The early career of Captain Richard Swanley', *The Mariner's Mirror*, 53/3 (1967), 276.

⁴⁶ Charles I to the Governor of Macau, ANTT, GEI/001/41, fo. 200^r.

⁴⁷ John Weddell to Domingos da Câmara, ANTT, GEI/001/41, fo. 199^r.

⁴⁸ Barreto, *Poder e Saber*, 160–198; Tereza Sena, 'Macau's Autonomy in Portuguese Historiography (19th and Early 20th Centuries)', *Bulletin of Portuguese-Japanese Studies*, 17 (2008), 83–5.

on the crown monopoly of the Nagasaki trade.⁴⁹ All this meant that the English reliance on treaties made in Goa and Europe carried little weight when balanced against the potential harm that Macau merchants would suffer by losing their monopoly of the Canton trade. The city's leading figures sought a response that neither complied with the terms of the Convention of Goa and the peace between English, Spain, and Portugal, nor openly rejected the sovereignty of the Iberian crowns in whose name the treaties were signed. To the English, da Câmara excused himself by claiming that the Convention of Goa had not yet been received in Spain due to delays *en route* and that he could not act without orders from the king, and that in any case the Chinese would not permit it. To Goa and Madrid, he wrote of the difficulty of his situation, recognising that he was obliged to obey the treaty signed by the Viceroy but arguing in veiled and euphemistic language that his disobedience of the treat was in fact a better form of serving the King by protecting the interests of Macau.⁵⁰ The city's leading merchants objected in stronger terms; in a letter written after the expedition, they wrote that, under the convention, 'this city and the entire *Estado da Índia* are left exposed to great evils' (*ficam exposta esta cidade e todo o Estado da Índia a grandes males*).⁵¹

Faced with this refusal, the English resolved on 12 July to proceed upriver and deal directly with the Chinese.⁵² There was, however, no single authority on the Chinese side with sole decision-making power in the matter of the unexpected arrival of the English. Trade was most directly controlled by the Maritime Trade Supervisorate (*Shibo Tijusi* 市泊提舉司) and the Surveillance Vice-Commissioner of the Maritime Defence Circuit (*Haidao Fushi* 海道副使), Zheng Jingguang (鄭靖光); but it was also a security concern, and the first English engagement with Chinese officialdom was with the military authorities.⁵³ Ming-era Canton fell within the supra-provincial grouping of Liangguang (兩廣), under the leadership of the Supreme Commander, who also acted as Guangdong's most senior provincial official, the Grand Coordinator (*Xunfu* 巡撫); but it so

⁴⁹ Captain-General to Viceroy of India, ANTT, GEI/001/41, fo. 153^r–155^v.

⁵⁰ Domingos da Câmara to Charles I, ANTT, GEI/001/41, fo. 202^r; Domingos da Câmara to John Weddell, GEI/001/41, fo. 201^r; Domingos da Câmara to the Viceroy of India, ANTT, GEI/001/41, fo. 193^r.

⁵¹ 'Rezoius que breuemente se dão aserca dequanto periuisso seja uirê osimgresses aesta çidade' [Reasons given briefly on how damaging it would be if the English came to this city], ANTT, GEI/001/041, fo. 231^r.

⁵² 'Itinerarium Mundii', fo. 135^r.

⁵³ 'Bingbu ti 兵部題', AS, LYYS, NGDK, no. 034914.

happened that the Weddell Expedition arrived when the Supreme Commander, Xiong Wencan (熊文燦), was due to leave office.⁵⁴ His intended successor, Zheng Maohua (鄭茂華), then Grand Coordinator of Guangxi (*Guangxi Xunfu* 廣西巡撫), declined due to ill health, taking up the post only temporarily until the arrival of the eventual appointee, Zhang Jingxin.⁵⁵ Also absent was the Regional Inspector of Guangdong, Ge Zhengqi, on business away from the provincial capital.⁵⁶ Zhang and Ge, as we have seen, would later be decisive in opposing trade with the English, but their absence left a power vacuum that allowed another group of officials to take the opposite course of action.

These officials were Regional Commander Chen, Regional Vice-Commander Li, Vice-Commissioner Zheng, and the Assistant Regional Commander (*Canjiang* 參將) Yang Yuan (楊元).⁵⁷ The existence of this group of officials who supported trade is central to the argument of this chapter, because it is what turns a straightforward case of smuggling into a narrative of political conflict with Paulo Neretti at the centre. There are tens of reports written by these officials still surviving, but they have been obscured by their inclusion in Zhang and Ge's memorial, which reworks them into a more one-sided narrative.⁵⁸

Contrary to the idea that Chen took advantage of Zhang and Ge's absence to carry out an illicit trade, he was in fact initially reluctant to act without their approval. On 28 July, Regional Vice-Commander Li met the English halfway upriver, receiving them on board his ship with African slaves for interpreters.⁵⁹ The English reported that he treated them affably once they said they wished to trade, and permitted them to take a petition to Canton.⁶⁰ However, Chen and Zheng turned them back close to the city with what the English described as a 'friendly message', promising to seek

⁵⁴ Wan, *Mingdai Zhongwai Guanxi* 明代中外關係, 663.

⁵⁵ 'Bingbu ti 兵部題', AS, LYYS, NGDK, no. 034914.

⁵⁶ 'Bingbu ti 兵部題', AS, LYYS, NGDK, no. 034914.

⁵⁷ 'Bingbu ti 兵部題', AS, LYYS, NGDK, no. 034914.

⁵⁸ 'Bingbu ti 兵部題', AS, LYYS, NGDK, no. 034914.

⁵⁹ 'Bingbu ti 兵部題', AS, LYYS, NGDK, no. 034914; 'Memorable passages', fo. 8^r-4^v. About these particular slaves, nothing further is known. African slaves made up a substantial portion of the population of Macau. See Peng Hui 彭蕙, *Ming-Qing shiqi Aomen heiren wenti yanjiu* 明清時期澳門黑人問題研究 [A study of the question of Black people in Macau during the Ming and Qing dynasties] (Beijing, 2017), 66.

⁶⁰ 'Memorable passages', fo. 8^r-v.

permission from the Supreme Commander for them to trade provided that they would leave the river and return to Macau.⁶¹ At the same time, he ordered defensive preparations to be made in case the English decided to attack.⁶² This would be Chen's consistent position for the next few weeks, shoring up Canton's defences while holding off any final decision until Zhang and Ge's arrival. However, the English grew frustrated, and resolved in a meeting on 8 August to return upriver again, eventually anchoring under Anunghoi Fort (*Yaniangxie Chongtai* 亞娘鞋銃台).⁶³ Once again, Chen sent messengers explaining that the Supreme Commander and Regional Inspector were still far from Canton, and promising that they would be able to trade within ten days.⁶⁴ But Zhang was much delayed—in fact, he had attempted to turn down his appointment as Supreme Commander, pleading illness and the need to care for his elderly parents—and the English merchants grew impatient.⁶⁵ On 22 August, impatience spilled over into conflict. Weddell sent a barge to sound the waters around Anunghoi; as it came close to the fort, it was fired upon three times.⁶⁶ In an atmosphere of anger among the fleet, Weddell and the merchants agreed that peaceful means had failed, and their only option was to attack the fort.⁶⁷ After only half an hour of fighting, the English captured two nearby ships and overran the fort, setting fire to the buildings inside, defacing its battlements, and removing a large quantity of cannon.⁶⁸

This was when Paulo Neretti became involved. Vice-Commissioner Zheng wrote to Supreme Commander Zhang that his subordinates had reported successfully repelling the English, but in reality both Chen and Zheng were aware of the defeat.⁶⁹ The next day the English skirmished on the

⁶¹ 'Bingbu ti 兵部題', AS, LYYS, NGDK, no. 034914.

⁶² 'Bingbu ti 兵部題', AS, LYYS, NGDK, no. 034914.

⁶³ 'Itinerarium Mundii', fo. 136^r.

⁶⁴ 'Itinerarium Mundii', fo. 136^r–137^v; 'Memorable passages', fo. 5^v–6^v.

⁶⁵ 'Itinerarium Mundii', fo. 137^r; Zhang Jingxin 張鏡心, 'Gao bing shu 告病疏' [Memorial reporting illness], in *Yunyintang Wenji* 雲隱堂文集 [Collected Writings of the Cloud-Shadow Hall], comp. Zhang Jin 張潛 (Cizhou, 1672), j. 3, 18–20.

⁶⁶ 'Itinerarium Mundii', fo. 138^r; 'Memorable passages', fo. 6^v.

⁶⁷ 'Itinerarium Mundii', fo. 138^r; w

⁶⁸ 'Itinerarium Mundii', fo. 138^r.

⁶⁹ 'Bingbu ti 兵部題', AS, LYYS, NGDK, no. 034914. Zhang was only able to begin investigating the truth of what had happened at Anunghoi after the English had left on 31 December (Zhang Jingxin 張鏡心, 'Bao zhenjinag quzhu hongyi shu 報鎮將驅逐紅夷疏' [Memorial reporting the Regional Commander driving away the red-haired foreigners], in *Yunyintang Wenji* 雲隱堂文集 [Collected Writings of the Cloud-Shadow Hall], comp. Zhang Jin 張潛 (Cizhou, 1672), j. 3, 22–3.).

shore with an angry crowd while attempting to obtain provisions.⁷⁰ The possibility for escalating violence was clear, and with no sign of Zhang Jingxin's arrival, Chen and Zheng decided to act on their own authority. Despite the later Portuguese claim, seized upon by Peter Mundy, that Neretti held no official position at all, all the Chinese sources agree that he was a linguist formally commissioned by Chen Qian and Zheng Jingguang to negotiate a peaceful resolution of the situation with the English.⁷¹ He arrived on board a naval junk under a flag of truce on 25 August, and the English sources show that he handled the subsequent negotiations with some skill.⁷²

His first task, as was common with early modern translators, was the construction of trust.⁷³ After exchanging courtesies in Portuguese, he explained his identity and the source of his authority, emphasising that he was sent directly by the 'higher powers', who were separate from the 'under mandarins' who had caused the English so much trouble.⁷⁴ He assured the English that he shared their dislike of the Portuguese, whom he claimed had abused him and sought to sell him into slavery.⁷⁵

Peter Mundy was much taken by the signs of his official rank and recorded them in careful detail.⁷⁶ He continued to pay attention to these details over the following weeks, and after a later meeting,

⁷⁰ 'Itinerarium Mundii', fo. 138^r.

⁷¹ 'Bingbu ti 兵部題', AS, LYYS, NGDK, no. 034914; Zhang, '參鎮臣庇奸', 3.

⁷² 'Itinerarium Mundii', fo. 139^r.

⁷³ Harrison, 'Faithful interpreter', 4–5; 'Itinerarium Mundii', fo. 139^r.

⁷⁴ 'Itinerarium Mundii', fo. 139^r.

⁷⁵ 'Itinerarium Mundii', fo. 139^r.

⁷⁶ 'Itinerarium Mundii', fo. 139^r.

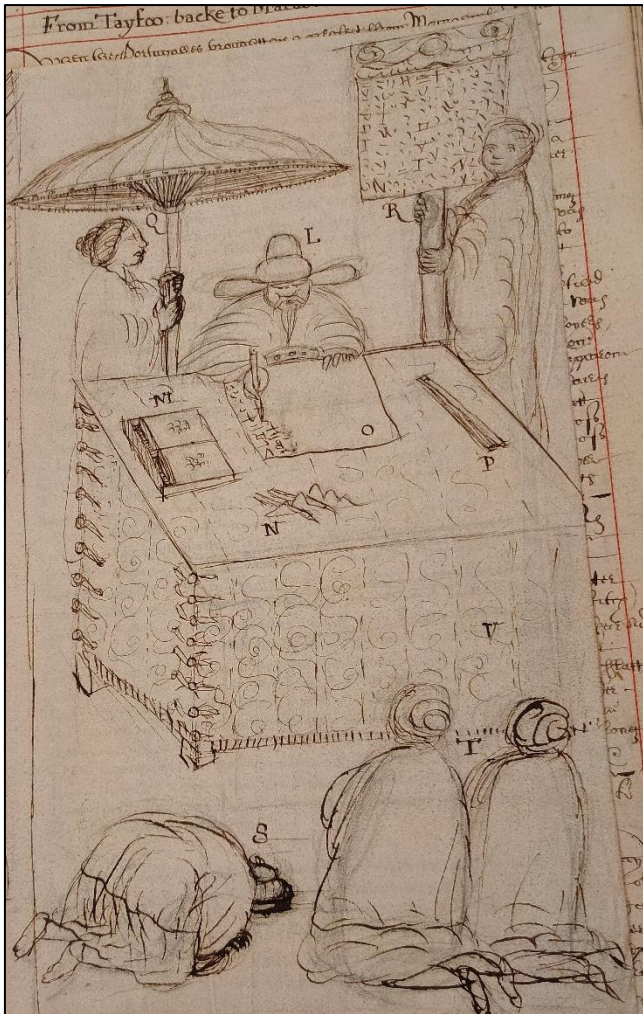


Fig. 1: 'A mandarin or officer sitting in his official robes at a table writing with a pencil [sic] as all in general do.' On the next page, Mundy notes that Neretti 'sat in state on the Dragon's half-deck according to letters L, M, N, O, P, Q, R, V'. Figure S is explained as depicting their prisoners kowtowing before Neretti. ('Itinerarium Mundii', insert between fos. 144^v and 145^r.)

he would note on a drawing of a Chinese official that this was how 'Neretti sat in state on the Dragon's half-deck', while their Chinese prisoners 'fell down on their knees and struck their foreheads against the ground three times' before him (fig. 1).⁷⁷

Having established his status and some degree of trust, Neretti began to discuss substantive matters. Although Chen and Zheng were well aware by this time of what the English sought, he presented them as entirely new to the affair and unconnected with what had gone before, saying that he had been sent to enquire after the 'reason of [the English] coming into their parts'.⁷⁸ Weddell, fully aware of Chen and Zheng's involvement thus far but understanding the rules of the diplomatic game, explained that the English wished to trade but had been 'abused by some of the under-

mandarins'; Neretti replied, equally diplomatically but untruthfully, that the 'great mandarins knew nothing of it'.⁷⁹ He proposed a mutually-beneficial solution: the English would be allowed to trade by the authority of the Regional Commander, but in return they must pay customs duties, restore the ordnance taken from Anunghoi Fort, and make restitution for any damages.⁸⁰ The talks

⁷⁷ The drawing seems intended to be a generic depiction of an official. This also disproves Coates's theory that Neretti was illiterate, given that Mundy depicts him writing at a portable table. 'Itinerarium Mundii', fo. 145^r.

⁷⁸ 'Itinerarium Mundii', fo. 139^r.

⁷⁹ 'Itinerarium Mundii', fo. 139^r. The English sources frequently mentioned 'champin' (zongbing 總兵, the Regional Commander) and 'aitao' (haidao 海道, the Surveillance Vice-Commissioner of the Maritime Defence Circuit) before the negotiations with Neretti, showing that they were already well aware of these officials' involvement.

⁸⁰ 'Itinerarium Mundii', fo. 139^r.

were a success, and we have seen how Neretti brought the merchants to Canton for an audience confirming what they had agreed.

This view of Neretti openly negotiating agreements in his official capacity with the agreement of Canton officialdom contradicts the image of a smuggler put forward in Zhang and Ge's memorial, preserved in the *Ming History*, and taken up by modern secondary literature.⁸¹ At first sight, this discrepancy between the English and Chinese sources seems difficult to resolve; but using a wider range of Chinese sources shows that, although Chen Qian was eventually quoted suggesting that Neretti had been sent to order the English to leave China, this was only a very late modification of his story, and all the Chinese sources written earlier in the expedition and quoted in later documents show that Chen and Neretti's actions matched the English accounts.

The most important of these is a little-studied separate memorial written by Zhang and Ge impeaching Chen early the next year, which reveals that Chen was originally quite open about his pro-trade position and use of Paulo Neretti until he realised how completely he had misjudged Zhang Jingxin.⁸² It is not clear exactly when Zhang finally arrived in Guangdong, but it appears to have been some time in September.⁸³ Up until this point, Chen seems to have genuinely believed that Zhang would support his decision to permit the English to trade, but he was quite wrong, and their first meetings revealed a disastrous clash of both opinion and personality. Chen told Zhang that 'there is benefit in permitting trade' (*li zai xu shi* 利在許市), attempted to defend Neretti, and argued that the foreigners would in any case be gone soon; Zhang dismissed this as 'using the public to benefit the private' (*jia gong ji si* 假公濟私), and, crucially, told Chen that he should have ordered the English to leave.⁸⁴ The English had written positively of Chen's affability in dealing with them,

⁸¹ 'Bingbu ti 兵部題', AS, LYYS, NGDK, no. 034914; Wan, *Mingdai Zhong-Wai Guangxi* 明代中外關係, 653-77; Wang, 'Tongshi yu jianmin 通事與奸民', 41-66; Zhang Tingyu 張廷玉 et al., *Mingshi* 明史 [Ming History] (Beijing, 1974), j. 325.

⁸² Zhang, '參鎮臣庇奸', 2-4.

⁸³ He formally took up his position in his official seat some time in late December (Zhang Jingxin 張鏡心, 'Jin chen Yue zhong duo shi xu ren shu 謹陳粵中多事需人疏' [Memorial respectfully presenting the many problems in Guangdong and the need for manpower], *Yunyintang Wenji* 雲隱堂文集 [Collected Writings of the Cloud-Shadow Hall], comp. Zhang Jin 張潛 (Cizhou, 1672), j. 3, 22.)

⁸⁴ Zhang, '參鎮臣庇奸', 2-4. The question of *li* 利 (profit/benefit) will be taken up below.

but Zhang was irritated by Chen's cheerfulness when he appeared not to take seriously Zhang's concern that Neretti could be engaging in deceit.⁸⁵ Zhang wrote openly that he was suspicious from their first meeting of Chen and his evasiveness in support of Neretti (臣首舉以問,即見其曲為庇護,情辭閃爍,臣藉疑之). Suspicion grew into contempt: Zhang would later write that 'everything he touches goes wrong' (觸手盡錯).⁸⁶

After Neretti's later arrest, Chen's story began to change, reflecting shifting political circumstances. On 25 September, Chen wrote that he and Zheng had commissioned Neretti to proclaim an edict and to accompany the Courteen merchants into the provincial seat for an audience.⁸⁷ Although not specifying the content of the edict, he still praised Neretti's diplomatic and linguistic skill and pointed out that it was down to him that the foreigners had 'obeyed orders, returned our trading ships, and restored our fort' (夷人聽命,歸我商艘,修我銃臺), and argued that 'Li Yerong cannot be said to be without merit' (李葉榮不可謂無功).⁸⁸ At the same time, however, he accepted that Neretti should be detained, but proposed taking no further action immediately, saying that it was too early to mete out disciplinary punishments.⁸⁹ Only five days later, however, he began to deny that he had ever permitted the English to trade, reporting that he and Zheng Jingguang had 'commissioned the linguist Li Yerong [Paulo Neretti] to bring the two foreign leaders to the provincial seat, in order to command them strictly to set out to sea forthwith' (差通事李葉榮帶夷目二人進省,嚴諭即刻開洋).⁹⁰ That neither of these accounts mentions granting approval for trade neither means that it did not happen nor implies that Chen kept it secret from Zhang, as some have assumed; the caginess of the first report and the outright contradiction of the second seem to simply reflect Chen's increasing realisation that the political tides were turning against him.

⁸⁵ Zhang, '參鎮臣庇奸', 2-4.

⁸⁶ Zhang, '參鎮臣庇奸', 2-4.

⁸⁷ 'Bingbu ti 兵部題', AS, LYYS, NGDK, no. 034914.

⁸⁸ 'Bingbu ti 兵部題', AS, LYYS, NGDK, no. 034914.

⁸⁹ 'Bingbu ti 兵部題', AS, LYYS, NGDK, no. 034914.

⁹⁰ 'Bingbu ti 兵部題', AS, LYYS, NGDK, no. 034914. Chen was less careful in speech than in writing, and Zhang records him still admitting to his actions in a conversation after the English had left (Zhang, '參鎮臣庇奸', 3-4).

Neretti, then, was indeed acting within and not against the Chinese state. What exactly this meant will be explored in the final section of this chapter, but it is important for now to note that this was not the extent of his role; all the while that Zhang and Chen were debating these matters, right up until his arrest, Neretti was busily engaged in acting as a commercial broker for the English alongside his official work. In this he did not act alone, but involved a whole network of others, including his relative, the merchant Jie Bangjun (揭邦俊), as well as another linguist, Liu De (劉德), about whom we unfortunately know nothing apart from his name, and at least three other merchants and middlemen, Lü Shenxi (呂沈西), Wu Wanhe (吳萬和), and Wu Peiyu (吳培宇).⁹¹ These commercial networks, based on personal contacts, were the normal way in which foreign trade operated in this period.⁹² A short story published in 1627 describes the engagement of these networks upon the arrival of a ship: 'Most of the crew had experience of trade, and they all had their preferred middlemen, providers of lodgings, and linguists, and each went ashore to search for them and dispose of their merchandise' (眾人多是做過交易的, 各有熟識經紀、歇家、通事人等, 各自上岸找尋發貨去了).⁹³ Li Qingxin's study of these figures characterises them as 'semi-official'; precursors of the later commercial houses known as *hongs* (*hang* 行), they arose as part of the illicit private trade during the era of the maritime prohibition, but were co-opted by the state as restrictions were relaxed in the late sixteenth century to assist in the collection of taxes.⁹⁴ Brokers and middlemen not only acted as commercial agents, but also accompanied government officials in talks with foreigners; they also took responsibility for foreign merchants before the law, and would be punished for the merchants' wrongdoings, even if they themselves had committed no

⁹¹ 'Bingbu ti 兵部題', AS, LYYS, NGDK, no. 034914.

⁹² Li Qingxin 李慶新, 'Cong Yan Junyan 'Mengshuizhai Cundu' kan Mingmo Guangzhou, Aomen maoyi zhidu ruogan biandong 從顏俊彥《盟水齋存牘》看明末廣州、澳門貿易制度若干變動' [An investigation of the trading system in Guangzhou and Macau during the late Ming through Yan Junyan's 'Mengshuizhai Cundu'], 學術月刊, 1 (2011), 129–136.

⁹³ Ling Mengchu 凌濛初, *Chu ke, er ke pai'an jingqi* 初刻、二刻拍案驚奇 [Slapping the Table in Amazement, First and Second Collection] (Changsha, 1988), 7.

⁹⁴ Li, '廣州、澳門貿易', 133.

crime.⁹⁵ Neretti was therefore part of a chain that both linked foreign traders with domestic production, and commercial interests with official oversight.⁹⁶

He lodged the English in Jie Bangjun's house and also stored a large quantity of goods in his own house.⁹⁷ This method of conducting trade may seem surprising today, but the practice, known as *xiejia* (歇家), was widespread in the Ming to the point that many popular riddles and stories alluded to it.⁹⁸ Foreign merchants would be provided with accommodation, storage, access to contacts, and assistance with closing deals; at the same time, as discussed above, the Chinese party would collect taxes on behalf of the government.⁹⁹ Of course, this system, which had grown up originally to serve private interests, was open to widespread abuse and those involved were particularly vulnerable to accusations of embezzlement or wrongdoing.¹⁰⁰ The implications of accusations such as these for understanding the interplay of public, commercial, and private interest in the role of the linguists will be discussed later in this chapter.

Zhang and Ge gradually began to take charge of the situation from mid-September. Zhang urged Chen to take his troops to Lampacau (*Langbai'ao* 浪白澳), where they would be positioned to engage with the English fleet, but Chen attempted to stall for time, only going as far as Xiangshan (香山), and pointing out that the English would be gone soon.¹⁰¹ But as the political tides began to turn, Chen found himself increasingly isolated. His former ally Zheng Jingguang realigned himself with Zhang and Ge, possibly having also received a bribe from the Portuguese in Macau; and when Chen's deputy, Regional Vice Commander Li Yanqing, formerly a reliable supporter of trade with the

⁹⁵ Zhao Liren, 'Zai lun Ming-Qing zhi ji de shisan hang yu Aomen maoyi 再論明清之際的十三行與澳門貿易' [A reconsideration of the Thirteen Hongs and the Macau trade in the Ming and Qing], *Haijiao Shi Yanjiu* 海交史研究, 2 (2005), 66.

⁹⁶ Li, '廣州、澳門貿易', 135.

⁹⁷ 'Bingbu ti 兵部題', AS, LYYS, NGDK, no. 034914.

⁹⁸ Hu Tieqiu 胡鐵球, 'Mingmo haiwai maoyi zhong de 'xiejia yahan' yu haijin zhengce de tiaozheng 明清海外貿易中的'歇家牙行'與海禁政策的調整' [The 'xiejia yahan' in Ming-Qing maritime trade and the adjustment of the maritime prohibition policy], *Zhejiang Xuekan* 浙江學刊, 6 (2013), 34.

⁹⁹ Hu, '歇家牙行', 28, 32.

¹⁰⁰ Zhao, '十三行', 33.

¹⁰¹ Zhang, '參鎮臣庇奸', 3.

English, reported that ‘all say a fire attack is the prime strategy’ (*qian wei huogong wei di yi ce* 僉謂火攻爲第一策), Chen had no choice but to begin preparations for a sea battle.¹⁰² Neretti realised the danger he was in, and attempted to save himself by submitting a ‘secret report’ to Zheng via Chen claiming to have discovered that foreigners had entered the province in a hired boat and suggesting that the matter should be investigated.¹⁰³ But Zheng, no longer a supporter of Neretti, simply passed the report on without comment to the provincial administrative and surveillance commissions, which ordered the Vice-Prefect of Canton (*Guangzhou Tongzhi* 廣州府同知), Xie Lijing (解立敬), to carry out a secret investigation.¹⁰⁴ Xie replied that the goods were clearly brought into the province by Neretti, and recommended he should be sent for interrogation.¹⁰⁵ On 20 September, Neretti was arrested and beaten such that, in the words of the English merchants, ‘that poor dog, they have scarce left him worth his skin’.¹⁰⁶ This was when Chen submitted the first of his reports discussed above, acknowledging in writing to Zhang and Ge for the first time that Neretti was a linguist commissioned by him and Zheng, defending his linguistic and diplomatic skill, and accepting his arrest, but suggesting delaying sentencing.¹⁰⁷

At the same time, as we have seen, the English merchants were placed under house arrest and their goods impounded.¹⁰⁸ On the same day, Chen’s subordinates led an attack on the English using fireships, which were widely agreed to be the best strategy to defeat European ships due to their perceived lack of manoeuvrability.¹⁰⁹ In fact, thanks to changing winds, the English ships were able to escape the fireships unscathed.¹¹⁰ But the sudden reversal of their fortunes was a shock to the English merchants, and, Peter Mundy wrote, some began ‘to mistrust the dealing of Neretti’.¹¹¹

¹⁰² ‘Bingbu ti 兵部題’, AS, LYYS, NGDK, no. 034914; ‘Memorable passages’, fo. 9^v.

¹⁰³ ‘Bingbu ti 兵部題’, AS, LYYS, NGDK, no. 034914.

¹⁰⁴ ‘Bingbu ti 兵部題’, AS, LYYS, NGDK, no. 034914.

¹⁰⁵ ‘Bingbu ti 兵部題’, AS, LYYS, NGDK, no. 034914.

¹⁰⁶ ‘Memorable passages’, fo. 12^v.

¹⁰⁷ ‘Bingbu ti 兵部題’, AS, LYYS, NGDK, no. 034914.

¹⁰⁸ ‘Bingbu ti 兵部題’, AS, LYYS, NGDK, no. 034914; ‘Memorable passages’, fo. 11^r–11^v.

¹⁰⁹ ‘Bingbu ti 兵部題’, AS, LYYS, NGDK, no. 034914; ‘Itinerarium Mundii’, fo. 140^r, Zhang Jingxin 張鏡心, ‘紅毛’ [Red-haired foreigners], in *Yunyintang Wenji* 雲隱堂文集 [Collected Writings of the Cloud-Shadow Hall], comp. Zhang Jin 張潛 (Cizhou, 1672), j. 23, 2.

¹¹⁰ ‘Itinerarium Mundii’, fo. 140^r.

¹¹¹ ‘Itinerarium Mundii’, fo. 140^r.

Mundy found confirmation of his suspicions soon after: under the title ‘Chief Agent of all the Mischief wrought us by the Chinese’, he wrote in his diary on 8 October that a Jesuit in Macau had provided a retranslation of the edict of 31 August, which, as discussed previously, the Jesuit claimed had in fact ordered the English to leave China and never to return.¹¹² The Jesuit’s translation was confirmed by a merchant from one of the captured junks and a runaway slave, and Mundy could find no other explanation than ‘close contrived treachery’ on Neretti’s part.¹¹³

There is, however, reason to doubt this version of events. Firstly, as argued above, the idea of a deliberate mistranslation does not fit with the narrative of Chen’s actions or his initial open support for trade in his first meetings with Zhang. Secondly, the Jesuit’s translation preserved in the Portuguese archives in fact reflects the language of a later edict that the Chinese sources give as only having been read to the English much later in September, after Zhang and Ge’s arrival, and it is likely that the retranslation was of this document instead.¹¹⁴ Finally, it is important to note that, although it has dominated the historiography, Mundy’s version of events was not shared by most of the key figures of the Weddell Expedition. His diary is extensive and detailed, and following its editing and publication by the Hakluyt Society in 1919, copiously annotated and supplemented by extracts from other sources (one account in a letter written by Weddell himself, and another in a joint letter written by the merchants), it quickly became the key English-language source used in accounts of the voyage.¹¹⁵ The Hakluyt Society’s methodology, using Mundy as the key source and supplementing this with extra detail from Weddell’s account, is also implicitly or explicitly adopted

¹¹² ‘Itinerarium Mundii’, fo. 145^r.

¹¹³ ‘Itinerarium Mundii’, fo. 145^r.

¹¹⁴ The closest match to the Portuguese retranslation is contained in a report sent to Zhang and Ge on 27th September, after Neretti had already been imprisoned: [Squad Commander He] Zhong and others read an edict: “China has no commerce with red-haired foreigners; if you do not speedily depart, then inevitably we will leave [you] not one piece of sail.” The foreigners beat their chests and pointed at the heavens, and left.’ (忠等傳諭: “中國而無與紅夷貿易, 爾等若不速去, 必使片帆不留。”夷人搏胸指天而去。) The Portuguese translation sent to Goa, which is presumably the same document shown to Mundy, and is dated the 27th October, contains lengthy admonitions that trade is not permitted, and finishes with the threat that, should the English not comply, ‘I promise you that with my soldiers, I will finish you off, and not even one small shred of your sails will be left to you’. (Bingbu ti 兵部題’, AS, LYYS, NGDK, no. 034914; ‘Treslado do chapa’, fo. 206^v).

¹¹⁵ Richard Carnac Temple, ed., *The Travels of Peter Mundy in Europe and Asia, 1608–1667*, 5 vols (Cambridge, 1907–1936), iii.1: ‘Travels in England, Western India, Achin, Macau, and the Canton River, 1634–1637’. The sources of these documents are: ‘Memorable passages’, fo. 1^r–21^v; Weddell on board Dragon, fo. 22^v–33^r.

by most modern accounts.¹¹⁶ This approach focusses on the similarities between the accounts, without questioning the differences between them. In fact, Weddell never mentioned the mistranslation or the Portuguese provision of a retranslation, nor did he ever lose trust in Neretti, writing even after the voyage of Neretti's 'help'.¹¹⁷ Nor did he mention the mistranslation when, on his return voyage to England, he met the EIC factor in Machilipatnam, who sent his superiors in Surat an account of Weddell's description of the voyage.¹¹⁸ Weddell instead blamed the Portuguese for the sudden reversal in English fortunes, believing them to have bribed a group of Chinese officials to prevent the English trading.¹¹⁹ Mundy's acceptance of the Portuguese claims was plausible given the suspicion under which early modern translators worked, and its acceptance by modern historians can be understood in light of their reliance on Zhang and Ge's straightforward account of smuggling and treachery, which does not contradict the idea of a mistranslation, but the fuller use of a wider range of sources in this chapter suggests that this version of events was most unlikely.¹²⁰

Now under arrest in Canton, Neretti confessed to acting as a broker for the English and bringing them to Jie Bangjun's house, to working with a network of contacts in Canton, and to having brought vast quantities of goods and money into the provincial capital.¹²¹ He handed over a receipt showing that he had stored 11,600 silver coins in his house, along with a number of other goods, all of which was separately confirmed by the detained English merchants.¹²² Zhang and Ge's focus turned to recovering the merchants' goods and money, now scattered across the city, and returning them so that the English would not have any lasting grievances, and then forcing them to return to Macau.¹²³ Once in Macau, it would become the responsibility of the Portuguese to ensure they left and caused no further trouble. They therefore ordered Neretti's and Jie's houses to be searched and

¹¹⁶ Coates, *Prelude to Hongkong*, 1–27; Wan, 明代中外關係, 653–677; Wang '通事與奸民', 41–66.

¹¹⁷ Weddell on Board Dragon, fo. 29^r.

¹¹⁸ Thomas Clarke to Surat, 26 July 1638, BL, IOR/G/12/13, fo 70^r–73^r.

¹¹⁹ Weddell on board Dragon, fo. 29^r.

¹²⁰ 'Bingbu ti 兵部題', AS, LYYS, NGDK, no. 034914.

¹²¹ 'Bingbu ti 兵部題', AS, LYYS, NGDK, no. 034914.

¹²² 'Bingbu ti 兵部題', AS, LYYS, NGDK, no. 034914; 'Memorable passages', fo. 9^v.

¹²³ 'Bingbu ti 兵部題', AS, LYYS, NGDK, no. 034914.

all the goods to be accounted for and returned, while also ordering the government of Macau to prepare an official request for the English to be released into Portuguese hands.¹²⁴

Chen's actions during this period are curious. On the one hand, he cooperated with Zhang in overseeing the recovery of the English goods, although he initially argued that they should be retained and used to supplement Guangdong's military budget, which was desperately short of funds—indeed, he and other officials had been obliged to fund the fire attack themselves, and clearly intended to use the English money to make good this loss.¹²⁵ Eventually he caved in to pressure and received the English in a series of audiences to provide receipts and hand over their goods.¹²⁶ On the other hand, however, he and his remaining ally, Assistant Regional Commander Yang Yuan, continued to pursue a separate path without Zhang and Ge's knowledge. He visited the merchants in captivity, asked them to cook English food for him, and 'assured them of his friendship', claiming that the Portuguese had 'so far prevailed with the great ones that he alone was not able to oppose so many'.¹²⁷ Even as the English goods were gradually returned and, following repeated orders from Zhang and Ge, the city of Macau finally accepted responsibility for the English and negotiated their release, Chen continued to negotiate with the English factors for trade and residence in return for 20,000 taels, four cannon, and fifty muskets annually.¹²⁸ The merchants returned to Macau on 6 December and signed an understanding to the Superintendent of Maritime Trade that they had been ignorant of Chinese law and in future would obey it.¹²⁹ On 4 January, a letter in Portuguese arrived, purportedly from Neretti, confirming the terms agreed with Chen.¹³⁰ It seems unlikely that Neretti had been released from prison by this point, but Chen was clearly still making use of him, just as he had been visiting the English in captivity as well.

¹²⁴ 'Bingbu ti 兵部題', AS, LYYS, NGDK, no. 034914.

¹²⁵ 'Bingbu ti 兵部題', AS, LYYS, NGDK, no. 034914.

¹²⁶ 'Memorable passages', fo. 15^v.

¹²⁷ 'Memorable passages', fo. 14^v. Zhang and Ge do not mention these meetings, even in their memorial impeaching Chen, so it seems they were unaware of it.

¹²⁸ 'Memorable passages', fo. 14^v–17^v.

¹²⁹ 'Itinerarium Mundii', fo. 147^v.

¹³⁰ 'Itinerarium Mundii', fo. 149^v.

What exactly he hoped to achieve with this agreement is hard to say. If we take it at face value, it seems implausible that Chen could prevail where he had failed before if the English were to return; but with no evidence, it is difficult to speculate. It does, however, support the notion that Chen, without the hindsight of nineteenth and twentieth-century imperialism, did not see the English as a threat, but rather as a means both to turn a profit and to obtain help in dealing with other threats against the backdrop of the late Ming crisis, just as Macau had also provided the embattled Ming with military assistance on several occasions.¹³¹ In any event, although Mundy was astonished at the idea that Neretti should still be believed, when the fleet finally set sail from Macau two days later, Weddell still believed that the English would in future be able to return and trade based on his agreement with Chen.¹³² But the fleet was lost in a storm on the return voyage, and with Weddell's death at sea, the failure of the Courteen Association, and the collapse of the Ming dynasty, his agreement with Chen was never tested.¹³³

After the English had left, Chen was still defending Neretti, but with the English gone and Neretti in prison, Zhang was now turning on the Regional Commander:

[Chen] met me on the twentieth day of the first month [24 February] and I explained to him Yerong's crime and that the Regional Inspector's preliminary judgement was most severe, and that I had ordered [Yerong] to be investigated and punished. How could [Chen] still be suggesting leniency, and jabbering away arguing on his behalf? I said sternly, "You should have ordered him to make the English leave, not to make them come; you should have ordered them to return to Macau, not to trade with the Chinese... the seeds have been planted for the redhaired foreigners to return, and you have nothing to be at ease about." He left ashen-faced.

迨正月二十日見臣，臣示以葉榮之罪，按院初批甚厲，兼本部院批行究治，何得議寬，尚嘵嘵代辯。臣正色曰：“諭之使去，非諭之使來。

¹³¹ Cf. Dong Shaoxin 董少新 and Huang Yinong 黃一農, 'Chongzhen nianjian zhaomu Pu bing xin kao 崇禎年間招募葡兵新考' [A new perspective on the recruitment of Portuguese soldiers from Macau during Emperor Chongzhen's reign], *Lishi Yanjiu* 歷史研究, 5 (2009), 65–86.

¹³² Weddell on board Dragon, fo. 28^r.

¹³³ Richard Carnac Temple, ed., *The Travels of Peter Mundy in Europe and Asia, 1608–1667*, 5 vols (Cambridge, 1907–1936), iii.1: 'Travels in Achin, Mauritius, Madagascar, and St Helena, 1638', 452–453.

諭之歸澳，非諭之市漢……紅夷再來，有謂根芽已伏者，該鎮無得泄泄。”於是面色如土而出。¹³⁴

Four days later, Zhang and Ge impeached Chen, asking for him to be punished with a hardship posting elsewhere and requesting instructions regarding Neretti.¹³⁵ The outcome of these accusations is unfortunately unknown. The Chongzhen emperor ordered the Ministry of War to prepare a sentence for Neretti, but this does not survive.¹³⁶ Two years later, it was reported that Chen Qian and Yang Yuan had been investigated separately, and Chen had requested posting elsewhere to avoid a capital sentence, but no further records survive.¹³⁷ However Neretti may have been punished, he continued to work as a linguist for several decades, and acquired a reputation as an experienced hand: the Dutch sought his advice in the 1650s about opening trade with China, and the final mention of him is as an interpreter for Nieuwhof's embassy to Beijing, for which he was rewarded with a damask gown by the Shunzhi emperor. Towards the end of the embassy, he was murdered in his home for reasons that were not recorded. Nieuwhof lamented that he was 'the best of our interpreters'.¹³⁸

Corruption and office

Out of this more balanced narrative, we see emerging a debate over what constituted legitimate activity for a state actor under these circumstances: were Chen and Neretti acting legitimately in their official capacities, or were they corrupt smugglers? This debate was framed within a particular political discourse, or what John Pocock has called a 'language', an intellectual resource that admitted of different viewpoints but couched them within a common frame of reference.¹³⁹ For Chen Qian, Zhang Jingxin, and Ge Zhengqi, this was a language shaped by the genre they wrote in,

¹³⁴ Zhang, '參鎮臣庇奸', 3–4.

¹³⁵ 'Bingbu ti 兵部題', AS, LYYS, NGDK, no. 034914.

¹³⁶ 'Bingbu ti 兵部題', AS, LYYS, NGDK, no. 034914.

¹³⁷ 'Bingbu ti 兵部題', AS, LYYS, NGDK, no. 034914.

¹³⁸ Gebhardt, 'Global Cities, Incoherent Communities', 195; Johan Nieuwhof, *An Embassy from the East-India Company of the United Province to the Grand Tartar Cham Emperor of China, Delivered by their Excellencies Peter to Goyer, and Jacob De Keyzer, at his Imperial City of Peking* (London, 1669), 132.

¹³⁹ Mark Goldie, 'Retrospect: The Ancient Constitution and the Languages of Political Thought', *The Historical Journal*, 62/1 (2019), 4–5; J. G. A. Pocock, 'The concept of a language and the métier d'historien: some considerations on practice', in Anthony Padgen, ed., *The Languages of Political Theory in Early-Modern Europe* (Cambridge 1987), 19–38.

a standard genre of official writing that combined political, administrative, and juridical functions; and was based on concepts such as *gong* 公 (public), *si* 私 (private), *li* 利 (profit or benefit), and *jian* 奸 (wrongdoing or treachery), terms that are ubiquitous in Chinese archive material relating to the Weddell Expedition and that will be explored further below.¹⁴⁰

However, as we have seen, this is not the language used by modern historians of the Weddell Expedition, who write instead of corruption and smuggling. Such discussion of corruption often seems to draw on two widespread present-day ideals, one of the state and one of translation. The former entails a relatively clear, albeit unrealistically idealised, distinction between public office and private interest, while the latter assigns a superior ethical value to a model of translation in which translators act as disinterested mediators without any stake of their own in the matter at hand; in both cases, a failure to live up to these ideals is taken to constitute corruption or a conflict of interest.¹⁴¹ These two ideals are linked by a concern for interest, itself the product of a current of early modern European political thought that began to articulate a vocabulary of self-interest, public interest, and interest of state tied in with the so-called ‘invention of public office’ and the emergence of new ideas about the state.¹⁴² In this context, self-interest was regarded with suspicion, both as an affront to the natural inclination of humans to collective life founded on Christian love and as a serious danger for the state.¹⁴³ However, these ideas were challenged almost as soon as they arose by the stresses of commercialisation, as an increasingly large part of human activity came to

¹⁴⁰ Sarah Mortimer, *Reformation, Resistance, and Reason of State (1517–1625)* (Oxford, 2021), 10–11 (role of genre in political languages).

¹⁴¹ Mona Baker and Carol Maier, ‘Ethics in Interpreter & Translator Training’, *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer*, 5/1 (2011), 3; Mark Knights, *Trust and Distrust: Corruption in Office in Britain and its Empire, 1600–1800* (Oxford, 2021), 417; Mary Lindemann, ‘Dirty Politics or “Harmonie”? Defining Corruption in Early Modern Amsterdam and Hamburg’, *Journal of Social History*, 45/2 (2012), 582; W. D. Rubinstein, ‘The End of “Old Corruption” in Britain 1780–1860’, *Past & Present*, 101 (1983), 55; Małgorzata Tryuk, ‘Translating and interpreting in conflict and crisis’, in Kaisa Koskinen and Nike K. Pokorn, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Ethics* (Abingdon, 2021), 400–401.

¹⁴² Lionel A. McKenzie, ‘Natural right and the emergence of the idea of interest in early modern political thought: Francesco Guicciardini and Jean de Silhon’, *History of European Ideas*, 2/4 (1981), 277.

¹⁴³ Pedro Cardim, ‘“Amor próprio” e “interesse” na “ilustração católica”’. Em torno de um livro recente de Julián Viejo Yharrassarry [‘Self love’ and ‘interest’ in the ‘Catholic Enlightenment’: On a recent book by Julián Viejo Yharrassarry], *Análise Social*, LV1/4 (2021), 702; Pedro Cardim and Nuno Gonçalo Monteiro, ‘Introduction’, in Pedro Cardim and Nuno Gonçalo Monteiro, eds., *Political Thought in Portugal and its Empire, c.1500–1800* (Cambridge, 2021), 6; McKenzie, ‘Natural right’, 277, 283–284; Joanne Paul, *Counsel and Command in Early Modern English Thought* (Cambridge, 2020), 12, 155–157.

be seen as founded on self-interest.¹⁴⁴ It is this process of questioning and debate that has led historians of Europe to argue that the notion of corruption and interest as reflections of essential, immutable categories of behaviour is a backwards projection of values that did not come into being until the nineteenth century. They argue instead that the idea of corruption was highly individual, situational, and political; it formed part of debates about the boundaries between licit and illicit acts, and both fed into and relied on shifting notions of public office and the state, as well as the strains of a changing society and new ideas about politics and commerce.¹⁴⁵ This view of corruption sees it not as a reflection of reality but as a discourse that actively *does* political work and tells political narratives.¹⁴⁶

This discussion of European history disrupts the analytical categories used by historians of the Weddell Expedition, and in many cases the wider seventeenth-century Canton trade, in two ways. Firstly, by looking more closely at the language used in the secondary literature, we can de-essentialise corruption and decouple it from modern notions of the state and translation, analysing discussions of corruption not as direct reflections of reality, but as illocutionary acts, asking what political work these texts are doing in their specific context.¹⁴⁷ Secondly, by setting this language against the language used by Chen, Zhang, and Ge, we can see its Eurocentricity; although Chinese officials were dealing with many of the same impetuses for thinking about these matters—commercialisation in particular—they did so within a different tradition of political thought with its own language and intellectual genealogy. This section takes the methodological insights of European historians of corruption discussed in the previous paragraph and applies them with a sensitivity to the language and context of the Chinese case, suggesting that we have misunderstood what Chen, Zhang, and Ge were trying to say about Neretti and linguists in general; this in turn leads to broader conclusions about the nature of the linguists between state and commerce.

¹⁴⁴ Cardim, “Amor próprio”, 702; this view was by no means universal, and other understandings of trade as grounded in ideas of community and the ‘common good’ were forcefully espoused, particularly in Catholic Iberia. Cf. Pedro Cardim, ‘Religião e ordem social: em torno dos fundamentos católicos do sistema político do Antigo Regime’ [Religion and social order: on the Catholic foundations of the political system of the Antigo Regime], *Revista de História das Ideias*, 22 (2001), 156.

¹⁴⁵ Knights, *Trust and Distrust*, 5–8; Lindemann, ‘Dirty Politics’, 582.

¹⁴⁶ Knights, *Trust and Distrust*, 298–301.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics* (3 vols) (Cambridge, 2002), i, ‘Regarding Method’, 1–8, 98–99.

As in Europe, commercialisation was raising important questions in China about the relationship between the state and trade. Unlike in Europe, however, these questions did not give rise to a new vocabulary, but were instead articulated within a pre-existing language that had been used already for centuries to discuss ideas about the individual and the state.¹⁴⁸ The primary overarching terms used were *gong* 公 and *si* 私, both complex concepts with a wide variety of connotations, often translated by approximation to European political thought as ‘public’ and ‘private’.¹⁴⁹ Here, in this quasi-judicial language, *gong* 公 was used primarily in a sense that combined an association with the activities of the imperial state with a sense of the collective good, while *si* 私 referred to private interests or motivations with an implication of selfishness and possibly secrecy or illicitness.¹⁵⁰ The fundamental difference between the two was not one of context, as a modern ideal of a clear public-private divide would condition us to expect, but motivation. We see this in both the Ming and Qing legal codes, in which *gong zui* (公罪, ‘public crime’) and *si zui* (私罪, ‘private crime’) were not distinguished through a connection with public duties on the hand or a private capacity on the other hand. The concern was not with context; in fact, both could refer to lawbreaking by an official in his official capacity. Instead, lawbreaking in office was considered public crime if it did not damage the state’s interest, and private crime if it implied personal or selfish interests triumphing over those of the state.¹⁵¹ This was reflected in the term *jian* 奸, variously translated as ‘wrongdoer’ or ‘traitor’, which described behaviour considered selfish and damaging to the state-sanctioned order.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁸ See below for the development of individual terms.

¹⁴⁹ Yueqing Wang, Qinggang Bao, and Guoxing Guan, *History of Chinese Philosophy Through its Key Terms*, tr. Shuchen Xiang (Singapore, 2020), 325.

¹⁵⁰ Anthony J. Barbieri-Low, ‘Intransigent and Corrupt Officials in Early Imperial China’, in N. Harry Rothschild and Leslie V. Wallace, eds., *Behaving Badly in Early and Medieval China* (Honolulu, 2007), 76; Erica Brindley, ‘The Polarization of the Concepts “Si” (Private Interest) and “Gong” (Public Interest) in Early Chinese Thought’, *Asia major*, 26/2, (2013), 1–31; Rankin, ‘Chinese Public Sphere’, 39–40; William T. Rowe, ‘The Public Sphere in Modern China’, *Modern China*, 16/3 (1990), 316–317; Frederic Wakeman, Jr., ‘Boundaries of the Public Sphere in Ming and Qing China’, *Daedalus*, 127/3 (1998), 167.

¹⁵¹ Nancy Park, ‘Officials and Chinese Justice: Public and Private Wrongdoing in Qing Law’, *T’oung Pao*, 106/5–6 (2020), 661–713.

¹⁵² Daniel McMahon, *China's Borderlands under the Qing, 1644–1912: Perspectives and Approaches in the Investigation of Imperial Boundary Regions* (Abingdon, 2021), 132, 136–137.

The situational nature of the judgement implied by *gong* 公 and *si* 私, in which the ethical value of a particular action depended on its relationship to the state's goals, has already been seen in the transformation of the *xiejia* 歇家, the use of private houses as commercial lodgings, from an illegal practice linked to smuggling into a legitimate way of dealing with foreign merchants, partially co-opted by the state to help extend its capacity to manage trade following the lifting of the maritime prohibition.¹⁵³ Contemporaries were aware of this fluidity: the official Xie Jie 謝傑 wrote against the backdrop of the mid-sixteenth-century debate over maritime trade that 'pirates and merchants are all people: when trade is permitted, then pirates turn into merchants, and when trade is prohibited, then merchants turn into pirates' (寇與商同是人, 市通則倭轉為商, 市禁則商轉為寇).¹⁵⁴ When Zhang and Ge criticised 'private trade' (*sishi* 私市) and 'using the public to benefit the private' (*jia gong ji si* 假公濟私), and called for 'prohibiting and putting an end to intermediaries dealing in private goods' (*jin jue jieji sihuo* 禁絕接濟私貨), this was therefore not a criticism of officials such as Chen and Neretti engaging in trade in general, but of them engaging in a specific trade with the English that, in their view, threatened the state's concern for frontier security.¹⁵⁵ It was not just that they were trading, but 'trading with cliques of wrongdoers' (*yu jiandang wei mao yi* 與奸黨圖為貿易)—although this was immediately followed by the surprising admission that Chen's 'desire to defend against wrongdoers and exterminate foreigners is no different [from us]' (*fang jian jiao yi zhi xin wu bu tong* 防奸剿夷之心無不同), suggesting that the problem was his misjudgement of this particular situation.¹⁵⁶ Chen's misjudgement, however, meant that he too found himself classed as a 'wrongdoer' (*jian* 奸), with its connotation of selfishly acting against the state, and Chen Qian was impeached for 'betraying the state's favour' in 'protecting a wrongdoer' (*bijian* 庇奸), referring to Neretti.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ Hu, '歇家牙行', 32–3.

¹⁵⁴ Xie Jie 謝傑, *Qian tai wo zuan* 虔臺倭纂 [Qiantai complication on piracy] (1595), j. 1, 7^{r-v}. See Hu, 'Xiejia yahan 歇家牙行', 32 for a discussion in this context.

¹⁵⁵ 'Bingbu ti 兵部題', AS, LYYS, NGDK, no. 034914. The question of security will be developed below.

¹⁵⁶ 'Bingbu ti 兵部題', AS, LYYS, NGDK, no. 034914.

¹⁵⁷ Zhang, '參鎮臣庇奸', 2.

Of course, this does imply the existence of a distinction between those who hold official posts and those who do not, even if holding an official post did not preclude other activities and this did not constitute the dividing line between *gong* and *si*. In fact, the crimes Neretti was accused of were explicitly situating him within the state. What this meant, however, was complex. Throughout this chapter, Neretti and Chen have been referred to as holding posts within the Chinese state, but the terminology is problematic. As far as the English and Portuguese were concerned, they were both officials, or 'mandarins', although there was a distinction between Neretti, described as a 'petty mandarin', and Chen, a 'great mandarin'.¹⁵⁸ In Chinese, however, there was no single overarching term for those holding official posts. Instead, the state had long distinguished two levels of state appointments: *guan* 官, the ranking officials appointed by the central state to what Charles Hucker has described as 'executive' positions; and *li* 吏, variously translated as 'minor officials', 'staff', 'unranked subofficials', 'non-official specialists', and 'functionaries'.¹⁵⁹ These latter were not part of the official Nine Ranks and were locally-appointed under the control of more senior ranking officials.¹⁶⁰ Despite the separation between these two career paths ('*guan-li fentu*', 官吏分途), however, both were clearly distinguished as forming a bureaucracy apart from the people without any official post ('*min*', 民); and although traditional historiography largely overlooks these functionaries, their permanence in the face of a constant rotation of senior officials, their local knowledge, and their role as most people's most immediate contact with the state meant they in fact held significant power despite their relatively lower position in the hierarchy.¹⁶¹ If these two terms were conflated in their English and Portuguese translations, the reverse was true in translation from Portuguese to Chinese: the ordinary official linguists named by the Senate of

¹⁵⁸ 'Itinerarium Mundii', fo. 139^r.

¹⁵⁹ Hucker, *Dictionary*, 5; Zhou Xueguang 周雪光, 'Cong "guan-li fentu" dao "cengji fenliu": diguo luoji xia de Zhongguo guanliao renshi zhidu 從“官吏分途”到“層級分流”：帝國邏輯下的中國官僚人事制度' [Between "Officials" and "Local Staff": The Logic of Empire and Personnel Management in the Chinese Bureaucracy], *Shehui* 社會 [Chinese Journal of Sociology], 36/1, 1.

¹⁶⁰ Hucker, *Dictionary*, 5; 'Itinerarium Mundii', fo. 139^r.

¹⁶¹ Bradley W. Reed, *Talons and Teeth: County Clerks and Runners in the Qing Dynasty* (Stanford, 2000), 9; Miao Quanji 繆全吉, *Mingdai Xuli* 明代胥吏 [Minor officials of the Ming] (Taipei, 1969), 1; Zhang Yan 張研, *Qingdai xianji zhengquan kongzhi xiangcun de juti kaocha: yi Tongzhi nianjian Ningzhi xian Du Fengzhi riji wei zhongxin* 清代縣級政權控制鄉村的具體考察：以同治年間廣寧知縣杜鳳治日記為中心 [A specific examination of the control of villages by county-level authorities in the Qing dynasty - centering on Du Fengzhi's diary] (Zhengzhou, 2011), 83–84.

Macau were referred to as *tongshi* (通事), but the most senior principal linguist of the city was translated as *tongguan* (通官), suggesting that there was an awareness that ‘mandarin’ in fact referred to two categories in Chinese thought.¹⁶² Alongside these were another category of privately-appointed staff, or *muyou* (幕友); these were recruited by local officials on their own initiative to help with specialist tasks within both civil and military administration, and were paid out of their employer’s own pocket rather than from public funds.¹⁶³

Fitting Neretti into these categories is difficult. He is referred to once as a functionary (*li* 吏), but lived in Chen Qian’s household like a *muyou* 幕友; and it is curious that the edict giving the English permission to trade named him as an assistant vice-prefect of Canton, an official (*guan* 官) of the sixth rank usually appointed to carry out a narrowly defined functional assignment.¹⁶⁴ In the image taken from Mundy’s diary above, the figure depicted, which admittedly is a typified ‘mandarin or officer’, albeit one that resembled Neretti, is wearing the *wushamao* (烏紗帽), the headdress reserved for ranking officials, rather than the *lijin* (吏巾) worn by functionaries, but his robe is that of a functionary, without the *buzi* (补子) or ‘mandarin square’ worn by ranking officials.¹⁶⁵ The confusion, and the broader difficulty of situating the linguists, seems to suggest that the divide between these categories was not as clear on the ground as in central government documents, which had to fit Neretti into a single existing category for disciplinary purposes. This reflects the fact that the category of linguist (‘*tongshi*’ 通事) was in fact a very broad one. It formed part of the varied and flexible range of methods used by the late imperial state in managing the frontier and relations with non-Han peoples, and the responsibilities of the linguists could range from tribute trade interpreters to powerful local representatives of the imperial state within the system of indigenous chieftaincies (‘*tusi*’ 土司).¹⁶⁶ From the state’s perspective, their function was always to

¹⁶² Cf Li, “‘Baobao shimo shu’ tongguan kao 《報效始末疏》通官考’, 20–31.

¹⁶³ Ma Xiaogang 馬曉剛, *Mishuxue shiye xia de Qingdai muyou zhi* 秘書學視野下的清代幕友制 [The Qing *muyou* system from the perspective of secretary studies] (Yinchuan, 2012), 49, 59.

¹⁶⁴ Hucker, *Dictionary*, 555; ‘Itinerarium Mundii’, fo. 139^r.

¹⁶⁵ See *Da Ming Huidian* 大明會典 [Collected Statutes of the Great Ming], j. 6.

¹⁶⁶ Peng Furong 彭福榮, ‘Huayu ji quanli: Tongshi he neng canyu Zhongguo tusi zhengzhi 話語即權力：通事何能參與中國土司政治’ [Speech is power: Why interpreters could take part in ‘*tusi*’ politics], *Qinghai Minzu Yanjiu* 青海民族研究, 4 (2021); John R. Shepherd, *Statecraft and Political Economy on the Taiwan Frontier, 1600–1800* (Stanford, 1993), 395.

be part of the state's programme of frontier management, aimed at both 'taming' threatening, unknown landscapes and people by bringing them under control, but also, more importantly, 'transforming' them, bringing non-Han peoples into Han cultural, social, and political norms.¹⁶⁷ These were tasks that linguists, with their linguistic and cultural knowledge, were eminently well-placed to perform, but the range of circumstances that they faced meant that their exact role and status was heavily contingent on local circumstances and needs, as well as their own background and skills. Despite this ambiguity, however, the important point for the purposes of the present discussion is to note that Neretti most certainly was part of the state, and this was in fact affirmed and not contested by Zhang Jingxin and Ge Zhengqi.

At the heart of the *gong-si* 公私 distinction in the debate over trade with the English was the question of *li* (利), a term meaning profit or benefit that had long been subject to debate in Chinese thought.¹⁶⁸ In the mid-to-late Ming in particular, there were two important new impetuses for thinking afresh about the pursuit of *li* in relation to the state and officeholding. The first of these was commercialisation and the early modern growth of long-distance trade.¹⁶⁹ Although the rise of a commercial economy has been seen in terms of the moral anxieties and social strains that it generated, it also gave rise to a new recognition that individuals motivated by *li* 利 could in fact be useful to the state's goal of economic and social stability, and officials and intellectuals alike began to criticise the old moral superiority imputed to an anti-commerce ethic of frugality.¹⁷⁰ This could be seen particularly clearly in the debate over the lifting of the maritime prohibition some decades before the Weddell Expedition, when many officials in Guangdong and elsewhere came to argue

¹⁶⁷ Anne Gerritsen, *Ji'an Literati and the Local in Song-Yuan-Ming China* (Leiden, 2007), 18; John E. Herman, 'Empire in the Southwest: Early Qing Reforms to the Native Chieftain System', *Journal of Asian Studies*, 56/1 (1997), 49, 69;

¹⁶⁸ Wang et al., *Chinese Philosophy*, 330; Yuri Pines, *Foundations of Confucian Thought: Intellectual Life in the Chunqiu Period, 722–453 BCE* (Honolulu, 2002), 199.

¹⁶⁹ Charles H. Parker, *Global Interactions in the Early Modern Age* (Cambridge, 2010), 68–109; Richard von Glahn, *The Economic History of China: From Antiquity to the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2016), 296–310.

¹⁷⁰ Timothy Brook, *The Confusions of Pleasure: Commerce and Culture in Ming China* (Berkeley, 1998); Wang et al., *Chinese Philosophy*, 336–337; Margherita Zanasi, *Economic Thought in Modern China: Market and Consumption, c. 1500–1937* (Cambridge, 2020), 48–50, 57–61, 72.

that allowing trade would both benefit the state's finances and resolve its security problems.¹⁷¹ The idea that pursuing profit was not necessarily selfish but could be beneficial was at the heart of Chen Qian's justification for sending Neretti to negotiate with the English: he argued that the English were too strong to defeat militarily, but since their goal was to make money, they could be easily pacified by letting them trade; in this way, not only could Canton avoid the harm caused by conflict, it would also receive restitution for its losses and could even gain extra profit by taxing the trade.¹⁷²

But at the same time as economic developments were pushing a new way of thinking about *li* in a more positive light, a second set of circumstances was fuelling a counterreaction that was wary of the potential dangers of the pursuit of *li* at the expense of security or stability. The challenges facing the Ming in its final years were considerable, and the southern coast was no exception, with increasingly weak maritime defence capabilities and constant financial difficulties.¹⁷³ Against this backdrop of a weakening state and the Ming-Qing transition, some officials, including Zhang Jingxin, attributed decline to the excessive pursuit of profit, linking this to both a concern for the moral character of officials and increasing anxieties about loyalty.¹⁷⁴ Zhang and Ge expressed this view throughout their memorials on the Weddell Expedition, and Zhang later wrote a more detailed explanation of this position, entitled *The Foreigners of Macau: Three Theses* (Aoyi: Fan san tiao 澳夷：凡三條).¹⁷⁵ He felt that Guangdong was beset with problems and lacked the manpower to deal with them; of these problems, the greatest was the activity of foreigners, whom he argued had replaced pirates as the most pressing worry on the coast.¹⁷⁶ But, he argued, the seemingly external problem of foreigners on the coastal seas in fact had to be resolved first from within as a domestic problem

¹⁷¹ Ivy Maria Lim, 'From Haijin to Kaihai: The Jiajing Court's Search for a Modus Operandi along the South-eastern Coast (1522–1567)', *Journal of the British Association for Chinese Studies*, 2 (2013), 1–26.

¹⁷² 'Bingbu ti 兵部題', AS, LYYS, NGDK, no. 034914.

¹⁷³ Andrade and Hang, 'East Asian Maritime Realm'; Kenneth Swope, *The Military Collapse of China's Ming Dynasty, 1618–44* (Abingdon, 2014).

¹⁷⁴ Zanasi, *Economic Thought*, 62–77. This line of thinking coalesced in the work of philosophers such as Wang Fuzhi after the fall of the Ming; Zhang's later writings included sentences lifted verbatim from these texts, although he never directly named them as influences on his thought.

¹⁷⁵ 'Bingbu ti 兵部題', AS, LYYS, NGDK, no. 034914; Zhang, '參鎮臣庇奸', 2–4; Zhang Jingxin 張鏡心, '澳夷：凡三條' [The Foreigners of Macau: Three Theses], in *Yunyintang Wenji 雲隱堂文集* [Collected Writings of the Cloud-Shadow Hall], comp. Zhang Jin 張潛 (Cizhou, 1672), j. 23, 9–12.

¹⁷⁶ Zhang, '粵中多事需人', 22.

(*xian nei er hou wai* 先內而後外), tackling the improper pursuit of *li* 利 among wrongdoing coastal officials and traders. ‘Wrongdoers (*jian* 奸)’, he wrote, ‘see [foreigners] as a cave of gold... they salivate and think of a hundred schemes to attract them here’.¹⁷⁷ This was not a blanket opposition to all forms of *li* 利: he argued that the establishment of the Maritime Trade Supervisorate had been an act of magnanimity, and that the founding of Macau and the subsequent rapid growth in trade ‘could be said to be most benevolent of our dynasty and of great profit/benefit to Guangdong and Guangxi’ (*ke wei tianchao zhi zhiren er Linghai zhi dali yi* 可謂天朝之至仁而嶺海之大利矣). But ‘righteousness suffers with an excess of benevolence, and the law is harmed with an extreme pursuit of profit’ (*ren zhi suo yu, yi yuan zhi er kui; li zhi suo ji, fa yin zhi er bi* 仁之所餘, 義緣之而虧; 利之所極, 法因之而敝). Instead of directly clamping down on illicit foreign traders, which would simply make them resentful and unwilling to abide by agreements, and would also have no effect on Chinese middlemen who could go out beyond the coast to trade with them, Zhang proposed targeting *li* 利, first among senior officials and then filtering downwards to the people: ‘we must control profit and not control foreigners’ (*bu zhi yi er zhi li* 不制夷而制利).¹⁷⁸ Ultimately, this implied returning to the established system of Europeans all trading through Macau under the classic policy of ‘using foreigners to control foreigners’ (*yi yi zhi yi* 以夷制夷), relying on a strong Portuguese presence to subdue Dutch and English interlopers, and preventing officials from trying to create new agreements contrary to this system.¹⁷⁹

This was a minority view among officials involved with the Canton trade, and Zhang wrote self-consciously as a counterreaction to the prevailing spirit of his times, criticising everyone from senior officials in the capital to the poorest in the Pearl River Delta for their pursuit of *li* 利 at the expense of security.¹⁸⁰ Throughout his writings, he lamented the inability of Canton officialdom to maintain vigilance over the latent danger of foreigners in the Pearl River Delta, claiming that familiarity with foreigners had lulled them into a false sense of security.¹⁸¹ But it is important to

¹⁷⁷ Zhang, ‘紅毛’, 2.

¹⁷⁸ Zhang, ‘澳夷’, 10.

¹⁷⁹ ‘Bingbu ti 兵部題’, AS, LYYS, NGDK, no. 034914.

¹⁸⁰ Zanasi, *Economic Thought*, 50.

¹⁸¹ Zhang, ‘澳夷’, 11.

note that although Zhang and Ge were suspicious of *li* 利 for its capacity to induce officials to behave in a way that imperilled the state, while Chen saw it as essentially a useful way of harnessing personal interests in the service of the state—while no doubt making a personal profit alongside—, at no point in any of their writings did they question the idea of trade being managed by officials and functionaries interested in making a private profit. Zhang wanted to pacify the coast by ‘controlling profit and controlling trade’ (*zhi li zhi shi* 制利制市) inside limits established within the trading system that had arisen in the 1570s and 1580s in the Pearl River Delta, not to completely stamp out the pursuit of *li* 利 by officials altogether.¹⁸² In discussing Neretti’s role, he never questioned Neretti’s ability to act both as a ‘linguist commissioned by the Regional Commander and the Surveillance Vice-Commissioner’ and as a merchant and broker; nor, despite the frequent discussion of ‘private’ (*si* 私) wrongdoing, did he express any reservations about the general principle of Neretti collecting taxes, taking commission, or indeed storing vast quantities of goods and money in his own house, all actions that a modern reader would be likely to see as a conflict of interest.

This reflected the fact that, in the words of Mark McNicholas, ‘the face of [Chinese] officialdom did not always look very official’ as a result of the late imperial state’s ‘minimalist approach’ to administration.¹⁸³ Such a delegation of state capacity to semi-official agents was a common part of early modern state-building processes, representing not a weakening of the state but an expansion of its reach into new areas.¹⁸⁴ It was also a common practice in trade, whether in the farming of the customs in England, whereby the collection of customs duties was contracted out to private agents, or in the co-option of the practice of *xiejia* 歇家 discussed above.¹⁸⁵ David Robinson has argued in the context of military garrisons that the Ming state often found that mobilising resources required

¹⁸² Nakajima Gakusho, ‘The Structure and Transformation of the Ming Tribute Trade System’, in Manuel Perez Garcia and Lucio De Sousa, eds., *Global History and New Polycentric Approaches: Europe, Asia and the Americas in a World Network System* (Singapore, 2018), 151–5.

¹⁸³ Mark McNicholas, *Forgery and Impersonation in Imperial China: Popular Deceptions and the High Qing State* (Seattle, 2016), 169.

¹⁸⁴ Choon Hwee Koh, ‘The Ottoman Postmaster: Contractors, Communication and Early Modern State Formation’, *Past & Present*, 251/1 (2021).

¹⁸⁵ Hu, ‘歇家牙行’; Stephen Gadd, ‘Illegal Quays: Elizabethan customs reforms and suppression of the coastal trade of Christchurch, Hampshire’, *The Economic History Review*, 71/2 (2018), 727–746.

an appeal to personal interests; examining the role of Neretti similarly shows us the extent to which the Canton trade hinged on semi-official agents such as linguists, who combined both state and commercial roles and took advantage of both for their own gain.¹⁸⁶ What we see is not a clear separation between modern ideals of public and private contexts or a clear state-society divide, but instead what Youngmin Kim has described as an ‘organic vision’ in which the state’s power is as often enabling as coercive, with state effectiveness relying on its embeddedness in society and its ability to co-opt external actors as ‘political agents of the imperial vision’.¹⁸⁷ As we have seen in the previous chapter, the primary push of the late Ming state on the south coast was in this direction, from the co-option of commercial practices that had arisen illicitly under the maritime prohibition to the absorption of the Zheng clan into the maritime defence system. This merged with a bottom-up impulse from those outside the state to seek recognition from and even incorporation into the state for their own benefit.¹⁸⁸

For a linguist such as Neretti, this combination of roles entailed a delicate balancing act enabled by an understanding of the ethical value of the pursuit of *li* 利 in relation to *gong* 公 and *si* 私 that tolerated private interest so long as it did not triumph over the state’s aims; in this way, the Ming state in the Pearl River Delta was able to achieve its aims through the agency of individuals motivated by their own financial interest and with a direct personal stake in the matter at hand, rather than any modern idealised sense of trust-based public office.¹⁸⁹ This balancing act required the linguist to have some level of skill in reading the political situation and using patronage to stay on the right side of the ever-shifting boundary between good and bad conduct, which depended not on fixed categories of behaviour, but on the changing priorities of the state. In good times, this could be lucrative, and we have seen how Neretti initially was able to use his position in Chen’s household to negotiate an agreement with the English that both met Chen’s political goals and promised great profits for all involved. But when the political tides turned or the state’s aims shifted in a way that the linguist had not anticipated, he could be in great danger. When Zhang and

¹⁸⁶ David Robinson, ‘Why military institutions matter for Ming history’, *Journal of Chinese History*, 1 (2017), 326.

¹⁸⁷ Youngmin Kim, *A History of Chinese Political Thought* (Cambridge, 2018), 184–189.

¹⁸⁸ Cf. Michael Szonyi, *The Art of Being Governed: Everyday Politics in Late Imperial China* (Princeton, 2017).

¹⁸⁹ Knights, *Trust and Distrust*, 416–7.

Ge turned out not to be as easily won over as Chen had expected, Neretti's clumsy attempt to save himself by submitting a falsified 'secret report' failed, and he found himself accused of damaging security and stability in the Pearl River Delta by selfishly pursuing profit, and suffered severe personal consequences.

Conclusion

The wide range of official and commercial activities in which Neretti was engaged have been troublesome for historians who have anachronistically interpreted the quasi-judicial resolution of a political conflict over trade and frontier security in the Pearl River Delta through modern ideas about translation, corruption, and office. This chapter has argued for an approach that engages critically with how archival practices combined with these modern ideas have shaped our understanding of the linguists. Making Paulo Neretti visible in new ways has brought into view underexplored contours of the Ming state in the Pearl River Delta: Neretti was simultaneously an official, a commercial broker, and a private trader, but in an early modern world where the boundary between officialdom and commerce was always blurred, there was no inherent contradiction in this. In fact, the Canton trade hinged on the ability of the state to absorb and co-opt innovative ways of handling trade that arose outside of the state. Rather than evidence of 'Old Corruption' or a pre-modern, irrational form of administration, this flexibility was essential to the trade's success; the balancing of state, commercial, and personal interests in a single linguist, provided that the latter two did not triumph over the former, is an illustration of how state and commerce came together to find new ways of managing the challenges of early modern long-distance trade. But the entanglement between state and conflict that this set up required careful management to ensure that the state achieved its goals. The next chapter explores how this played out in the day-to-day management of commercial disputes.

Chapter Three

Violence and commerce in the Pearl River Delta: the *Defence*, 1689

Macau in autumn 1689 was a hive of activity as the southwest monsoon abated and the commercial season got underway. The city was much reduced from its heyday, when the galleons from Nagasaki were said to bring profits of up to three hundred per cent, but after decades of hardship during the Ming-Qing transition, trade with India and Southeast Asia was on the rise.¹ After years of tight control of the coasts, the new Qing dynasty had once again opened the Pearl River Delta to foreign merchants in 1684, going even further than the Ming in allowing any European nation to trade.² Fifty years after the Weddell Expedition, the right to trade no longer had to be fought for, and two English ships, private traders newly arrived from Madras, lay at anchor in the Outer Harbour.³ Alongside them were two Portuguese ships being laden with a cargo for Batavia belonging to two of the richest merchants of Canton, Gea and Linqua, with the promise of a welcome profit for the heavily-indebted city authorities from the duties and fees they would levy.⁴ But if dramatic conflicts over the right to trade as experienced by Weddell and Paulo Neretti no longer arose, the archives of the trade are still full of disputes. The beginning of the season was always a period of strategizing and jostling for position, as merchants, officials, and captains sized each other up and began the process of negotiation and haggling that would last until the northeast monsoon arrived to carry the foreign traders home, and disagreements arose almost immediately. Would the Senate grant Gea and Linqua a reduction in import tariffs?⁵ Would the magistrate of Xiangshan County side with the Chinese merchant Miki, who alleged José Pinheiro had not paid him what he was owed, and

¹ Giovanni Francesco Gemelli Careri, *Giro del Mondo del Dottor D. Gio: Francesco Gemelli Careri* [Dr Giovanni Francesco Gemelli Careri's World Tour], 4 vols (2nd edn, Naples, 1708), iv, 'Parte Quarta: Contente le cose piu ragguardevoli vedute nella Cina' [Part Four: Containing the Most Remarkable Things Seen in China], 8; Jorge Manuel Flores, 'Macau: Os Eventos Políticos. 1' [Macau: The Political Events], in António Henrique R. de Oliveira Marques, ed., *História dos Portugueses no extremo oriente* [History of the Portuguese in the Far East], 5 vols (1998–2003, Lisbon), ii, 107–118.

² See Gang, *Qing Opening* for the story of this change.

³ 'Journal of Thomas Yale', BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 256^v; BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/XC 'Defence's Journall, Cap^t. W^m Heath, Command^r to ffort S^t George China Bencolen begin 26th ffbruary 1688 ended 16th Septemb^r 1691', 10 September 1689 [no folio numbers].

⁴ *Arquivos de Macau*, iii-1-1, 23–4.

⁵ *Arquivos de Macau*, iii-1-1, 23–4.

wanted Pinheiro and his linguist arrested?⁶ Which of the English ships would be dispatched first, with the best prices and the choicest goods?⁷

An unexpected twist came on 7th September, when the last winds of the monsoon brought an unseasonably late arrival.⁸ The *Defence*, commanded by William Heath, was the largest ship yet sent to the Pearl River Delta by the English East India Company, with a tonnage of more than double the other two English ships combined.⁹ Within days of the *Defence*'s arrival, a linguist in Canton received a letter by express post from Macau, informing him that Thomas Yale, a familiar face from the previous year's trading season, had returned as the chief factor of a group of five merchants of the East India Company.¹⁰ He wanted help in getting permission for the *Defence* to bypass Macau and come straight up to Canton, where he hoped to contract for sugar and tutenag, a zinc alloy with the appearance of silver.¹¹ Representing merchants with such a large cargo was an opportunity not to be missed, particularly if they were to trade in Canton, away from the competition of the other two English ships. The linguist immediately passed the ship's details on to the Maritime Customs House and set off downriver to meet the English merchants.¹²

Yale's linguist has no name preserved in the historical record, but he played a crucial role in the events to follow. As the trading season unfolded, he and other linguists would be important negotiators and brokers, but would also suffer official reprimands, threats, beatings, public humiliation, and arrest. The previous chapter has already examined how the quasi-judicial language used in the Chinese sources to describe the arrest and beating of Paolo Neretti was not a straightforward condemnation of corruption, but rather part of a broader debate over changing views of profit and self-interest in the service of the state. But while this helps us to recognise how the role of the linguists was understood in a world where the division between state and commerce, public and private, official and merchant was never clear-cut, it still does not answer the question

⁶ *Arquivos de Macau*, iii-1-1, 27-8.

⁷ BL/IOR/G/12, fos. 258^{r-v}.

⁸ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 257^v.

⁹ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 257^r.

¹⁰ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 257^v; *Records of Fort St. George: Diary and Consultation Book of 1689* (Madras, 1916), 45; *Records of Fort St. George: Letters from Fort St. George for 1689* (Madras, 1916), iii, 36.

¹¹ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 257^v.

¹² BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 257^v.

of why the state's use of violence against its own linguists was so common during disputes in the Canton trade. This chapter reconstructs the story of the *Defence* and its unnamed linguist through events of the 1689–90 trading season, examining how the threatened and actual use of violence against the linguists was made meaningful and purposeful within a process of dispute and reconciliation, keeping the linguists within the boundaries of acceptable conduct discussed in the previous chapter and thereby restricting the foreign merchants' freedom to challenge these boundaries. The next section discusses this approach to the relationship between violence and commerce in more detail.

Violence and commerce

The frequency with which violence against the linguists appears in the record has often been attributed to a view of the Canton trade as irrational and pre-modern, dominated by often arbitrary and capricious violence on the part of officials who found the linguists' closeness to foreigners and ability to speak foreign languages dangerous and unsettling. But this understanding is rooted in a view that violence and commerce were inherently incompatible. This is based on the argument that this period saw the beginning of a long-term decline in violence, problematised as an irrational behaviour solved on the one hand by the advance of Enlightenment rationality and on the other by the rise of a new emphasis on 'civility', 'politeness', or 'manners'.¹³ According to this narrative, commerce—the 'parent of politeness'—required new codes of behaviour and new forms of sociability that tamed the passions and violence of an earlier age, giving rise eventually to what has been characterised as the 'polite eighteenth century'.¹⁴

However, this view is not merely the product of modern scholarship but has its origins in the eighteenth century itself and a European concern to distinguish a new refined commercial society

¹³ Deborah Madden, 'Education and Manners', in Richard Whatmore and Brian Young, eds., *A Companion to Intellectual History* (Hoboken, 2016), 264–5; J. G. A. Pocock, 'Cambridge paradigms and the Scotch philosophers: a study of the relations between the civic humanist and the civil jurisprudential interpretation of eighteenth-century social thought', in Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff, eds., *Wealth & Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1983), 241

¹⁴ Paul Langford, 'The Uses of Eighteenth-Century Politeness', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 12 (2002), 312.

from the supposed barbarism of the past.¹⁵ While this entailed a belief that the violent and ruthless politics of the past could be traced to a lack of commerce and politeness, this was a politically-partisan and ahistorical account that ignored the direct continuities with earlier notions of chivalry and civility.¹⁶ In fact, a growing body of work has begun to criticise the view of a significant break between an ‘outmoded honour culture’ and a ‘modern commercial culture’ with radically different standards of behaviour.¹⁷ Equally, this understanding of violence has been subject to significant criticism by scholars who note that violence is often driven by rational motives and that the causal relationship between intellectual changes in the long eighteenth century and the decline in violence is largely unproven.¹⁸ Instead, scholars have sought to understand violence on its own terms, with a large body of work since the 1970s exploring the social and cultural meanings of popular violence, focussing particularly on participants’ understanding of its significance and legitimacy.¹⁹ Finally, in addition to these developments in the Anglophone historical and scholarly reception of the place of violence in commerce, another influential but heavily contested argument has suggested that China was unusually and lastingly peaceful in its foreign relations.²⁰ The examples in this and other chapters suggest that this was not entirely true, and violence was used purposefully and frequently by Ming and Qing officials in the management of the frontier.

Violence was therefore not opposed historically to the development of a commercial culture, nor was it irrational or purposeless, nor was its deployment alien to Chinese political thought. This chapter approaches violence instead as a normal and generally accepted part of commercial life, asking how we can understand its meaning when used so frequently against linguists within the context of the management of the Pearl River Delta. In this way, this chapter develops a more

¹⁵ J. G. A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1985), 114–115, 210.

¹⁶ Markku Peltonen, *The Duel in Early Modern England: Civility, Politeness, and Honour* (Cambridge, 2003), 305; Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History*, 131, 236.

¹⁷ Alexandra Shepherd, ‘Review: Violence and Civility in Early Modern Europe’, *The Historical Journal*, 49/2 (2006), 593–603.

¹⁸ Philip Dwyer, ‘Whitewashing History: Pinker’s (Mis)Representation of the Enlightenment and Violence’, *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques*, 44/1 (2018), 54–65.

¹⁹ Philip Dwyer, ‘Violence and its histories: Meanings, methods, problems’, *History and Theory*, 56/4 (2017), 7–22; Natalie Zemon Davis, ‘The Rites of Violence: Religious Riot in Sixteenth-Century France’, *Past & Present*, 59 (1973), 54; Natalie Zemon Davis, ‘Writing “The Rites of Violence” and Afterward’, *Past & Present*, 214/Supplement 7 (2012), 11.

²⁰ David C. Kang, *China Rising: Peace, Power and Order in East Asia* (New York, 2007).

historical understanding of the purpose and meaning of violence and the trading environment of the Pearl River Delta. The idea of officials having their own linguists beaten in disputes with foreign merchants is inimical to present-day ideas of both how a state should function and how translators and interpreters should function as a neutral and disinterested ‘honest spokesperson’ between parties that are at odds with each other.²¹ But examining why and how this violence was used and what it meant to participants gives a rather different picture.

Rather than judging the Canton trade by the ethical standards of an Enlightenment notion of commercial culture, we can see a more mixed picture in which violence and civility interact in an environment that was prone to disputes over commercial advantage, rather than over any more fundamental incommensurability, but that managed largely to contain these disputes. In fact, just as important was the process of subsequent reconciliation, which occupies a much larger place in the archive sources, and most of the time only the threat rather than the act of violence was enough to force both parties to begin seeking a resolution. As we have seen in the previous chapter, many of the institutions of the Canton trade have a more complicated genealogy at least partially outside of the state than is often appreciated, and officials were confronted with the problem of how to discipline these sometimes-unpredictable elements. The position of the linguists, caught between state and commerce, identified both as the Hoppo’s men and as representatives of foreign commercial interests, made them an obvious target. Foreign merchants were both dependent enough on them and had enough of a personal relationship with them that they took the threat of their linguists being beaten seriously. At the same time, the linguists were enough a part of the state that beating them would not cause the same escalation as beating an English merchant or sailor and violence against them could be legitimated as a quasi-judicial punishment, although this is not the language used in the English sources.

The practice of making linguists responsible for the foreigners that they represented and punishing them when things went wrong proved to be a surprisingly effective system, but this was also its downfall. In 1689, we already find the beginnings of what will be seen more clearly in the following

²¹ Brian Harris, ‘Norms in Interpretation’, *Target*, 2 (1990), 118.

chapter: as the boundaries of what the linguists could do were increasingly effectively enforced, foreign merchants found themselves turning more and more frequently to other bilingual contacts to do what the official linguists would not. This would have wide-reaching consequences for the role of the linguists into the eighteenth century.

This chapter considers these beatings within a general category of violence, rather than the narrow category of judicial punishment, because, although these always had a quasi-judicial nature, the English merchants in particular were not thinking purely within a framework of law and punishment, and, as we shall see, more commonly thought of these events as part of commercial negotiation. Nor does the secondary literature always take this stance, and thinking more broadly allows us to examine it in connection with the wider question of commercial culture outlined above. It also gives us a new perspective on the so-called ‘age of partnership’ in early modern maritime Asia.²² Some historians have drawn on this influential paradigm to characterise the seventeenth-century Pearl River Delta in terms of ‘harmonious coexistence’ and partnership, a cooperation-driven stage before the later conflicts of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.²³ However, newer work on early modern Asia has pointed to what has been called an ‘age of contained conflict’, in which the threat of the use of force was always present, even if those involved never thought that they were unjustified or engaged in gratuitous violence.²⁴ Seeing the Canton trade against this wider backdrop suggests, in this period, it was no anomaly, but fitted into a broader pattern of European trade in maritime Asia, in which violence was ever-present and not opposed to commerce, but was also understood as purposeful and, on the whole, capable of being contained but not eliminated.

²² Holden Furber, ‘Asia and the West as Partners before “Empire” and After’, *Journal of Asian Studies*, XXVIII/4 (1969); Blair B. Kling and M. N. Pearson, eds., *The Age of Partnership: Europeans in Asia before Dominion* (Honolulu, 1979); Anthony Reid, ‘An “Age of Commerce” in Southeast Asian History’, *Modern Asian Studies*, 24/1 (1990).

²³ Roderich Ptak, ‘Portugal and China: An Anatomy of Harmonious Coexistence (Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries)’, in Laura Jarnagin, ed., *Portuguese and Luso-Asian Legacies, 1511–2011*, 2 vols (Singapore, 2012), ii: ‘Culture and identity in the Luso-Asian world: tenacities and plasticities’, 225–242; Barreto, *Poder e Saber*.

²⁴ Zoltán Biedermann, *(Dis)connected Empires: Imperial Portugal, Sri Lankan Diplomacy, and the Making of a Habsburg Conquest in Asia* (Oxford, 2018), 22; Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce: Southern India 1500–1650* (Cambridge, 1990), 276, 281.

There is a difficulty with recovering the story of this voyage, and that is that it requires reading the sources against the grain. The English-language sources that survive are focussed not on the disputes involving the linguist, but on an internal conflict between Thomas Yale and Captain Heath. Of course, the East India Company was as prone to disputes internally as much as externally, and this was the case with the voyage of the *Defence*. Even more than Weddell, Captain Heath was a man of short temper and strong opinions, who lacked the diplomacy required in a system where authority was shared and negotiated between captains and factors who acted relatively autonomously, writing that ‘for my part, I should sometimes think my own people my worst enemies’.²⁵ Yale suspected him of preferring his fellow captains, even competitors, to his own merchants, and constantly questioned his loyalty to the commercial interests of the East India Company.²⁶ Yale, too, was mistrusted by many in the East India Company’s factory at Madras, including Heath.²⁷ His brother, Elihu Yale, is best known today for the debates over his contentious legacy as an extraordinarily wealthy benefactor of Yale University, but in his own lifetime he was better remembered for the accusations of corruption that dogged his career in the East India Company.²⁸ In 1689, he was President of Madras, and his choice of his brother as chief factor for the China voyage was widely seen as nepotism.²⁹ Relations between Thomas Yale and Heath were poor to begin with, and, as we shall see, broke down completely over the course of the voyage. By the time of their return to Madras, their dispute became a proxy for a wider conflict between Elihu Yale, siding with his brother, and the majority of the English merchants of Madras, siding with Heath against the president.³⁰ The sources that have survived are heavily coloured by this dispute. Many early entries in Thomas Yale’s journal seem to have been rewritten to create a narrative inculcating Heath from the very start, with an unlikely foreknowledge of events yet to come, and almost every entry longer than a few sentences ending with an explanation of how the events recorded would

²⁵ ‘James Sowdon and Council to Capt William Heath of Defence, Benkulen, 24 January 1691’, BL/IOR/E/3/48/2 fo. 236; Emily Erikson and Peter Bearman, ‘Malfeasance and the Foundations for Global Trade: The Structure of English Trade in the East Indies, 1601–1833’, *American Journal of Sociology*, 112/1 (2006), 202.

²⁶ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 260^v.

²⁷ *Records of Fort St. George: Diary and Consultation Book of 1690* (Madras, 1917), 84–85.

²⁸ Cf. Diana Scarisbrick and Benjamin Zucker, *Elihu Yale: Merchant, collector & patron* (London, 2014).

²⁹ *Records of Fort St. George: Diary and Consultation Book of 1690* (Madras, 1917), 84–85.

³⁰ *Records of Fort St George: Diary and Consultation Book of 1690* (Madras, 1917), 84–88.

build up to the eventual ruin of the voyage on Heath's account. But the conflict between Yale and Heath was a consequence of the East India Company's management of trade, rather than anything specific to the Canton trade, and is not the focus of this chapter.

Instead, what follows is based on a reading against the grain of the sources, reconstructing the narrative arc of the linguists' activity rather than the conflict between Yale and Heath. This narrative is divided into three stages, examining how violence was legitimated within certain boundaries; how it was made meaningful for participants by being set within a longer process of dispute and reconciliation; and the consequences of this for the foreign merchants' use of the linguists. The next section begins with the outbreak of a conflict between the three English ships after Captain Heath refused to bring the *Defence* to Canton, forcing Yale to remain in Macau and compete with the other English ships. This unexpectedly put the three ships' linguists in competition with each other over their respective precedence: who would be received first by the Hoppo and have a better chance of negotiating good terms that would earn the linguist a hefty commission? The Hoppo quickly suppressed a threat by one of the other English captains to beat the other captains' linguists and acted quickly to clamp down when a physical fight broke out between the linguists, underscoring the limits of legitimate violence in commercial disputes, of which he claimed a monopoly.

The opening moves: Establishing the limits of legitimate violence

That Yale's linguist had no difficulty in obtaining permission for the *Defence* to trade was a function of the changes wrought by the transition to Qing rule, now recognised as one of the most significant events for seventeenth-century maritime Asian trade.³¹ On the one hand, the Qing had inherited much of the Ming system, including the use of linguists with an ambiguous position as both state and commercial agents, now set in a new institutional context with the establishment of the Maritime Customs House, whose Superintendent (*Yuhaiguan Jiandu* 粵海關監督), known to

³¹ Pedro Cardim, 'A rutura luso-espanhola e os tratados de Vestefália. Mudança de uma ordem mundial?' [The rupture between Portuguese and Spain and the Treaties of Westphalia: A change of world order?], in Carlos Fiolhais, José Eduardo Franco, and José Pedro Paiva, eds. *História Global de Portugal* [Global History of Portugal] (Lisbon, 2020), 425–6.

Europeans as the Hoppo, was now the official to whom the linguists answered.³² On the other hand, however, the experience of the last few decades on the southern Chinese coast had led to a radical shift in official thinking about trade.³³ In the Ming, trade had been seen primarily as a solution to security problems, particularly piracy, seen as caused by excessive restrictions on commerce forcing men from economically depressed coastal regions into smuggling and raiding.³⁴ Security concerns, this time about the danger from the Zheng regime on Taiwan, also dominated Qing thinking initially, and this led the new dynasty to prohibit maritime trade for the first two decades of its rule.³⁵ However, by the 1680s, Qing officials had come to actively encourage trade for its economic benefits, not least in providing a continual stream of revenue for the government.³⁶ Despite strong opposition from Macau, the Qing had ended the city's monopoly of the European trade, allowing all European nations to trade freely in the Pearl River Delta except the Russians, who in any case did not belong to the same category in Qing thought.³⁷ This meant that permission to trade, the central cause of the conflict of 1637, was now granted as a matter of course, and Yale's linguist set off immediately from Canton on the assumption that permission would naturally follow. He met his English merchants five days after their arrival, in the county town of Dongguan (東莞), some thirty miles east of Canton.³⁸ They had arrived after a slow journey of several days over difficult terrain, relying on a linguist whom they had picked up in Macau to bring them this far and arrange their food and lodging.³⁹ This figure, who is described as having only limited language skills and whose role was entirely taken over by the linguist from Canton once they had reached Dongguan, was presumably not one of the official linguists, and seems likely to have been one of

³² Paul A. Van Dyke, 'The Canton Linguists in the 1730s: Managers of the Margins of Trade', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong Branch*, 57 (2017), 10.

³³ Zhao, *Qing Opening*, 41–56.

³⁴ Zhao, *Qing Opening*, 55.

³⁵ Zhao, *Qing Opening*, 72.

³⁶ Zhao, *Qing Opening*, 86.

³⁷ 'Representação do Senado da Câmara de Macau a [D. Pedro II], rei de Portugal, sobre as medidas prejudiciais ao comércio de Macau que são a liberdade de comércio na China que acolhe muitos estrangeiros concorrentes e a instituição de tribunais chineses para a cobrança de impostos sobre todo o comércio' [Representation of the Senate of Macau to [Pedro II], king of Portugal, regarding the measures detrimental to the commerce of Macau which are the liberty of commerce in China which welcomes many foreign competitors, and the establishment of Chinese tribunals for the collection of taxes on all the commerce], AHU, CU/062/0002/00005.

³⁸ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 257^v.

³⁹ BL/IOR/G/12, fos. 257^{r-v}.

the many people in Macau who made a living out of a variety of roles ancillary to the trade.⁴⁰ In Dongguan, having made the best entrance they could using rented carriages and sedan chairs, they had been welcomed by the county magistrate, Guo Wenbing (郭文炳).⁴¹ This mirrored the pattern of their welcome at every other town where they had stopped *en route*; they had always been welcomed by local officials and provided with food and lodgings, often after their temporary linguist had gone ahead to prepare the way, and in each place Yale was gratified by the courtesy with which they were received.⁴²

Yale and his Canton linguist seem to have been acquainted each other from the previous year, as Yale had immediately known whom to write to upon arrival in Macau, and their meeting in Dongguan was encouraging for both parties. At this early stage of the Qing management of the Pearl River Delta, the trade was not yet fixed in Canton; sometimes ships would come upriver, and other times they would receive goods brought overland to Macau. Yale's chief concern was to be able to trade directly in Canton, which he thought would give him a commercial advantage over the other English ships in Macau. As we have seen, his linguist was sure that this would be possible, the Maritime Customs already having been informed, and was keen for the *Defence* to come directly upriver to be dispatched as soon as possible.⁴³ Yale assured him that the ship was coming up after them, and the party set off immediately for the provincial capital.⁴⁴ When they arrived that evening, all seemed promising. The linguist brought a messenger from the Hoppo to welcome them and told them that a permit for the *Defence* to come to Canton would be drawn up. They confirmed the contents of this document in an audience the next day with the Hoppo (Yuehaiguan Jiandu 粵海關監督), a Manchu named Shu Shu (舒恕), who, Yale wrote, gave 'all appearances of favour and friendship imaginable'.⁴⁵ Although relatively routine meetings such as these occupy little space in the archive sources, facilitating such rituals of courtesy and civility was a key task for linguists, and

⁴⁰ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 257^r.

⁴¹ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 257^r; Chen Botao 陳伯陶, *Dongguan Xianzhi* 東莞縣志 [Gazetteer of Dongguan County] (Dongguan, 1927), j. 42, 2^r.

⁴² BL/IOR/G/12, fos. 257^{r-v}.

⁴³ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 257^v.

⁴⁴ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 257^v.

⁴⁵ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 257^v.

one that had been explicitly recognised in the training system developed for linguists in Macau several decades earlier.⁴⁶ Their work here was not merely linguistic, but also involved both the practical logistics and, most importantly, negotiating in advance the content of anything that was to be formally agreed or discussed.⁴⁷

On the same day, however, disaster struck. A merchant arrived from Macau with the news that the *Defence* was nowhere near Canton and was in fact anchored on the far side of Ilha da Montanha (*Hengqin Dao* 橫琴島), some ten miles from Macau, with its topmasts struck.⁴⁸ Here the archival record must be taken with caution. Striking topmasts was a technique used to stabilise a ship in bad weather, which the *Defence* was indeed experiencing, and Heath's journal records in detail how heavy rain and gales had forced him to take this step.⁴⁹ Yale, on the other hand, took this as a sign that Heath had no intention of moving closer either to Macau or Canton, and wrote that this 'put a stop to all our prosperous endeavours, which plainly forebode the loss of our [onward] Persia voyage'. But, as we have seen, it is likely that he rewrote at least portions of his journal based on hindsight with the intention of inculpating Heath.⁵⁰ There is also a suggestion later in the journal that Heath's refusal to move was based on a fear of his ship running aground.⁵¹ This was not baseless, since the East India Company had no experience of taking ships of such size into the Pearl River Delta, but nor was Yale's exasperation unjustified. In fact, Macau had regularly received ships of equal or greater tonnage during its heyday in the late Ming, with large ships being one of the hallmarks of the Portuguese imperial enterprise, and one sign of the Qing openness to trade was its investment in regular dredging of the river to keep it navigable.⁵²

⁴⁶ BA, JA, 49-V-6.

⁴⁷ Van Dyke, 'The Canton Linguists', 12-19.

⁴⁸ BL/IOG/G/12, fo. 257^v; BL/IOG/L/MAR/A/XC 12 September 1689.

⁴⁹ Sir Henry Mainwaring, *The Sea-mans Dictionary, or, An Exposition and Demonstration of all the Parts and Things belonging to a Shippe together with an Explanation of all the Termes and Phrases used in the Practique of Navigation* (London, 1644), 52-53; BL/IOG/L/MAR/A/XC 13 September 1689.

⁵⁰ BL/IOG/G/12, fo. 257^v.

⁵¹ BL/IOG/G/12, fo. 258^r.

⁵² George Bryan Souza, *The Survival of Empire: Portuguese Trade and Society in China and the South China Sea 1630-1754* (Cambridge, 1986), 277; Ye Xian'en, Tan Dihua, and Luo Yixin, 廣東航運史（古代部分）[History of Shipping in Guangdong (Ancient China)] (Beijing, 1989), 162, 165.

It is impossible to say for certain why Heath would not go to Canton, although it is likely that the answer is a combination of factors—the weather, uncertainty about the navigability of the river, personal animosity hindering cooperation between the captain and the chief factor—, but his refusal drastically altered the dynamics of the trading season. While Yale had hoped to gain an advantage over the other English ships through direct trade in Canton and a faster dispatch, now the Canton merchants saw their chance. Yale was to deal with Gea, a powerful figure closely connected to the highest levels of officialdom, who would spend nearly two decades as a leading ‘official merchant’ (*guan shang* 官商) of Canton.⁵³ His position and wealth are clear from the range of business in which he was involved: in the 1689/90 season alone, he led the group of merchants contracting not just with the *Defence* but also with the other two English private traders from Madras, and was contracting to load the two Portuguese ships for Batavia along with Linqua, a ‘great merchant’ with personal experience of the Dutch colony.⁵⁴ Each of these voyages held out the promise of great profits, but also represented a great expense for the merchants, and Gea had no hesitation in using his preponderating influence to drive down costs as far possible. As we have seen, he had put pressure on the Senate of Macau to reduce its import duties, and when he threatened to load the return cargo from Batavia on junks instead, leaving the Portuguese ships to return empty, the Senate had no choice but to give in, noting the city’s desperate financial straits and inability to put together a cargo without the Chinese merchants.⁵⁵

When Heath refused to come upriver, Gea spied another opportunity to turn the situation to his advantage by keeping all three English ships in Macau, at arm’s length from suppliers upriver and forced to deal only through him and his partners, allowing him to play them off against each other.⁵⁶ In a meeting with the Hoppo, he emphasised that Heath was unwilling to move.⁵⁷ The Hoppo repeated this line to Yale and told him that he would cancel the *Defence*’s permit to come upriver.⁵⁸

⁵³ Cheong, *Hong Merchants*, 31, 129, 342, 344. Also known as Guia or Chun Yea.

⁵⁴ *Arquivos de Macau* iii-1-1, 23–4; BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 257^v; Cheong, *Hong Merchants*, 343.

⁵⁵ *Arquivos de Macau* iii-1-1, 23–4; Flores, ‘Macau’, 112–3.

⁵⁶ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 257^v.

⁵⁷ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 257^v.

⁵⁸ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 258^r.

Instead, he said, they would all go down to Macau together in a few days.⁵⁹ Now that Yale had no alternative, Gea immediately raised his prices for both sugar and tutenag.⁶⁰ Yale was not slow to realise the significance of this, writing in his journal of ‘a fine trap laid for us and indeed wholly occasioned by Captain Heath’s obstinacy’.⁶¹ He repeated the sentiment in a later dispatch to Madras, asserting that he had obtained permission to trade in Canton and had ‘near effected [it] with assurance of a kind and free entertainment for their business’, were it not for Heath’s actions, ‘contrary to order or expectation’.⁶²

What was good for the Chinese merchants, however, was not always good for the linguists, caught between their position in the state and their personal role as commercial brokers. On the one hand, they had an interest in securing the best possible deal for the merchants whom they represented, ensuring that their ships were dispatched first and with the most profitable cargoes; on the other hand, they also had an interest in keeping fees and taxes high, both for their own profit and to avoid falling foul of the Hoppo. Yale and his linguist having failed to trade in Canton, the next few weeks would see a period of intense competition and jockeying for position between the *Defence* and the other two English ships.⁶³ One important matter in these disputes was the precedence of the linguists: whose linguist would be received first by the Hoppo and therefore have the first chance to negotiate prices and cargoes?⁶⁴ Yale’s linguist clearly anticipated this causing trouble in Macau; before the Hoppo and Gea set off downriver, he took Yale to Gea’s house in an attempt to negotiate down the newly-raised prices first. After over five hours of negotiation, they reached a compromise: Gea would offer a discount of what amounted to approximately eleven percent, but this would only be written in a secret contract, and a *pro forma* public contract would still give the original prices, which he said was necessary to ensure that he could still get a higher price from the other two ships.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 258^r.

⁶⁰ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 258^r.

⁶¹ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 257^v.

⁶² *Records of Fort St. George: Diary and Consultation Book of 1690* (Madras, 1917), 19.

⁶³ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 258^v.

⁶⁴ BL/IOR/G/12, fos. 258^{r-v}.

⁶⁵ From 1 tael 7 mace to 1 tael 5 mace. BL/IOR/G/12, fos. 258^r, 259^r.

The linguist and merchants reached Macau in Gea's boat on 24th September, having been kept under close watch by the Hoppo, who refused to let them go ahead for fear that they might find others to deal with.⁶⁶ When the Hoppo had been forced by seasickness to leave the boat and take the slower overland route, he left them with Gea, in whose house in Macau they were lodged, along with some other merchants of the *Defence* who had not come upriver.⁶⁷ When the Hoppo finally arrived two days later, the competition between the linguists began in earnest.⁶⁸ Yale and his linguist had claimed the right to contract first, having already begun negotiations, and by virtue of representing the largest and most valuable cargo in the Delta.⁶⁹ On this basis, when the Hoppo arrived to a formal welcome from the Macau authorities outside the city walls, Yale's linguist immediately went to ask if the Hoppo would receive the linguist and his merchants that evening to discuss measuring the *Defence*, the process by which the Hoppo would determine the duties the ship must pay.⁷⁰ Although the Hoppo put them off until the next day, claiming exhaustion from the journey, he nevertheless agreed to see them before any other. Hearing this, Francis Eldred, the captain of one of the two English private traders, the *Loyal Captain*, flew into a rage, claiming to be 'as free and as great' as Yale and to 'know no superiors in India'.⁷¹ Ignoring both Yale and Gea's attempts to dissuade him, Eldred declared that if Yale's linguist claimed precedence, he would have him beaten with a bamboo cane.⁷² Yale wrote later that Eldred seemed to think that employing the same punishment used by Chinese officials against the linguists would increase his own status in Chinese eyes, but when, as Yale mockingly wrote, 'in this height of grandeur the good old man advanced to make his visit', he returned unreceived by the Hoppo, and his linguist was given an official reprimand for entertaining this attempted usurpation of a power of punishment never given to foreign merchants.⁷³

This was not, however, the end of the matter. After several more days of negotiation, in which Yale and his linguist attempted to delay signing their final contract until after the *Defence* had been

⁶⁶ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 258^r.

⁶⁷ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 258^r.

⁶⁸ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 258^r.

⁶⁹ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 258^r.

⁷⁰ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 258^r.

⁷¹ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 258^v.

⁷² BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 258^v.

⁷³ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 258^v.

measured, while the Hoppo refused to determine their customs duties until after they had contracted, on 4th October a clerk from the Maritime Customs House made a circuit of all the English ships to officially register which linguists were representing them.⁷⁴ This clerk declared that the official precedence would be Eldred's linguist first, followed by the linguist of the second English private trader, the *Curtana*, commanded by Anthony Weltden, an acquaintance of both Eldred and Heath.⁷⁵ Last of all was Yale's linguist, a relegation that Yale found 'as ridiculous as disrespectful', given that he was 'the Company's' linguist. Matters came to a head when Yale denounced the clerk as having taken a bribe from Eldred.⁷⁶ Damage to Yale's journal makes it impossible to recover the precise details of what followed, but it is possible to make out that Eldred's linguist came aboard the *Defence*, and that this dispute 'occasioned a clash amongst them [the linguists]'.⁷⁷ The result is not recorded, but it appears that the Hoppo or another official quickly suppressed the dispute in favour of Yale's linguist. In the following days Yale signed a contract to be dispatched first, while Weltden was still negotiating.⁷⁸ Meanwhile, Eldred now refused to contract with Gea, claiming that his linguist could get a better deal elsewhere, which Yale dismissed as politically impossible.⁷⁹

How should we understand these incidents? The first point to note is how Qing officials construed the problem of the Pearl River Delta. A little-recognised fact about the early Qing is that the bureaucracy on the south coast was made up of men experienced in coastal affairs.⁸⁰ At the time of the *Defence*'s arrival, the incoming Governor-General of Liangguang (*Liangguang Zongdu* 兩廣總督) was Shi Lin (石琳), who had spent time in Zhejiang 浙江 as a Salt Controller (*Yanyunshi* 鹽運使) in charge of the salt trade and as Provincial Administration Commissioner (*Buzhengshi* 布政使), and had fought in the campaign against the Three Feudatories.⁸¹ As Governor-General of Liangguang

⁷⁴ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 258^v.

⁷⁵ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 258^v.

⁷⁶ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 258^v.

⁷⁷ BL/IOR/G/12, fos. 258^v–259^r.

⁷⁸ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 259^r.

⁷⁹ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 259^r.

⁸⁰ The dominant narrative is of an anti-commercial and corrupt bureaucracy, a narrative which draws much of its power from negative representations from the Opium War onwards. Cf. Song Chuan-Chen, *Merchants of War and Peace: British Knowledge of China in the Making of the Opium War* (Hong Kong, 2017) 151–2.

⁸¹ Fulunggan 福隆安 et al, *Qianding Baqi Tongzhi* 欽定八旗通志 [Imperial Gazetteer of the Eight Banners] (1796), j. 197.

his tenure of thirteen years would be the longest in history, and he would build up close connections with many foreign merchants and Jesuits.⁸² The General of Guangdong (*Guangdong Jiangjun* 廣東將軍), Baidari (拜音達禮), had fifteen years of experience in various posts in Guangdong and close connections with Fujian 福建, and, like Shi Lin, had also fought against the Three Feudatories.⁸³ Shu Shu, the Hoppo, was also a veteran of the war against the Three Feudatories, and had previously served as the first Hoppo of Jianghai (*Jinaghaiguan Jiandu* 江海關監督) after the lifting of the maritime prohibition.⁸⁴ The magistrate of Xiangshan (*Xiangshan Zhixian* 香山知縣), Zheng Aimin (鄭愛民), who was responsible for relations with the Portuguese, had already been in post for ten years, and was a frequent visitor to Macau.⁸⁵ The Governor of Guangdong (*Guangdong Xunfu* 廣東巡撫), Zhu Hongzuo (朱弘祚), it must be said, was new to the coast, although he would spend the rest of his career there.⁸⁶ Even his exceptional case, however, is instructive, because it shows the degree to which the Kangxi emperor not only preferred to appoint men with relevant experience to the south but also expected a degree of sympathy for the lands they were appointed to govern, as the Qing tried to revive the economies of southern provinces devastated by decades of fighting.⁸⁷ In the triennial official evaluation of 1694, the emperor came across a memorial written by Zhu Hongzuo, by then Governor-General of Min-Zhe, the supraprovincial region of Fujian and Zhejiang (*Min-Zhe Zongdu* 閩浙總督), in which Zhu had written that ‘Fujian’s land is barren and its people are frivolous’ (閩省地瘠民佻). Furious, the emperor exclaimed that ‘virtuous talents are not born only in chosen

⁸² Chen Yufang, ‘The Relational Network of Court Jesuits in Local Provinces: The Example of Tomás Pereira (1689–1690)’, in Thijs Weststeijn, ed., *Foreign Devils and Philosophers: Cultural Encounters between the Chinese, the Dutch, and Other Europeans* (Leiden, 2020), 232.

⁸³ Sometimes written as 拜音達里. Chang Shan 長善, *Zhu Yue Ba Qi Zhi* 駐粵八旗志 [Record of the Eight Banners Garrisoned in Guangdong] (1879), facs. edn in Chen Jianhua 陈建华 and Cao Chunliang 曹淳亮, eds, *Guangzhou Dadian* 廣州大典 [Compendium of Guangzhou], 520 vols (Guangzhou, 2015), cccxxx, j. 14, 2–3.

⁸⁴ Zhang Xiaotang 張曉堂, *Qingchao Duiwai Maoyi Fazhi Yanjiu—Shiqi Shiji Zhongye zhi Shijiu Shiji Zhongye* 清朝對外貿易法治研究——十七世紀中葉至十九世紀中葉 [Rule-by-law in Qing foreign trade: From the mid-seventeenth century to the mid-nineteenth century] (Beijing, 2011), 95; Liang, *Yuehaiguan Zhi* 粵海關志 [Gazetteer of the Canton Customs], j. 7, 21^r.

⁸⁵ *Arquivos de Macau*, iii-1-1, 27–8; Liang, *Yuehaiguan Zhi* 粵海關志, j. 7, 21^r.

⁸⁶ Zhu Hongzuo 朱弘祚, ‘Qing Zhongtang Fu Yue Zoushu 清忠堂撫粵奏疏’ in Chen Jianhua 陈建华 and Cao Chunliang 曹淳亮, eds, *Guangzhou Dadian* 廣州大典 [Compendium of Guangzhou], 520 vols (Guangzhou, 2015), clxxxiii, 344–5.

⁸⁷ R. Kent Guy, *Qing Governors and their Provinces: The Evolution of Territorial Administration in China, 1644–1796* (Seattle, 2010), 309–10.

lands' (賢才不擇地而生). Listing a series of officials whom he had already been forced to dismiss for their regional prejudices, particularly against southerners, he told the assembled Grand Secretaries that such views were 'greatly displeasing to our heart' (甚不愜於朕心), and ordered Zhu to be demoted for his 'absurd words' (謬言).⁸⁸ His replacement, Guo Shilong (郭世隆), was more acceptable to the emperor, and, after seven years in Fujian and Zhejiang, would eventually replace Shi Lin as Governor-General of Liangguang in 1702, with the General of Fujian (*Fujian Jiangjun* 福建將軍), Jin Shirong (金世榮), succeeding as Governor-General of Fujian and Zhejiang.⁸⁹ All this was another sign of the court's preference for specialists in coastal affairs.

These were experienced men and by no means anti-commerce, and nor should we expect their use of violence to be irrational or arbitrary. In fact, given the early Qing view of trade as primarily an economic benefit, their priority was to encourage a continuous stream of foreign merchants to visit Canton in an atmosphere of relative harmony.⁹⁰ The question for them was how to manage this. Keeping such a varied group of merchants coming back year after year entailed what Paul Van Dyke has called a 'story of tolerance'—neutrality regarding inter-European disputes, a flexible approach rather than a strict adherence to the law, and above all an avoidance of using force against foreign merchants wherever possible.⁹¹ In the last two points, they followed on from Ming thought on coastal defence, which emphasised the importance of avoiding 'provoking disputes' (*tiaoxin* 挑釁).⁹² What differed from the weakened Ming was their ability to increasingly assert the state's monopoly of legitimate violence, a product of the Qing project to pacify the south, shifting from what R. Kent Guy has called a 'military occupation' to civilian provincial government.⁹³ As discussed in the previous chapter, the weakness of late Ming coastal defences had entailed an uneasy and fragile alliance with other armed or military forces, such as the naval fleets of the Zheng clan and the

⁸⁸ Zhao Erxun 趙爾巽 et al, 清史稿 [Draft History of the Qing] (1928), j. 274, '列傳六十一·朱宏祚' [Biographies 61: Zhu Hongzuo].

⁸⁹ 大清實錄康熙朝實錄 [Veritable Records of the Great Qing – Veritable Records of the Kangxi Reign], juan 209, '康熙四十一年' [41st Kangxi Year]; Zhao Erxun 趙爾巽 et al, 清史稿 [Draft History of the Qing] (1928), j. 275, '列傳六十二·郭世隆' [Biographies 62: Guo Shilong].

⁹⁰ Van Dyke, *Success and Failure*, 2, 15; Zhao, *Qing Opening*, 86.

⁹¹ Van Dyke, *Whampoa*, 9.

⁹² E.g. '兵部題'; Zhang Jingxin, 'Liangyue Zhu Yi Yi 兩粵諸夷議'.

⁹³ Guy, *Qing Governors*, 265.

artillery of the Portuguese. In the Pearl River Delta, they had relied on a policy of using a strong Portuguese presence in Macau to subdue other foreigners, whereas the Qing relied above all on a balance of power between multiple foreign nations, a system that was effective in this period, although it would later fall apart as the British increasingly asserted dominance over other European traders.⁹⁴

Within this framework, it is important to note that, as we have seen in the first month of the *Defence's* stay in the Pearl River Delta, the disputes that arose were primarily over questions of immediate commercial advantage. More fundamental disagreements over the management of the trade, which had indeed been the cause of conflict under the Ming with its restrictions on European trade, were not at issue in the early decades of the Qing opening. These disputes were conditioned by the seasonal nature of the trade, which began in autumn with the northeast monsoon and ended with the southwest monsoon in spring.⁹⁵ As the season unfolded, officials and merchants alike would seek to size up and play off each other's relative strength and weaknesses, trying to gain an advantage over each other before the southwest monsoon pushed matters to a conclusion. As participants rather than aloof regulators, the Hoppo and other officials were neither expected to be neutral arbiters without a personal interest, nor strict disciplinarians enforcing the rules with a heavy hand. When Zhu Hongzuo was appointed Governor of Guangdong, he promised in strong terms in an audience with the Kangxi emperor to stamp out the practice of officials demanding money from those under their rule.⁹⁶ The emperor urged Zhu to temper his enthusiasm, pointing out that he still needed a source of funds for his daily expenses in office, but also warning him that he must remain honest and act with integrity.⁹⁷

What we see, therefore, in this first month of the 1689–90 season, is the limits of violence. The focus was on maintaining an open and peaceful trading environment, although one in which competition

⁹⁴ Van Dyke, *Whampoa*, 1–2.

⁹⁵ Maria Kar-wing Mok, 'Trading with Traders: The Wonders of Cantonese Shopkeepers', in Paul A. Van Dyke and Susan E. Schopp, eds., *The Private Side of the Canton Trade, 1700–1840: Beyond the Companies* (Hong Kong, 2018), 64.

⁹⁶ Zhu Hongzuo, 'Qing Zhongtang Fu Yue Zoushu 清忠堂撫粵奏疏', 344.

⁹⁷ Zhu Hongzuo, 'Qing Zhongtang Fu Yue Zoushu 清忠堂撫粵奏疏', 345.

could be fierce.⁹⁸ When Eldred threatened Yale's linguist with a beating, and later the three linguists clashed over precedence, the Hoppo acted swiftly to assert his monopoly of legitimate violence. This was justified by the need to avoid provocations and maintain a harmonious trading environment but, at the same time, was also a powerful tool for the Hoppo to use in his own commercial interest in dealing with the three English ships. Enforcement of the boundaries of what could be considered legitimate violence contained conflict within limits that were recognised by contemporaries as acceptable and avoided the direct involvement of the foreign merchants in perpetrating or being subject to such incidents of violence, redirecting it instead onto the linguists.

Conflict and peacemaking

In fact, despite the frequency of commercial disputes in every trading season, an unexpected aspect of the depiction of the Pearl River Delta in official sources was its peaceful nature. Of course, there were 'wrongdoers' (*jian 奸*), widespread smuggling, and the problem of foreigners taking Chinese merchants abroad; but, while the debate over the lifting of the maritime prohibition and the establishment of the maritime customs had occupied significant time and energy in official circles, once the reestablishment of foreign trade was accomplished, the Pearl River Delta all but disappeared from view as a political or security problem in the archives for another two decades.⁹⁹ Shortly after the *Defence's* arrival at Macau, Governor Zhu Hongzuo was called to serve as acting Governor-General of Liangguang while awaiting the arrival of the new appointee, Shi Lin.¹⁰⁰ Zhu immediately left Canton to go to the Governor-General's seat in Zhaoqing (肇慶), which he argued was a more important strategic location in need of improvements in its military posture, and set about energetically trying to deal in short order with a large backlog of security and financial problems left over from his predecessor Wu Xingzuo's (吳興祚) tenure.¹⁰¹ But it is notable that none of these was connected with the presence of Europeans on the coast. Not only that, but while he vigorously promoted a more active military presence elsewhere in Liangguang, Zhu also argued

⁹⁸ Van Dyke, *Whampoa and the Canton Trade*, 28.

⁹⁹ Zhao, *Qing Opening*, 153–168.

¹⁰⁰ Zhu Hongzuo, 'Qing Zhongtang Fu Yue Zoushu 清忠堂撫粵奏疏', 486.

¹⁰¹ Zhu Hongzuo, 'Qing Zhongtang Fu Yue Zoushu 清忠堂撫粵奏疏', 486–97.

that Canton was already sufficiently defended and even named Xiangshan, which had nominal oversight of Macau, as one of only three garrisons (衛所) in Liangguang that he was willing to countenance being abolished.¹⁰² In other words, amidst a flurry of writings about security concerns throughout Liangguang, the Pearl River Delta stands out precisely because it was *not* a security problem. This showed both that the Qing officials were confident of their ability to maintain violence in the trade with foreigners within the boundaries they had established, that is to say, to retain it as a tool exclusively for the state, and, importantly, that this semi-judicial violence was being understood in a different framework from the kind of violence that might break out in, say, the management of rebellious tribes, which Zhu was also trying to deal with at this time. Its purpose was to disrupt events and force a new reconciliation on changed terms, what in the scholarly literature has been called ‘peacemaking’.¹⁰³ This became clear in the next stage of the trading season, when the Hoppo used the threat of beating Yale’s linguist to death to force the English to reconsider their intransigence on taxes.

Shu Shu having successfully resisted giving any hint of the taxes to be paid until after the contracts were signed, a practice that would later become routine in Canton, the next step was for the ships to be measured to determine their customs liability.¹⁰⁴ This was an important task with which the linguists would later come to be particularly identified. By the eighteenth century, the linguists were responsible for arranging measurement by one of the Hoppo’s deputies, announcing the final determination of fees a few days later, and collecting the money owed, such that they would come to be seen almost as tax officials by foreign merchants, and in the nineteenth century John Robert Morrison would note that ‘they are now regarded as mere custom-house clerks’.¹⁰⁵ However, in the late seventeenth century, when the volume of trade was lower, the Hoppo still generally oversaw the measurement of ships himself, and negotiating the timing of the measurement, critical for a quick dispatch, still involved audiences between the chief factor and the Hoppo himself.¹⁰⁶ Initially,

¹⁰² Zhu Hongzuo, ‘Qing Zhongtang Fu Yue Zoushu 清忠堂撫粵奏疏’, 490–491.

¹⁰³ Stuart Carroll, ‘The Rights of Violence’, *Past & Present*, 214/Supplement 7 (2012), 133.

¹⁰⁴ Van Dyke, ‘Canton Linguists’, 13.

¹⁰⁵ John Robert Morrison, *A Chinese Commercial Guide Consisting of a Collection of Details and Regulations Respecting Foreign Trade with China* (Guangzhou, 1848), 199.

¹⁰⁶ Van Dyke, *Life and Enterprise*, 20–21.

Yale's linguist seems to have had little voice in this process beyond interpreting for Yale at a series of audiences in early October. However, as disputes arose, he became crucial in the eventual resolution of the matter. The Hoppo repeatedly put off the measurement, claiming that inclement weather prevented him from going out to the ships, particularly the *Defence*, which was still far from the shelter of Macau's harbours.¹⁰⁷ Although it is true that Shu Shu was no seaman and suffered badly from seasickness, it seems likely that the more important reason was that he wanted to wait until all three captains had signed their contracts before measuring all the ships at once.¹⁰⁸ As Yale feared, this would give him the advantage of determining customs duties in full knowledge of each ship's commercial position.¹⁰⁹ Eventually, Shu Shu announced he would begin measuring the ships on 15th October. At midmorning of that day, he was received on board the *Defence* to a ceremonial welcome from the English merchants, accompanied by their linguist and Gea.¹¹⁰

Measuring foreign ships was not a formality. There were many ways to calculate the ship's dimensions, which could have a great effect on the fees paid. Measurers could increase the ship's liability by measuring from beyond the railings, taking into account the ship's bulging hull, or measuring on a lower, wider deck; merchants could reduce their liability by removing the wedges holding the masts in place to bring the masts closer together, or moving pigsties to shrink the accessible surface area of the decks.¹¹¹ All this meant that measurements could be hotly disputed, and this was the case on the *Defence*, where determining the ship's dimensions took most of the day and a payment to the measurers to resolve.¹¹² Even then, Shu Shu refused to give any hint of what they would have to pay until after he had measured the other ships and discussed with his subordinates.¹¹³ By the evening, seasick and tired after such a long dispute, the Hoppo was impatient to leave, but the merchants convinced him to stay for a dinner lasting into the early

¹⁰⁷ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 258^v.

¹⁰⁸ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 259^r.

¹⁰⁹ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 259^r.

¹¹⁰ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 259^r.

¹¹¹ Van Dyke, *Life and Enterprise*, 29–30.

¹¹² BL/IOR/G/12, fos. 259^{r-v}.

¹¹³ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 259^v.

hours of the morning, a more conciliatory end to the day than a sudden departure after hours of argument.¹¹⁴

However, despite the merchants' best efforts at winning Shu Shu over, when the Hoppo's final calculation of their taxes came two days later, it was nearly one thousand taels of silver more than the maximum that Madras had authorised them to pay.¹¹⁵ After a second audience, the Hoppo could only be persuaded to a small discount of two hundred taels, and Yale began to change tack, using the only leverage he had—the threat to depart without trading at all.¹¹⁶ Leaving with an ostentatious display of dissatisfaction, he announced that he would rather abandon his contract than pay such a fee, and moved out of Gea's house, leaving behind only the second factor, John Haines, to make final arrangements for departure.¹¹⁷ In fact, he was not as determined to leave as he seemed: instead of going out to the *Defence*, still on the far side of Ilha da Montanha, he only went on board Captain Weltden's *Curtana*, where he was still close enough to return to Macau should the situation change.¹¹⁸ The next day, Haynes went to see Shu Shu one final time. Faced with the complete loss of the trade, Gea, in a much weaker position than he had been in negotiating taxes with the Macau Senate, 'heartily begged' the Hoppo to agree to a discount of five hundred taels.¹¹⁹ Reluctantly granting the discount, Shu Shu adopted the language of 'cherishing men from afar' (*rou yuan* 柔遠), a trope of imperial frontier diplomacy, attempting to conciliate Haines by explaining that he understood the troubles of their long voyage from afar, and that he would see them treated with all civility possible.¹²⁰ He conceded that they would be able to trade freely for supplies outside of their contract with Gea but claimed that the fees were fixed by the Emperor and must be paid.¹²¹ Haynes was unconvinced and announced his intention to leave Macau immediately.¹²² Gea too said

¹¹⁴ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 259^v.

¹¹⁵ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 259^v.

¹¹⁶ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 259^v.

¹¹⁷ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 259^v.

¹¹⁸ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 259^v.

¹¹⁹ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 259^v.

¹²⁰ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 259^v; Schottenhammer, 'The East Asian Maritime World', 25.

¹²¹ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 259^v.

¹²² BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 259^v.

that he would return to Canton that same day, and by evening Haines was on board the *Curtana* with all his baggage.¹²³

At this point, the *Defence*'s voyage seemed lost, with irreconcilable differences between the Hoppon, Gea, and the English merchants. The most immediate and severe consequences of this would be felt by Yale's linguist, who, despite the favour and leniency shown towards him by the Hoppon in the clashes over the precedence of the linguists, had failed to prevent disputes and bring the foreigners to an agreement.¹²⁴ An eleventh-hour meeting at Gea's house on 20th October provided the linguist with his last chance to save himself from punishment.¹²⁵ It is not certain whether he went on his own initiative or whether Gea summoned him, but it is clear that the responsibility for the foreigners leaving would fall entirely on his shoulders.¹²⁶ Not only that, but he would be unable to prevent Eldred's linguist and the other merchants disadvantaged by his claiming precedence blaming him for all the disagreements that had come before.¹²⁷ All this he explained the next day when he came on board the *Curtana*, begging in tears for the English merchants to accept a further discount of two hundred taels which he had negotiated with Gea, otherwise, he claimed with some exaggeration, he would be bamboozled to death.¹²⁸ 'Many were the tears and supplications the insinuating devil used to soften me to a supplication,' wrote Yale in his diary.¹²⁹ Worn down by the linguist and realising that the eventual fee of one thousand eight hundred taels was not as bad as it could have been, although still excessive, Yale accepted his linguist's demands and gave his word that he would pay.¹³⁰

What we see here is that almost more important than violence, or in this case the threat of violence, was the process of peacemaking that followed.¹³¹ Far from being purely an innocently positive

¹²³ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 259^v.

¹²⁴ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 259^v.

¹²⁵ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 259^v.

¹²⁶ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 259^v; Van Dyke, 'Canton Linguists', 8.

¹²⁷ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 259^v.

¹²⁸ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 259^v.

¹²⁹ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 259^v.

¹³⁰ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 259^v.

¹³¹ William Sheils, "Getting on" and "Getting Along" in Parish and Town: English Catholics and their Neighbours', in Benjamin Kaplan, Bob Moore, Henk Van Nierop and Judith Pollmann, eds., *Catholic Communities in Protestant States: Britain and the Netherlands, 1580–1720* (Manchester, 2009); Carroll, 'The Rights of Violence', 133.

reflection of consensus, reconciliation or peacemaking has been seen as a practice that often involved the sometimes violent expression of relations of authority and dominance, as in this case, when the Hoppo and Gea reasserted their position in the trade, closing off all but the narrowest space for further negotiation.¹³² This was a deliberate move to force an agreement, and it has been noted in the case of Macau that although it is tempting to the modern historian to read such incidences of violence as a failure of conflict resolution, it was in fact purposeful and seen as justified precisely because of the resolution that it could bring about.¹³³ Indeed, such a process of peacemaking, even if punctuated by violence, was in no means unacceptable to the new notion of civility, but was in fact an essential part of it.¹³⁴ We have already seen in the previous chapter how Weddell's goal in attacking Anunghoi Fort and the villages around the Pearl River Delta was not just a show of military strength, but rather an attempt to force both parties to gather around the negotiating table to reach a solution, and in their peace negotiations Neretti and Weddell were able to rapidly move on from the issue of armed conflict by fitting it into a stereotyped narrative of the use of violence to call superior officials' attention to grievances caused by lower-level officials.¹³⁵ Similarly, within Qing thought on frontier governance, in which men like Shu Shu had long experience, violent action and peacemaking were often two sides of the same coin, most famously under the policy of 'carrying out extermination and pacification together' (*jiao-fu jian shi* 剿撫兼施).¹³⁶ It is true that in part the threat to beat Yale's linguist was a punishment, legitimated in quasi-judicial language, for his failure to bring the English to an agreement conducive to the Chinese state's interest. In reality, however, the true target was the foreign merchants, something that was

¹³² Stephen Cummins and Laura Kounine, 'Introduction: Confronting Conflict in Early Modern Europe', in Stephen Cummins and Laura Kounine, eds., *Cultures of Conflict Resolution in Early Modern Europe* (Abingdon, 2016), 6.

¹³³ Tara Alberts, 'Colonial Conflicts: Factional Disputes in Two Portuguese Settlements in Asia', in Stephen Cummins and Laura Kounine, eds., *Cultures of Conflict Resolution in Early Modern Europe* (Abingdon, 2016), 153–4.

¹³⁴ Cf. Stuart Carroll, 'Peace-making in Early Modern Europe: towards a comparative history', in Paolo Broggio and Maria Pia Paoli, *Stringere la pace: Teorie e pratiche della conciliazione nell'Europa moderna (secoli XV-XVIII)* (Rome, 2011), 92.

¹³⁵ Cf. Anthony Fletcher and Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions* (6th edn, Oxford, 2016), 14.

¹³⁶ E-tu Zen Sun, trans. *Ch'ing Administrative Terms: A Translation of the Terminology of the Six Boards with Explanatory Notes* (Cambridge, MA, 1961), 235; Zhang Jie 張傑, *Qingchao Sanbai Nian Shi* 清朝三百年史 [History of the Three Centuries of the Qing Dynasty] (Beijing, 2011), 198; Zhang Ming 張明 and Yu Jingyao 于井尧, *Zhongguo Gudai Junshi Sixiang Shi* 中國古代軍事思想史 [History of Ancient Chinese Military Thought] (Changchun, 2006).

also recognised by those involved in the trade.¹³⁷ In this sense, the frequency with which incidents of beating the linguists appear in the archives cannot always be seen as a sign of any unusual degree of lawlessness among the linguists or of a failure to develop a modern, 'civil' commercial culture in the Pearl River Delta, but rather highlights the importance of these moments of disruption for forcing a resolution.

This meaning is revealed more clearly when these are not taken as isolated incidents but set in the context of the unfolding of commercial negotiations. Studies of Europeans in maritime Asia have shown that, alongside the kind of violence aimed at establishing colonial domination, an equally pervasive albeit contained form of violence was the constant measuring of forces by officials and traders, which, Zoltán Biedermann has argued, in fact formed an important part of how early modern markets worked and was seen as entirely legitimate.¹³⁸ This was reflected in Yale's own construction of his narrative in his journal: as he portrayed it, the rituals of courtesy and a mutual understanding facilitated by his linguist led to what could have been a profitable agreement to trade in Canton, until this was ruined by Heath's stubborn refusal to come upriver, leading to fierce competition with the other ships and disputes with Chinese officials, finally resolved only when the threat to beat his linguist left him with no choice but to accept a compromise. This was of course a partial narrative intended to inculcate Heath, but it also reveals an understanding of the purpose of threatening to beat his linguist.

The power of this incident over the English merchants also reveals something about the relationship between them and their linguists. On the one hand, although of course commercial and political calculation played the most important role in Yale's decision to accept the offer, his diary also makes it clear that he did also feel some obligation towards his linguist, just as Weddell and his merchants had astonished Zhang Jingxin by continuing to plead Neretti's case up to the very end.¹³⁹ In part, this was why the linguists made such an effective target for Chinese officials:

¹³⁷ *Address to the People of Great Britain Explanatory of Our Commercial Relations with the Empire of China, and of the Course of Policy by which it May be Rendered an Almost Unbounded Field for British Commerce* (London, 1836), 30.

¹³⁸ Biedermann, *(Dis)connected Empires*, 22–3.

¹³⁹ 'Bingbu ti 兵部題', AS, LYYS, NGDK, no 034914.

although they were enough a part of the Chinese state to be forced to accept official discipline, they were also collaborators of the foreign merchants, with whom they sometimes worked over several years, as appears to be the case with Yale's linguist.¹⁴⁰ On the other hand, however, it also points to the limits of the linguists' ability to represent the merchants' interests. Whereas a modern ethic of translation would expect an interpreter not to act without his or her clients' approval, the threat of punishment forced Yale's linguist into a negotiation without Yale's knowledge, followed by his emotive attempt to convince Yale to accept Gea's final offer.¹⁴¹ The effects of this limitation would become increasingly clear over the next few months, as the English merchants increasingly chafed at the restrictions of relying on official linguists.

Boundary enforcement and the turn to private contacts

Although contracts had been signed and the measurement fees had finally been agreed, trade could not yet begin without Shu Shu granting permission for the English merchants to travel up to Canton to receive their goods.¹⁴² The Hoppo still had a few days' business in Macau and was reluctant to let anybody travel upriver ahead of him, where they could contract with others without his knowledge.¹⁴³ Yale's greatest concern, as before, was the speed of dispatch, hoping both to conclude his business without further trouble and to reach Persia while the winds were still favourable.¹⁴⁴ Meanwhile, Eldred was also anxious to be in Canton as soon as possible, before Yale and if possible before Shu Shu.¹⁴⁵ Their linguists took different approaches. Underscoring once again the difference between his role and a modern notion of impartial trust-based officeholding, Yale's linguist acted as a clandestine channel to the Hoppo, as he had before when Yale and Gea had agreed separate secret and public contracts.¹⁴⁶ This time he met Shu Shu privately to offer him a gift of furniture and a horse from Yale if the *Defence* were dispatched within forty days, changing the offer to 450 taels when Shu Shu noted the difficulty of dividing a physical gift between him and his

¹⁴⁰ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 257^v.

¹⁴¹ Maria Tymoczko, *Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators* (Abingdon, 2014), 320.

¹⁴² Van Dyke, *Life and Enterprise*, 21.

¹⁴³ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 260^v.

¹⁴⁴ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 260^r.

¹⁴⁵ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 260^v.

¹⁴⁶ Knights, *Trust and Distrust*, 416–417.

subordinates.¹⁴⁷ Eldred's linguist, with a confidence in his own political judgement not shared by Yale, advised Heath and Eldred that it would not be a problem to send a small party to Canton without permission in order to 'forestall the market'.¹⁴⁸ Of course, the linguist himself could not go, but Eldred and Heath sent the *Defence's* Chinese doctor as interpreter for Eldred's nephew, who would represent the English merchants.¹⁴⁹ What Eldred's linguist had not understood, however, was the complete breakdown by this point of relations between Heath and his chief factor. Yale, tired of Heath's attempts to assert his authority to act independently of Yale, suspicious of Heath's friendship with Eldred, and convinced Heath was trying to trade privately at Yale's expense, wrote that he would have 'given a considerable sum rather than have undertaken the voyage with him', claiming that Heath had 'made it his study from the beginning to thwart my orders and spoil the voyage'.¹⁵⁰ When he heard of Eldred's linguist's plan, he immediately sent Haines to Shu Shu to complain of the linguist's 'great affront' to the East India Company's right of precedence.¹⁵¹

The Hoppo was furious at such a blatant attempt to circumvent his plan of keeping all the foreigners under close watch in Macau until he could return to Canton. Haines seems to have been taken off-guard by the strength of Shu Shu's reaction when, 'mightily enraged', he threatened not only to beat Eldred's linguist to death as 'an example to all mischief-making rogues', but also to imprison the English party for their disobedience.¹⁵² After some discussion, the Hoppo accepted that the fault was the linguist's for giving poor advice and Heath's for following that advice.¹⁵³ The others, Haines argued, were simply following Heath's orders and bore no responsibility.¹⁵⁴ Shu Shu agreed to spare them from prison, placing them instead under what amounted to house arrest in his official residence; as for Heath, he could not be punished directly, but the Hoppo gave Yale the sole right to decide which of the foreigners to include in the eventual license to trade in Canton, naturally

¹⁴⁷ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 260^r.

¹⁴⁸ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 260^v.

¹⁴⁹ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 260^v.

¹⁵⁰ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 260^v.

¹⁵¹ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 260^v.

¹⁵² BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 260^v.

¹⁵³ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 260^v.

¹⁵⁴ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 260^v.

excluding Heath and his supporters.¹⁵⁵ Eldred's linguist, for his part, attempted to save himself by using his personal connections among Canton officialdom.¹⁵⁶ However, even the Regional Commander speaking on his behalf was not enough, and he was severely beaten in early November and placed in a cangue, a wooden collar often worn as a judicial punishment for weeks or even months.¹⁵⁷

Shu Shu had successfully cowed Eldred's linguist into obedience, but what he could not resolve—and, indeed, was not concerned with resolving—was the dispute between Yale and Heath. By this time, the two no longer even made a pretence of co-operation, each openly trading separately in competition with the other.¹⁵⁸ The full story of these disputes is beyond the scope of this chapter and extends beyond the end of their stay in Macau, but it is worth noting, as we have seen, that they were caused not by any factor specific to the trading environment of the Pearl River Delta, but by the way in which authority was divided on East India Company voyages between factors and captains and the personal animosity between Yale and Heath. However, the Chinese merchants certainly took advantage of these unexpected divisions among the English to play the two sides off against each other as far as possible.¹⁵⁹ Eventually, by the new year, Yale came to the conclusion that he would have to publicly force a resolution.¹⁶⁰ Hearing that the incoming Governor-General was expected shortly to arrive in Canton, he prepared a petition for justice and posters denouncing the Hoppo and the Chinese merchants to be posted throughout Canton.¹⁶¹ But he faced a problem: nobody was willing to translate them into Chinese. Petitioning could be an effective avenue for redress, but was risky even at the best of times, and linguists were often suspected of changing or softening the wording.¹⁶² With the posters added to the mix, the danger was even clearer. When his own linguist would not help, Yale even tried asking Eldred's linguist, but he dared not, 'still

¹⁵⁵ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 260^v.

¹⁵⁶ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 261^r.

¹⁵⁷ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 262^r; Klaus Mühlhahn, *Criminal Justice in China: A History* (Cambridge, MA, 2009), 34.

¹⁵⁸ BL/IOR/G/12, fos. 261^r–263^r.

¹⁵⁹ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 261^r.

¹⁶⁰ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 262^r.

¹⁶¹ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 262^r.

¹⁶² Philip C. Huang, *Civil Justice in China: Representation and Practice in the Qing* (Stanford, 1996), 162; Van Dyke, 'Canton Linguists', 70.

trembling at the smack of the bamboo'.¹⁶³ In the end, the only person he could find willing to bear the risk was the Chinese doctor.¹⁶⁴ In the event, Yale also seems to have lost his nerve, and the posters seem not to have ever been publicly displayed, disappearing from his diary soon after the doctor translated them.

This points to an important effect of the Chinese state's increasing assertion of control over the official linguists. As we have seen, early modern translators were not assumed to be impartial and were often suspect of using their power in their client's or their own interests.¹⁶⁵ This meant that they were unprotected by the ideal of neutrality, described by one translation theorist as the 'ideological home ground' of the modern translator, according to which he or she is seen as an 'invisible' figure responsible purely for linguistic transfer.¹⁶⁶ Instead, they were seen as liable for the content of what they translated, and officials had no hesitation in using the threat of punishment to clearly set the boundaries of what kind of translation work was acceptable, while also jealously guarding their sole right to this power of legitimate violence and ensuring that others, such as Eldred, did not usurp it. This way of taking advantage of the linguists' relationship with both the Chinese state and foreign merchants in order to manage the merchants by constraining their linguists' freedom to act had its roots in the Ming practice discussed in the previous chapter of extending the state's reach through the co-option, legitimation, but also disciplining of semi-state agents. This proved to be highly effective, but this very effectiveness would also be its downfall. Foreign merchants were increasingly familiar with Canton and Macau and could call on a growing web of personal contacts, and the restrictions on the official linguists drove the merchants to make growing use of these contacts to circumvent official channels.¹⁶⁷ This trend was already becoming clear by the late 1680s, and, as we shall see in the next chapter, was firmly established by 1700.

¹⁶³ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 262^r.

¹⁶⁴ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 262^r.

¹⁶⁵ Harrison, 'A Faithful Interpreter', 1076–7.

¹⁶⁶ Satu Leinonen, 'Professional stocks of interactional knowledge', in Cecilia Wadensjö, Birgitta Englund Dimitrova, and Anna-Lena Nilsson, eds. *The Critical Link 4: Professionalisation of Interpreting in the Community: Selected Papers from the 4th International Conference on Interpreting in Legal, Health and Social Service Settings, Stockholm, Sweden, 20–23 May 2004* (Stockholm, 2004), 232.

¹⁶⁷ Van Dyke, *Life and Enterprise*, 78.

Indeed, from this point on, Yale's linguist disappears from the historical record. Although it is likely that he was still interpreting in commercial dealings such as the weighing and loading of goods, routine activities in which the linguists are generally invisible in the archive, both he and Eldred's linguist seem to have withdrawn themselves from any contentious matter, cowed by the Hoppo.¹⁶⁸ This left Yale having to make do with other bilingual contacts he could find in Macau, principally the doctor and Frans Flettinger, a Dutch soldier detained in Macau, who had many years' experience in Asia and could speak both very good Portuguese and, seemingly, some Chinese.¹⁶⁹ In January and February, the imminent end of the northeast monsoon, which the foreign ships relied on to return to India and Southeast Asia, forced a new urgency in resolving outstanding disputes over prices and cargoes.¹⁷⁰ But when it appeared that the *Defence* was ready to sail in early March, the final and most serious conflict of the voyage broke out.

Heath had bought a new mast in Canton, which was renowned for its ironwood masts, used since the Ming in the construction of the best Chinese warships and prized by European captains for their strength.¹⁷¹ Although Heath and Yale both give very partial narratives, it appears that Heath, possibly short of money after his private trading, had not paid in full for this mast and attempted instead to take it offshore by force. He succeeded in taking the mast, but in the process a firefight broke out between the English sailors and the Regional Commander's soldiers, resulting in multiple deaths and injuries on both sides.¹⁷² In Heath's haste to escape, the doctor, who had been interpreting in the dispute, was left ashore, along with two of the *Defence*'s officers.¹⁷³ While the officers managed to hide amidst the crowds in Macau, the doctor was arrested and imprisoned, leaving Flettinger the only interpreter willing to serve the English.¹⁷⁴ But the *Defence*'s secretary, Mr Watts, whom Yale and Heath sent ashore to secure the release of the English prisoners, soon realised that even Flettinger was not free from influence, having an interest in winning over

¹⁶⁸ BL/IOR/G/12, fos. 261^r–264^r.

¹⁶⁹ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 263^r.

¹⁷⁰ BL/IOR/G/12, fos. 262^v–263^r; Mok, 'Trading with Traders', 64.

¹⁷¹ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/XC 8 March 1690.

¹⁷² BL/IOR/G/12, fos. 263^{r-v}; BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/XC, 8 March 1690.

¹⁷³ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 263^v.

¹⁷⁴ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/XC, 14 March 1690.

Chinese officials whom he thought might help him secure permission to leave Macau, where the Portuguese were preventing him from taking any ship going abroad.¹⁷⁵ After the Regional Commander required 5000 taels as the fee for releasing the English sailors and the Senate of Macau similarly demanded 3500 taels, Flettinger eventually admitted in an angry exchange of letters that, being interrogated by the Chinese officials, he had given away all that he knew about the English financial position.¹⁷⁶ Realising that Flettinger was in no position to win any concessions from senior Chinese officials, Yale recognised that he could do no more. In his diary, he claimed to have accepted the demand, but to have heard nothing back.¹⁷⁷ Whether the Chinese officials really did ignore the offer of five thousand taels, or whether Yale had decided for himself that the cost was too high, is unclear. Nevertheless, on the 15th March 1690, two days after Flettinger's confession, the *Defence* set sail from Macau at the tail-end of the monsoon, leaving behind the cook with a final letter to the English prisoners.¹⁷⁸

This final incident underscored once again how violence was understood in the Pearl River Delta. Qing officials clamped down immediately on this outbreak of illegitimate violence, while making sure not provoke further violence by responding in kind. Instead, with arrests and fines, they treated as a matter to be handled in a semi-judicial manner and disposed of as quickly as possible without further escalation. The Qing state's monopoly both on violence and on determining the limits of violence was once again reasserted.

Conclusion

The voyage of the *Defence* was by no means a commercial success, a fact which would lead to lengthy recriminations and disputes in Madras.¹⁷⁹ However, the disagreements and disputes of the voyage allow for a reinterpretation of the nature of violence against the linguists in the Canton trade. This chapter has argued for understanding it as a legitimate and purposeful activity, structured with clear boundaries and a mutual understanding of its purpose. It was carried out by officials who

¹⁷⁵ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/XC ,14 March 1690.

¹⁷⁶ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 264^v.

¹⁷⁷ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 264^v.

¹⁷⁸ BL/IOR/G/12, fo. 264^v.

¹⁷⁹ *Records of Fort St. George: Diary and Consultation Book of 1690* (Madras, 1917), 84–5.

understood the economic benefit of trade and had no wish to curtail it, although they were not neutral regulators and the use of violence played a role in commercial negotiation that went beyond a simple punitive function. Examining this in light of the twists and turns of an entire commercial season shows that this purpose was not just to punish but to force a resolution, and incidents of violence, if successful, were followed by a process of peacemaking that was equally important to those involved, who after all had a financial interest in reaching a deal. This way of managing foreign trade, conceived within the framework of a tradition that avoided direct conflict with foreign merchants as much as possible, was surprisingly effective and drove the downfall of the linguists as the primary translators and negotiators of the European merchants. When John Robert Morrison wrote in the nineteenth century that linguists had been reduced to customs clerks, this was perhaps the culmination of a multi-faceted process that began with the search for alternative bilingual contacts in the late seventeenth century. But the open warfare that Morrison had lived through was in no way presaged in the seventeenth century. Historians have written of an Asian age of contained conflict, and in the late seventeenth-century Pearl River Delta the Qing state largely successfully contained trade disputes inside acceptable boundaries, within a commercial culture where moments of violence punctuated a much more prevalent atmosphere of civility between Chinese officials and European merchants, despite the ferocity of their commercial competition. The next chapter takes up the English response to Qing officials' close control of the linguists, examining the beginnings of their attempt to find alternative bilingual contacts.

Chapter Four

Friends and enemies: the *Macclesfield*, 1699–1700

‘Friendship’ and ‘kindness’ are not terms that frequently appear in histories of the Canton trade. But, in fact, they are ubiquitous in English sources towards the end of the seventeenth century. We have already seen that Yale was gratified by the Hoppo’s ‘friendship’ and the ‘kind and free entertainment for their business’ in Canton, which he blamed Captain Heath for spoiling. And in the diary of Robert Douglas, supercargo of the *Macclesfield*, which arrived in the Pearl River Delta in autumn 1699, these terms are the centre of his narrative and demand the reader’s attention. Terms such as these were used in early modern England to describe relationships of obligation and mutuality, and when read in light of the growing English disquiet at the restrictions of using the linguists, so closely controlled by Qing officials, they reveal a concern with understanding the commercial environment of the Delta as governed by personal relationships based on ties of obligation, loyalty, trust, and their opposite, enmity and mistrust. Robert Douglas’s diary has already been seen as an important source for understanding the East India Company’s problems with their weakness relative to Asian powers and the question of how to find and use go-betweens, but exactly how Douglas understood this problem and its solution has not been investigated.¹

This chapter argues that the increasing focus on personal relationships and the detailed description of them in diaries meant to explain and justify the conduct of the trading season to the East India Company’s directors reflected a growing disquiet at the effectiveness with which the Qing officials established the boundaries within which the linguists could act through the threat of violence and other forms of coercion. It argues that the constraints on the linguists, which made them often unable or unwilling to do what the English merchants wished them to do, gave rise to the group stereotype in English writings of the linguists as collectively untrustworthy and dishonest ‘rogues’, while also explaining the increasing emphasis on the judgment of potential against standards of courage and honesty. Unsatisfied with the linguists, the English worked to keep as much of their

¹ Jason Grier, ‘Navigation, Commercial Exchange and the Problem of Long-Distance Control in England and the English East India Company, 1673–1755’, PhD Dissertation, York University, ON, 2018, 211–12.

business as possible secret from them, while also beginning to search for alternative bilingual contacts. This was made possible by their familiarity with the Pearl River Delta environment as well as the willingness of a wide range of people, from merchants to doctors and other literate people in Canton and Macau, to actively come and volunteer themselves in the hope of a financial reward.

Douglas threw his lot in with a merchant called Hunshunquin, who offers an example of the kind of alternative contact the English were looking for: he was bilingual, possessed influential 'friends' himself, and had a powerful personal interest in helping Douglas circumvent the officials and their merchant representatives. But for Chinese officials, this represented not just an attempt to gain a commercial advantage by illicit means, but also an attack on the foundations of the system by which the trade was managed. The justification for opening trade following the maritime prohibition had been that it would bring smuggling, piracy, and other illicit activities within the purview of the state's control, turning pirates into merchants and guaranteeing the security and prosperity of the coast. It was not surprising that Douglas's attempt failed, and his woes were compounded when he fell into dispute with Hunshunquin over the quality of his cloth. His search for new supporters, which he saw as the key to resolving all his troubles, involved a detailed consideration of the personal ties structuring the Pearl River Delta market, evaluating them on the basis of honesty, faithfulness, and courage. But as matters came to a head, Douglas not only focussed on maintaining personal ties, but used the disruption of personal relationships through outbursts of anger in a similar way to how Chinese officials used threats of violence, to disrupt events and signal a sense of grievance, forcing a reconciliation on changed terms. This chapter proceeds through this argument sequentially, following the development of Douglas's understanding of the social ties that bound together the commercial world of the Delta in light of his changing fortunes.

Official interference and the choice of linguists

By the end of the seventeenth century, the Chinese method of controlling the foreign merchants indirectly through the linguists had become source of much concern among foreigners in Canton. They recognised in increasingly explicit terms that the weight of official influence on the linguists, enforced by the ever-present threat of punishment for overstepping the boundaries, was such that the linguists were unwilling to challenge officials or do anything on behalf of foreign merchants or

that might place themselves in danger.² As a French observer on the ship *Amphitrite* wrote a few months before Douglas's arrival in the Delta,

These interpreters were beholden to the Hoppo, but we nevertheless had no choice but to take them on. Knowing languages is not enough in China to be an interpreter. They must be sharp-witted, hard-working, cunning, and something of a double-crosser. They answer for all the foreigners' transgressions, and if they do not inform the Maritime Customs of the least thing, they are given 50 strokes of the bamboo cane...

*Ces interprètes étaient des gens dévoués au Houpou, et cependant on fut dans la nécessité de les prendre. Ce n'est pas assez à la Chine de savoir les langues pour être interprète : il faut encore être adroit, industrieux, fourbe et un peu fripon. Ils répondent de toutes les fautes que font les étrangers, et si à la moindre chose ils n'avertissent pas les gens de la Douane, on leur donne 50 houpades ou coups de bambou...*³

Charles Lockyer, an experienced merchant, wrote in a guide to the Canton trade in 1711 of the difficulty in getting the linguists to 'honestly interpret what is said to the Hoppo; for that they are often so much afraid of them, as to mar the best projects with their own foolish yeas and nays.'⁴ And Douglas himself complained that the linguists, 'those rogues', were subject both to direct influence from the customs officials and indirect influence from merchants with senior official patrons. He wrote that the linguists

are in fee with several merchants and do manage their business so that there is no buying nor selling but where they please and where it is most for their interest, and they study ways to cheat and embroil affairs for their own advantage, that they may get sufficient to pay their fees to the Hoppo's officers, whose prisoners they are for their places.⁵

² Ye Xiangyang 葉向陽, 'Cong 18 shiji Yingguo lü Hua youji kan Zhong-Ying jiechu zhong de tongshi 從 18 世紀英國旅華遊記看中英接觸中的通事 [Linguists in Sino-British Encounters as seen in eighteenth-century British travelogues on China]', *Guoji Hanxue* 國際漢學, 1 (2023), 74–85.

³ François Froger, *Relation du premier voyage des François à la Chine fait en 1698, 1699 et 1700 sur le vaisseau "L'Amphitrite"* [Relation of the first voyage of the French to China made in 1698, 1699 and 1700 on the ship 'Amphitrite'], ed. E. A. Voretzsch (Leipzig, 1926), 86–7.

⁴ Charles Lockyer, *An Account of the Trade in India, Containing Rules for good Government in Trade, Price Courants, and Tables: With Descriptions of Forst St. George, Acheen, Malacca, Condore, Canton, Anjengo, Muskat, Gombroon, Surat, Goa, Carwar, Telichery, Panola, Calicut, the Cape of Good-Hope, and St Helena. their Inhabitants, Customs, Religion, Government, Animals, Fruits, &c. To which is added, An Account of the Management of the Dutch in their Affairs in India* (London, 1711), 108.

⁵ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 19.

As these complaints about the linguists' inevitably conflicted loyalties mounted, they entered the institutional memory of the East India Company as part of what Guido van Meersbergen has called the 'implicit ethnography' formed in journals, letters, minute-books, and other types of company writing.⁶ This was the source of the widespread stereotype that the linguists were untrustworthy or unreliable. Such group stereotypes played an important part in decisions relating to trust and how to treat others in trade.⁷ Indeed, it is only recently that basing trust on such stereotypes has come to be seen as problematic.⁸ Nevertheless, such stereotypes do not tell the whole story. These negative ethnographic judgments underlay much decision-making and tended to surface most in disputes and moments of anger, but studies of maritime Asia have noted that they did not hinder individual relations or the ability to reach a mutually accommodating *modus vivendi*.⁹ What is most important here is to note that these descriptions of the unreliability of the linguists recognised their root in the power imbalance between linguists and officials. Of course, there was the ever-present suspicion of the linguists' self-interest, common to most early modern discussion of translation, but the sources consistently trace the problem back to the linguists' need to negotiate the complex and sometimes dangerous commercial and political environment of the Pearl River Delta. This was reflected in a term constantly used throughout the English sources from this period to describe the linguists: 'rogues'. Provoking both fear and admiring fascination, the trope of the rogue, widespread in early modern English culture, arose from the growth of an urban, commercial society in England and was tied to the self-invention, social adeptness, and secret network of relationships needed to survive in an ever-changing world.¹⁰

That the problem, in the eyes of the English merchants, was too much official interference, could be seen in how they tried to solve this problem. They did not call for the solutions that a modern ethics of translation would suggest, such as stricter regulation of the linguists or greater

⁶ Guido van Meersbergen, *Ethnography and Encounter: The Dutch and English in Seventeenth-Century South Asia* (Leiden, 2021), 8–12, 15–16.

⁷ Francesca Trivellato, *The Promise and Peril of Credit: What a Forgotten Legend about Jews and Finance Tells Us about the Making of European Commercial Society* (Princeton, 2019), 11.

⁸ Trivellato, *The Promise and Peril of Credit*, 12.

⁹ Van Meersbergen, *Ethnography and Encounter*, 27–8.

¹⁰ Craig Dionne and Steve Mentz, 'Introduction', in Craig Dionne and Steve Mentz, eds, *Rogues and Early Modern English Culture* (Ann Arbor, 2004), 1–3, 8.

transparency. The problem was not that the linguists were not capable of translating accurately because of a lack of skill, or that they were marginal, unpredictable figures, not tightly controlled enough. It was precisely the opposite: they were too tightly controlled and could not be induced to serve fully the merchants' interests. This diagnosis of the problem was clearly visible in that the English and other foreigners came to feel that the freedom to choose for themselves whom they could deal with was essential to a successful voyage.

This was reflected in the pattern of the trading season that had become established by the end of the century, discernible in supercargoes' journals and described most clearly in Lockyer's guide. English ships would anchor first in Taipa Quebrada road, a sheltered anchorage a few miles south of Macau, at a safe distance from official interference. Lockyer warned not to move upriver until all the preliminaries had been settled and the supercargo and his assistants had resolved definitively to stay in Canton that year.¹¹ These preliminaries were agreed in two stages: in Macau, initial contact would be made with customs officials and city dignitaries, and then the English merchants would head upriver, normally by boat, to discuss the measurage and the wording of the trade permit with the Hoppo and to decide finally on merchants, linguists, and a lease on a house in Canton.¹²

In negotiating this trade permit, the so-called 'general chop', the English merchants would not agree to stay in Canton unless they were given the freedom to choose their merchants and linguists freely.¹³ They paid careful attention to the exact language of the permit, ensuring that it really did allow a free choice in all parts of the Pearl River Delta. They felt that, although Canton was widely agreed to be the best-regulated and fairest place in China to trade, the degree of official involvement was suffocating their ability to get a better deal through a free choice of who to deal

¹¹ Lockyer, *Trade in India*, 100–101. Lockyer's reference to l[ying]l at Macau' certainly refers to Taipa Quebrada, which was used as the Macau anchorage for the English ships in this period.

¹² Lockyer, *Trade in India*, 100–101.

¹³ This 'general chop' was different from the 'grand chop' (*hongdan* 紅單), widely referred to in English sources over the nineteenth century, which was given at the end of the season as a permit to leave. Cf. Wong Su King, *An English and Chinese Dictionary Compiled From General Miscellaneous Important Terms, Business Letters, Bills, Documents, and the Tariff of Imports and Outports of China, and Bills of Ladings* (Hong Kong, 1895), 185; Samuel Wells Williams, *The Chinese Commercial Guide, containing Treaties, Tariffs, Regulations, Tables, etc., Useful in the Trade to China and Eastern Asia; with an Appendix of Sailing Directions for those Seas and Coasts*, (5th edn, Hong Kong, 1863), 168–9.

with.¹⁴ This was partially a question of competition: they put great effort into ‘trying’ the market and attempting to get better prices by searching to alternative merchants to deal with, and when Douglas obtained his general chop he wrote that it ‘did not please’ the leader of a group of merchants ‘who were combining together to make a prey of us and to procure that no others should be permitted to deal with us’.¹⁵ But, as we shall see, it was also a question of obtaining linguists or other bilinguals who would be willing to interpret in discussions and draw up contracts, petitions, and other papers that could advantage the English merchants but would potentially be received with hostility by the officials and senior merchants of the Delta.

In this way, the choice of linguist bore little consideration of their linguistic ability, which seems to have been taken for granted. This was the opposite of the other bilingual contacts made by the English, whose abilities or otherwise in translation and the composition of effective, tightly-worded petitions and other formal documents were explicitly discussed.¹⁶ For the official linguists, the greatest considerations were honesty, any suggestion of divided loyalties to other Europeans, and, above all, courage in the face of official might. This has already been hinted at in the quotes above, and it is the clearest recognition that the English understood this as a problem of excessive official control.

In 1699, Douglas found three linguists competing to offer their services to him: Phillis, Quiqua, and Rosário.¹⁷ Phillis, a Chinese Christian described by Lockyer as a ‘maudlin sort’, had a long career serving English merchants.¹⁸ He had already been employed in 1698 by a Captain Wilmott, who seems to have been a country trader known to Douglas, and was an acquaintance of Biggs.¹⁹ Lockyer would recommend him in 1711 as the best linguist, although for his pliability rather than his skill.²⁰ However, this year he was already employed by the French and indeed obtained his first meeting with Douglas as the bearer of three letters from the French chief factor, the captain of the *Amphitrite*,

¹⁴ Lockyer, *Trade in India*, 98–9 (preference for Canton over other ports).

¹⁵ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 29.

¹⁶ See, for example, the discussions of Senhor Luís and João Baptista Lima below.

¹⁷ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fos. 22–23.

¹⁸ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 17; Lockyer, *Trade in India*, 100.

¹⁹ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 17.

²⁰ Lockyer, *Trade in India*, 100–101.

and a French Jesuit, Jean Basset.²¹ These connections immediately aroused Douglas's suspicion, and he rejected Phillis out of hand, even before he had obtained any character references. He wrote that he feared employing Phillis would allow the French to 'defeat us in anything that interfered with their interest'.²² Unwilling to give up so easily, Phillis attempted to prove his loyalty by going to the Hoppo of his own accord and obtaining a permit for the English to trade with promises of better treatment than had been given to Phillis's previous master, Captain Wilmott.²³ Douglas was astonished but resolute that he could not possibly take him on.²⁴

The remaining two potential linguists presented Douglas with a quandary. He wanted one who was not only honest, but also brave enough to push the boundaries of what the Chinese officials would allow. But neither of the linguists fitted the bill completely. The first, Rosário, was a linguist and small merchant in his own right from Macau, and, given his Christian name and residence in Macau, probably either a Chinese Christian or a member of the mixed-race class of *jurubaças*.²⁵ The second, Quiqua, was a linguist from Canton and, like Rosário, was also a trader in his own right.²⁶ If Weng Eang Cheong is correct that he was the Khequa or Old Quiqua with whom the English traded throughout the early eighteenth century, he was evidently a substantial businessman and one of the merchants officially licensed to trade with foreigners.²⁷ It is curious then why he was working as a linguist in 1699, although he was probably still early in his career. Nevertheless, he was clearly of some social standing, given his use of the suffix *-qua* (*guan* 官). Although recent scholarship has shown that this suffix did not indicate the purchase of office (*juanna* 捐納) as has often been assumed, it was nevertheless a marker of social status widely used throughout maritime Asia for Chinese men with a degree of social status, regardless of whether they held official rank or not.²⁸

²¹ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fos. 16–17.

²² BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 17.

²³ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 22.

²⁴ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 22.

²⁵ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fos. 23, 89.

²⁶ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fos. 23, 53, 193.

²⁷ Cheong, *Hong Merchants*, 31, 33.

²⁸ Hung-Yi Chien, 'Minnan toujia de mingming xue – "guan" yu "she" de yiyi, yongfa, ciyuan 閩南頭家的命名學 – 「官」與「舍」的意義、用法、詞源' [Honorific Suffixes of Hokkien Gentlemen: The Meanings, Usages and Etymologies of *-qua* and *-sia*], *Hanxue Yanjiu* 漢學研究, 322, 331. Other linguists throughout the early Qing also had the suffix *-qua*, such as Tienqua, a linguist for the Nieuhof embassy in the 1650s, and

Perhaps emboldened by his greater social and economic status, Quiqua was seen by Douglas as a 'very sharp fellow' who 'had boldness and courage enough and could express himself very well'.²⁹ However, although he had a letter of recommendation from an English merchant, Douglas wrote that he had a reputation as a 'rogue'.³⁰ Rosário also had a letter of recommendation and was reputed to be much more honest than Quiqua, but Douglas thought he came across as too mild and lacking the courage needed to counter the Hoppo and other senior officials.³¹ In his own words, Douglas was 'at a loss' as to which to employ.³²

On the one hand, there was the question of honesty. This was not a simple matter of truthfulness. Indeed, there are few examples of linguists outright lying. In the early modern English understanding, honesty implied plain dealing and industry. It was closely linked with notions of credit, trustworthiness, and worth—one's ability to 'live of oneself', free of dependency, for the word of a poor or financially dependent man counted for little.³³ It is this standard of honesty—straightforward dealing and freedom from the conflicted loyalties of dependency—that Douglas and other merchants seem to apply to the linguists. On the other hand, there was the question of courage, in which Quiqua came off better than Rosário. Douglas clearly thought that courage was the greater priority, given his aim of getting a better deal by circumventing the official influence, and wrote that Quiqua was 'the best of the two for us with good looking after'.³⁴ But at the same time, the risk was very great, and eventually he decided to take both Quiqua and Rosário and see them in action, delaying his definitive choice until after the trade permit had been finalised with the Hoppo.³⁵

Of course, the importance of these descriptions of moral categories as standards for trust in the linguists can be overstated. It is important to remember that, like the descriptions of corruption

Whequa, Lockqua, Sinqua, Suqua, Conqua, Cowqua, and Jaqua in the 1720s, 1730s, and 1740s: Nieuhof, *Embassy*, 21; Van Dyke, 'Canton Linguists', 29.

²⁹ BL/IOE/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 23.

³⁰ BL/IOE/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 23.

³¹ BL/IOE/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 23.

³² BL/IOE/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 23.

³³ Alexandra Shepard, 'Honesty, Worth and Gender in Early Modern England, 1560–1640', in Johnathan Barry and Harry French, eds, *Identity and Agency in England, 1500–1800* (Basingstoke, 2004), 87–102.

³⁴ BL/IOE/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 23.

³⁵ BL/IOE/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 23.

analysed in the Chinese sources in Chapter One, these terms are not neutral and do not reflect inherent categories of behaviour, but rather *do* political work. What Douglas wanted was not a neutral, disinterested translator, but one who was, as he later wrote, ‘faithful to our interest’, and in this light the same behaviour could be categorised positively or negatively depending on whether it served Douglas’s interest.³⁶ In this light, discussions of honesty have to be held in tension with the equal and opposite drive for secrecy, described by Xabier Lamikiz as the ‘most conspicuous feature of early modern trade’.³⁷ Over the coming days, Douglas’s concerns over the honesty or trustworthiness of the two linguists would lead him to keep a number of secrets from them, while also relying on other contacts to provide a second, confidential opinion on the linguists’ work.

As Douglas negotiated the terms of the trade permit with the Hoppo and held meetings with potential merchants to discuss goods and prices, he became ever more convinced that the market was dominated by official influence and his only hope for a better deal was to find local contacts who could help him circumvent this influence. He began to realise that the most powerful figures in the market were a group of three merchants, whose names he recorded as Tinqua, Chun Samia, and Chun Yea.³⁸ These were familiar figures to the English merchants, and we have already seen two of them in the previous chapter. Chun Yea was Gea or Guía, the senior merchant with whom Yale had contracted in 1689 and who had forced the Portuguese senate to accept his terms on import duties, and Tinqua was Deanqua, whom Yale had also dealt with.³⁹ For continuity, these two merchants will continue to be referred to here as Gea and Deanqua.

More important than familiarity, however, was that all three of these merchants had powerful official backing. Gea was now the official merchant of the General of Guangdong (*Guangdong jiangjun* 廣東將軍), Lu Chongyao (盧崇耀); and Tinqua also had official ties, although Douglas does not specify with whom. Even better connected than Gea was Chun Samia, a very substantial merchant

³⁶ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 147.

³⁷ Xabier Lamikiz, *Trade and Trust in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World: Spanish Merchants and their Overseas Networks* (London, 2010), 141.

³⁸ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 120.

³⁹ Cheong, *Hong Merchants*, 32.

also known as Shemea to the English or Chin Quonkia to the French, and addressed as Chin Loya or Sin Loya, using the respectful term of address *laoye* (老爺), which the foreigners also universally used for senior officials.⁴⁰ He was the official merchant of none other than the Governor-General Shi Lin, who was still in office over a decade after the *Defence*'s voyage to Canton.

Shi Lin's tenure as Governor-General would be the longest in the late imperial period, but almost none of his writings survive, and his importance for the position of foreigners in the early Qing Pearl River Delta has been underestimated. Described by a French observer who claimed to 'know this mandarin particularly well' as a 'small man, swarthy, lean, and thin', Shi Lin was a bannerman from one of the most socially and politically prominent Manchu lineages, the Suwan Gūwalgiya (*suwan guaerjia shi* 蘇完瓜爾佳氏), and had by now built up extensive commercial and social contacts with the Portuguese and French.⁴¹ By the end of the century, both he and his wider family had become close associates of the Jesuit missionaries, although they were never openly acknowledged as Catholic converts. The Portuguese Jesuit Tomás Pereira saw the governor-general as a friend and obtained through him an introduction into his extensive family network of officeholders throughout south China, while the French Jesuits considered him the principal cause of their success.⁴² Although Douglas never met him, Shi Lin was a constant presence in the 1699 trading season. Not only was he heavily involved with the *Amphitrite*, but he and his fellow senior officials, General Lu Chongyao and Tinquá's unnamed official backer, were determined also to monopolise the English trade through their three merchants.⁴³

Such was the weight of official influence behind these three merchants that Douglas quickly found that no-one dared contract with him without including them. He discovered their plans through an

⁴⁰ For example, 'Xe Loya' 石老爺 (Governor-General Shi Lin).

⁴¹ Hong Zhou 弘晝 et al., *Baqi Manzhou Shizu Tongpu* 八旗滿洲氏族通譜 [Complete genealogies of the Manchu clans and families of the eight banners] (Shenyang, 2002), 46–7; Pamela Kyle Crossley, *Orphan Warriors: Three Manchu Generations and the End of the Qing World* (Princeton, 1990); Bouvet de la Touche, *Journal*, 133; Thierry Meynard, 'Kangxi nianjian Liangguang Zongdu Shi Lin yu Faguo chuan "Anfeilite hao" de Guangzhou zhi xing 康熙年間兩廣總督石琳與法國船“安菲特立特號”的廣州之行 [The Kangxi-era Governor-General of Liangguang Shi Lin and the voyage to Canton of the French ship 'Amphitrite']', *Xueshu Yanjiu* 學術研究, 4 (2020), 155 fn. 3.

⁴² Chen, 'Relational network', 231–2; Froger, *Relation du premier voyage*, 106.

⁴³ Meynard, 'Liangguang Zongdu Shi Lin 兩廣總督石琳', 119–121, 123.

extraordinary piece of detective work, placing secret markers on the Chinese ‘musters’, or silk samples, and using these markers to prove that the same pieces of cloth were being used by all three merchants working together.⁴⁴ He realised that anything he said to one of the merchants quickly became known to all of them, and eventually surprised them all together in a meeting.⁴⁵ Placing his hope in a trade permit granting a free choice of merchants, he concluded that ‘we see no possibility of effecting anything with these merchants but on very disadvantageous terms; however, we were in hopes that our general chop would defeat all their designs.’⁴⁶

To obtain this permit, Douglas knew that he had to get the Hoppo, an elderly Manchu named Solbi (*Yuehaiguan Jiandu Suoerbi* 粤海督關索爾弼), on his side. He pursued a three-pronged strategy of pressuring the Hoppo with the threat to leave and sail to Amoy instead, encouraging him with gifts, and preparing a draft petition against him as a backup in case the gifts did not work.⁴⁷ But this was not simple given the preponderating influence of these three merchants. He needed the linguists both to help with choosing and presenting the gift, and to draw up the petition. The problem was that, given the linguists’ reliance on officials and their merchants for their survival in the trade, Douglas began to suspect that both Rosário and Quiqua unsurprisingly ‘favoured’ the three official merchants and were reluctant to do anything to disadvantage them.⁴⁸

In fact, the linguists did privately offer advice on the gift and supported Douglas’s plan to keep the true extent of the gift secret from other customs officials, but he was still wary of them. He had the details of the gift written down and delivered directly to the Hoppo so that the linguists could not deceive him, and sent his servant Mr Edwards to accompany Rosário and Quiqua to ensure that the gifts were all presented in full.⁴⁹ The petition was more risky, because it involved going against both the Hoppo and the three merchants and their patrons. Douglas dared not entrust this to his

⁴⁴ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 30.

⁴⁵ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 30.

⁴⁶ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 30.

⁴⁷ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fos. 30.

⁴⁸ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 31.

⁴⁹ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fos. 31–32.

linguists and turned instead to a bilingual ‘Chinese Christian friend’ in Macau, Senhor Luís.⁵⁰ Although nothing more is known about this Senhor Luís, ‘Chinese Christians’ such as him, many actually mixed race, made up the majority of the population of Macau by this period.⁵¹ They provided a ready supply of literate bilingual contacts to supplement the linguists. Without official recognition, however, this was dangerous. The French on the *Amphitrite* had also attempted the same course, using a Chinese Christian called Denis who ‘wrote and spoke Portuguese and Latin very well’ (*écrivait et parlait fort bien la langue portugaise et la latine*), but the outgoing Hoppo had him arrested and ‘placed in irons for having committed no crime other than to have served us’ (*chargé de fers sans avoir commis d’autre crime que celui de nous avoir rendu service*), forcing them instead to use the official linguist Phillis.⁵² Douglas therefore made sure to keep Senhor Luís’s identity secret from the Hoppo and, it is implied in his journal, from Quiqua and Rosário as well.⁵³

The Hoppo in fact proved to be more amenable than Douglas had expected. Like many of the officials in the Pearl River Delta, he was socially at ease with foreigners and both the English and French found him initially easy to deal with, a ‘good and affable man’ (*bon homme et affable*).⁵⁴ Douglas was gratified by his displays of ‘extraordinary favour’ and courtesy, and before long Quiqua brought the trade permit ‘with great joy’.⁵⁵ In fact, when Quiqua read it to him, Douglas found the wording was not quite right, and sent it back for corrections to ensure it unambiguously allowed them a free choice of who to deal with both in Macau and in Canton, as well as to ensure that the burden of paying customs fees would fall on whichever merchant they dealt with, rather than the English themselves.⁵⁶ Quiqua promptly returned the next day with the requested changes all made.⁵⁷ Douglas still ‘thought it not convenient to trust wholly to our linguist’, and secretly sent

⁵⁰ ‘Senior Liwes’ in the journal; Senhor Luís seems the only possible Portuguese equivalent. BL/IOI/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 30.

⁵¹ BL/IOI/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 33.

⁵² Froger, *Relation du premier voyage*, 85; BL/IOI/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fos. 16–17.

⁵³ BL/IOI/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 30. He wrote of his ‘fear of discovering our friend’ when a messenger came from the Hoppo.

⁵⁴ Froger, *Relation du premier voyage*, 109.

⁵⁵ BL/IOI/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fos. 29, 33.

⁵⁶ BL/IOI/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 33.

⁵⁷ BL/IOI/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 34.

the permit to Senhor Luís to have it checked before he formally accepted it.⁵⁸ Douglas's clandestine connection with Senhor Luís was almost discovered when the Hoppo, who was about to return from Macau to Canton, suddenly sent for Douglas to take leave of him, and Douglas had to put him off for several hours while he waited for Senhor Luís to finish.⁵⁹ When Douglas finally went to the Hoppo, he also brought with him another draft permit for travelling to Canton that he had got Senhor Luís to draw up, evidently still not trusting Rosário and Quiqua.⁶⁰ The Hoppo agreed on the spot to this second permit.⁶¹

All the while that these negotiations had been going on, Douglas's other task had been to choose which merchants to deal with. In this, he was no less cautious about how far he could trust the linguists. He made sure that the linguists did not know exactly which goods he was most interested in, and when he went to a large Manchu-style dinner at Gea's house, he sent Quiqua away on a pretext so that he could negotiate privately with some merchants using their linguist without Quiqua knowing.⁶² After receiving the trade permit, Douglas went up to Canton with Rosário to meet the merchants of the city, but even then attempted to make as little use of his linguist as possible. He and his deputy John Biggs went out secretly early in the morning to visit the merchants' shops in order to avoid letting Rosário know, presumably communicating using the Portuguese creole, the so-called 'lingua franca' or 'Indian Portuguese' that was widely spoken in the Pearl River Delta in this period.⁶³ But despite all these efforts, as we have seen, he was coming to the inevitable conclusion that the senior officials and their merchants held such sway not just over the linguists but over lesser merchants as well that his hopes of securing a deal without official interference seemed slim indeed.⁶⁴ But in fact he had hit on what seemed an attractive solution to his problems with both the linguists and the merchants; a merchant called Hunshunquin, who he would eventually choose both as his merchant and, unofficially, as his translator. The next section

⁵⁸ BL/IOE/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 34.

⁵⁹ BL/IOE/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 34.

⁶⁰ BL/IOE/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 35.

⁶¹ BL/IOE/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 35.

⁶² BL/IOE/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 25.

⁶³ BL/IOE/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 37.

⁶⁴ BL/IOE/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 39.

attempts to reconstruct why Hunshunquin was an attractive choice for Douglas: in other words, what kind of alternative to the linguists were the English merchants looking for?

Hunshunquin and the evaluation of alternative contacts

Hunshunquin was a merchant of considerable standing in Canton, who had once been what was known to the English as the 'king's merchant' (*wangshang* 王商). The 'king' referred to here was the 'prince pacifying the south' (*pingnan wang* 平南王), a hereditary position held first by Shang Kexi (尚可喜) and, later, his son Shang Zhixin (尚之信), to whom the early Qing had given wide-ranging power in Guangdong before the full establishment of civilian government in south China during the early 1680s.⁶⁵ Shang Kexi and Shang Zhixin made extensive use of such merchants, whose monopolistic practices drew from the working methods of the state salt monopoly.⁶⁶ These merchants were noted generally to be either members of the princely household, including bondservants, or subordinates in the official hierarchy.⁶⁷ In Hunshunquin's case, he was almost certainly not a substantive official of any kind, and there is no evidence either way of whether he was a bondservant, but it was clear that he had connections among senior officialdom.

Not only that, he had also managed with some political adroitness to survive the fall of the princely feudatories after their rebellion against the emperor.⁶⁸ Following the pacification of the south and the reopening of the coast, he had been the Dutch merchant for many years, and Weng Eang Cheong has suggested that he may have been the 'Tsongqua' whom the Dutch met during their audience with Shang Zhixin in 1676.⁶⁹ He claimed to have handled an enormous volume of business, one year even dispatching eight ships in a single season.⁷⁰ This was an undertaking that not only spoke to his

⁶⁵ Guy, *Qing Governors*, 310–11.

⁶⁶ Huang Guoxin 黃國新, 'Fanwang shiqi de Liangguang yanshang 藩王時期的兩廣鹽商' [The salt merchants of Guangdong and Guangxi during the period of the feudatories], *Yanye shi yanjiu* 鹽業史研究, 1 (1999), 12.

⁶⁷ Huang Guoxin, 'Yanshang 鹽商', 12.

⁶⁸ Cf. Zhao, *Qing Opening*, 87–88 for the fall of the Three Feudatories and its effect on merchants. The Kangxi emperor wished to preserve these merchants, although other officials objected.

⁶⁹ Cheong, *Hong Merchants*, 30.

⁷⁰ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 149.

extensive contacts with inland producers, but also required vast reserves of capital to make the necessary advances to secure inland goods.⁷¹

His Dutch connections brought him to Southeast Asia as well. Although it was long believed that Chinese merchants did not travel overseas, it is now increasingly recognised that this was by no means uncommon in the seventeenth century, despite the danger of flouting official prohibitions.⁷² It seems that Hunshunquin spent time in the 1680s in the key Dutch entrepôt of Batavia, where Dutch factors frequently wrote of dealings with a resident Chinese merchant called 'Oensoenquin'. Following the collapse of the Japan trade in the 1640s, this was one of the most important trading destinations for the merchants of Macau and had a sizeable Chinese community.⁷³ We have already seen in the previous chapter that most of the senior Chinese merchants of the Pearl River Delta were closely involved in this trade, and Hunshunquin was clearly no exception.

But by the time Douglas met him in 1699, Hunshunquin had suffered a string of losses that had reduced him financially. Nevertheless, he still claimed substantial political influence. In Canton, he was known to be a 'friend' of both the Regional Commander (*Guangdong Zongbing* 廣東總兵), Yin Huaxing (殷化行), and his secretary—befriending secretaries and other lower-ranking figures was as important as cultivating ties with their masters, as we shall see.⁷⁴ He repeatedly emphasised the amount of 'friends' he had throughout the city, and, even more importantly, told Douglas that he 'valued himself upon the friendship that he pretended to have at the Court of Peking'.⁷⁵ This audacious claim appears to be referring to the connections he had through his cousin, named in Douglas's diary as 'John Delima', who was at court at the time of the English arrival but would come to their aid later in the season.⁷⁶

John Delima, a curious name for the cousin of a Chinese merchant, provides a clue that helps us disentangle another layer of Hunshunquin's complex connections. He was in fact a Chinese man

⁷¹ Cf. van Dyke, *Politics and Strategies*, 16–21 for the financing of inland production.

⁷² Van Dyke, *Success and Failure*, 8–9.

⁷³ Leonard Blussé, 'Chinese Trade to Batavia during the days of the V.O.C.', *Archipel*, 18 (1979), 206–208; Souza, *Survival of Empire*, 128.

⁷⁴ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 48.

⁷⁵ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 40.

⁷⁶ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 205.

named Gao Zhu (高竹), courtesy name Gao Jiaqi (高嘉淇), son of Gao Ricong (高日琮). Gao Ricong was a minor official of Xinhui County (新會縣), to the south of Canton and a short distance from Macau.⁷⁷ Here Gao Zhu was born in 1658 amidst the chaos of the Qing conquest of the south. His early years were spent following his parents as they fled from place to place to avoid the fighting, until his father was killed in 1668. The ten-year-old Gao ended up being taken into a Portuguese family in Macau. They had him baptised with the Christian name João Baptista Lima and took him overseas to Siam, where he began to study Western medicine. This was his entry-point into the imperial court. He returned to China with Bernardino della Chiesa, who was to take up the post of Vicar Apostolic of Zhejiang, and accompanied della Chiesa on missionary work throughout the Jiangnan region. He later returned to Xinhui, where he established a Western medical practice, and in 1689 was appointed by the Senate to serve the city of Macau as a doctor. Finally, in 1692, following Ferdinand Verbiest's request for the Society of Jesus to send a medical expert in addition to the mathematicians already present in Beijing, he was chosen to accompany the Jesuit physician Isidoro Lucci to court, with their journey paid for by Governor-General Shi Lin. He personally treated the emperor and his relatives during the year he spent at court, for which he was rewarded with the title Imperial Physician of the Hall of Mental Cultivation (*yangxindian yuyi* 養心殿御醫). He clearly made further visits to the capital over the following decade, including in 1699 when the English arrived.⁷⁸

Hunshunquin made much of his imperial connections through his cousin, but his other great advantage in trade was his life spent in a multicultural environment, which Lima's biography shows encompassed his extended family as well. He was at ease dealing with Chinese and foreigners alike, and even told Douglas that he wanted to send his son to England to learn English and study with the East India Company.⁷⁹ Although he does not appear to have used a Christian name, he liked to refer to God and Christian concepts such as sin in moments of great tension and was either a

⁷⁷ The following discussion is based on Dong Shaoxin 董少新, *Xing-shen zhi jian: Zaoqi Xiyang yixue ru Hua shi gao* 形神之間：早期西洋醫學入華史稿 [Between Form and Spirit: Draft History of the Entry of Early Western Medicine into China] (Shanghai, 2008), 110–112.

⁷⁸ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 204.

⁷⁹ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 89.

Catholic like his cousin or at least conversant with Western thinking.⁸⁰ More importantly, he was a fluent Portuguese speaker and needed no interpreter. Douglas distinguished in his journal between Portuguese and the Portuguese-based creoles used throughout maritime Asia, which he called ‘our Indian *Lingua Franca*’.⁸¹ Hunshunquin, he said, spoke ‘the Portuguese language’—the prestige variety spoken in high society in Macau.⁸² However, he could not write in the Latin script, but instead wrote letters using a system of transcribing Portuguese sounds into Chinese characters, which his son, another fluent Portuguese speaker, could read aloud to the English merchants.⁸³

For Douglas, the advantages of working with Hunshunquin were obvious. He was independent from the officials attempting to influence the trade, had the courage and official connections to stand up even to senior officials, and had a powerful motivation in that this was his chance to return to his former wealth. Indeed, he told Douglas explicitly that he hoped through siding with Douglas to become the East India Company’s merchant for future voyages.⁸⁴ And, just as importantly, the problem of the linguists’ divided loyalties would also be solved if Hunshunquin could undertake most of the important interpreting work himself.⁸⁵ Douglas signalled the end of this first stage of the trading season, the negotiation of the terms of the trade, by throwing his lot in completely with Hunshunquin. Not only would Douglas contract primarily with Hunshunquin, he also allowed the Chinese merchant to convince him to dismiss both his linguists. Douglas was perhaps concerned to temper his enthusiasm for Hunshunquin in his journal, and initially claimed that Quiqua had left of his own accord, but made it explicitly clear in later entries that he had dismissed both the linguists at the merchant’s request.⁸⁶ This was not surprising, given that Quiqua was, in Douglas’s words, Hunshunquin’s ‘inveterate enemy’, and Rosário ‘had no kindness for him’.⁸⁷ They were nominally replaced by a ‘*jurubaça*’, presumably from Macau, whom Douglas later described as

⁸⁰ BL/IOA/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fos. 135, 149.

⁸¹ BL/IOA/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 138.

⁸² BL/IOA/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 19.

⁸³ BL/IOA/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 75.

⁸⁴ BL/IOA/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 89.

⁸⁵ BL/IOA/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 19.

⁸⁶ BL/IOA/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fos. 53, 146.

⁸⁷ BL/IOA/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fos. 42, 146.

Hunshunquin's 'creature'.⁸⁸ Too elderly and sick to play much of an active role, he is not even given a name in the historical record.

This sequence of events—Douglas's debate over which linguists and merchants to work with in light of problems of trust caused by the conflicted loyalties of these semi-state semi-commercial actors, his attempts to circumvent official interference, and his eventual decision to trust Hunshunquin as both merchant and translator—reveals the origins of the search for alternative bilingual contacts in a reaction to the official management of the trade, as well as the kind of alternative contacts whom he was seeking: courageous in the face of official pressure, bilingual, and well-connected. However, his seeming solution to this problem in the person of Hunshunquin would quickly fail. Reading Douglas's diary with the benefit of hindsight, it is perhaps obvious that he and Hunshunquin were hopelessly unrealistic in believing they could circumvent the official dominance of the trade by themselves. Officials expected to be closely involved in trade, and of course this was an attack on their own profits, but it also went beyond this. Given that the management of the trade relied on collaboration between state and commercial interests, what they were attempting was not only an attack on many powerful men's financial interests, but also the security of the border itself. This was because one of the central justifications for lifting the maritime prohibition had been to bring traders back into the purview of the state, transforming pirates into merchants, as we have seen in Chapter Two. It was therefore no surprise that Douglas's plan failed, but his subsequent actions are revealing of how personal ties were mobilised and evaluated in the Canton trade. The next section therefore examines the rapid fall of Hunshunquin and Douglas's attempt to resolve his subsequent isolation and lack of allies, using it as a window into the English understanding of the personal ties that were the stuff of commercial life in the Pearl River Delta, expressed in a language based on concepts such as friendship, service, and enmity.

Friends and enemies: commercial ties in the Pearl River Delta

⁸⁸ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 73.

For a brief period, Hunshunquin did live up to Douglas's expectations. The *Macclesfield* sailed from Taipa Quebrada for Canton on the 3rd of October.⁸⁹ Two days later, they reached the fort of the Bocca Tigris, where they paid their fees and registered their ship's complement and her armaments.⁹⁰ Another two days of working up the river brought them within sight of Whampoa (*Huangpu* 黃埔), but before they entered the anchorage, Hunshunquin arrived in a small boat to smuggle some money off away from the oversight of the Customs House.⁹¹ This was so that he could use it to secure goods without having to let the other merchants and their official patrons know, which would have pushed prices up. Not only that, but when they did finally enter the anchorage he managed to convince the Customs not to levy duty on the wine and spirits that were only for consumption on the ship, as well as to limit the number of Chinese officials coming on board expecting food and drink.⁹² Douglas wrote with satisfaction that all this 'both saved us money and prevented a great deal of trouble'.⁹³

Hunshunquin also performed the work that a linguist would normally do. Rosário, spurned by Douglas as a linguist, had gone into business with the captain of a Chinese merchant ship called Tiqua.⁹⁴ Douglas had contracted with them for pepper, but quickly fell into dispute over the quantity and quality of what they sent him.⁹⁵ Hunshunquin was able to solve the dispute by translating the contract for Douglas and using his local knowledge to explain what its vague terms meant in the context of Pearl River Delta custom.⁹⁶ So, he explained, the contract might not specify explicitly that the pepper should be cleaned, but this was implied in the terms.⁹⁷ The custom of the Delta was that dusty and uncleaned pepper was unacceptable for sale, so the contract could indeed be used to force Tiqua and Rosário to deliver better quality pepper. This was clear enough to anyone with local knowledge, so there was no need for formal enforcement mechanisms: simply the

⁸⁹ BL/IOE/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 54.

⁹⁰ BL/IOE/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 54.

⁹¹ BL/IOE/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 55.

⁹² BL/IOE/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fos. 55–56, 67.

⁹³ BL/IOE/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 67.

⁹⁴ BL/IOE/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fos. 52, 90.

⁹⁵ BL/IOE/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fos. 61–62.

⁹⁶ BL/IOE/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 63.

⁹⁷ BL/IOE/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 63.

awareness that Hunshunquin was acting on Douglas's behalf was enough that Tiqua and Rosário realised that they could not get away with their attempt to cut costs for themselves.⁹⁸ Of course, as with all his work, he had his own interests in this. He told Douglas, probably truthfully given Tiqua's actions, that Tiqua and Rosário were struggling to supply the quantity that Douglas had ordered and offered to take over part of the contract himself.⁹⁹ Overall, Douglas thought he had succeeded in all his goals. He wrote encouragingly back to the East India Company directors that the Hoppo had promised 'all manner of freedom' and that he was confident that, if Hunshunquin should deliver on time, he could be gone from China by December.¹⁰⁰

But the very same day that Douglas wrote to the directors, Hunshunquin was arrested, probably by the magistrate of Xiangshan county (*Xiangshan Zhixian* 香山知縣), Ren Hanru (任漢儒), which Douglas immediately understood was because he had sought to block the senior officials' merchants from trading with the English.¹⁰¹ Eventually, Hunshunquin managed to obtain his own release via his 'friends'—his powerful contacts—but this was not the end of his troubles.¹⁰² Douglas and Hunshunquin fell into a heated dispute because the quality of the cloth that Douglas had sold to Hunshunquin was far below that of the musters that the Chinese had seen before signing their contract.¹⁰³ And, to make matters worse, Douglas discovered that the East India Company had been cheated in London when its agents had purchased the cloth, which, upon opening, turned out to measure significantly less than what the Company had paid for.¹⁰⁴ Douglas and Hunshunquin fell out so severely that the arguments made Douglas ill.¹⁰⁵ But more importantly, it also changed the equation with regard to his position in the Delta.

For the second time in as many months, Douglas found himself at cross purposes with his broker and translator. Having alienated both sides, the official linguists and Hunshunquin who had

⁹⁸ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fos. 64–65.

⁹⁹ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 65.

¹⁰⁰ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 69.

¹⁰¹ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 71. Hunshunquin was arrested by 'the Sin Loya', possibly 縣老爺.

¹⁰² BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 77.

¹⁰³ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 90.

¹⁰⁴ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 93.

¹⁰⁵ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 91.

promised to circumvent them, he was at a loss as to what he should do. But Douglas's problems are revealing for the historian, because it was as he cast around for new allies that he wrote in his diary the most detailed description of how he understood the network of relationships structuring the market of the Pearl River Delta. He wrote in a language of concepts such as friendship, service, kindness, and their opposite, enmity.

The most important of these, friendship, was a crucial term in early modern English thought, expressing a combination of sentiment and instrumentality, with the implication of a tie of mutually beneficial obligation.¹⁰⁶ Friendship in this light was once seen rather cynically by historians, but it has been argued that, in early modern England, before the modern narrowing of the definition of friendship, material expectations were not associated with the distortion of friendship as today.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, relationships of mutuality and obligation, often expressed under the label of 'kindness' performed by friends, formed an important way of making society legible, which is exactly how they appear in Douglas's diary.¹⁰⁸ Hunshunquin, in Douglas's diary, saw the Regional Commander and, at one point, the Hoppo as his 'friend[s]'; he hid in a 'friend's house' when he was evading arrest by the Provincial Surveillance Commissioner; and he believed himself to have 'such friends' that he could overcome his troubles.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, very often, the only details that Douglas notes about more minor figures in his narrative is their name or title and who their friends and enemies were—the General of Nantou's secretary who was a 'friend to Tinquá, the chief of our three merchants', or the Surveillance Commissioner of the Grain Circuit, who was 'a friend of' the Jesuits.¹¹⁰ Linguists, by contrast to Douglas's other contacts, offered not 'friendship' but 'service', a term with a much broader meaning than might be assumed, referring not narrowly to domestic servants but to any kind of hierarchical employment relationship with a master, but increasingly associated in the commercialising early modern era with timebound and contractual

¹⁰⁶ Naomi Tadmor, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England: Household, Kinship, and Patronage* (Cambridge, 2001), 213.

¹⁰⁷ Lynn Johnson, 'Friendship, coercion, and interest: Debating the foundations of justice in early modern England', *Journal of Early Modern History*, 8/1–2 (2004), 46–47.

¹⁰⁸ Wrightson, 'Mutualities', 163.

¹⁰⁹ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fos. 48, 74, 80, 82.

¹¹⁰ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fos. 160, 170.

relationships.¹¹¹ These were not alien concepts in the Pearl River Delta. Very similarly to England, the language of friendship and its allied concepts also played a key part in Portuguese understandings of stable, fair, and trustworthy commercial relations, situating them in what Pedro Cardim has called ‘the thickness of social relations’ (*na espessura das relações sociais*)—and, of course, it must be noted that all of the conversations about friendship and service that are recorded in English in Douglas’s diary in fact took place in Portuguese.¹¹² We know also that Chinese merchants understood markets as governed by interpersonal ties. The relatively low level of economic regulation in late imperial China meant that commercial relations were reliant primarily on trust and personal relationships, in particular with brokers familiar with local markets and capable of introducing buyers and sellers.¹¹³ Authors of merchant manuals advocated establishing personal relations (*guanxi*) and feelings (*renqing*), claiming that these were more powerful tokens of trust than the government-issued licenses for brokers.¹¹⁴

This section begins by exploring Douglas’s use of this vocabulary to describe how he now sought a replacement for Hunshunquin, turning initially to ‘friends’ whom he believed had reason to show him ‘kindness’. But this was unsuccessful, and eventually Quiqua convinced Douglas to accept and have trust in his ‘service’ again on the basis of his courage and his professed enmity towards Hunshunquin. This latter concept, the opposite of friendship, was becoming increasingly important as Douglas searched for contacts to act explicitly against Hunshunquin. In describing his search, he linked these terms also with his prior concern for courage and faithfulness in evaluating the quality of a potential contact.

Douglas’s goal now was to get the Hoppo to intervene against Hunshunquin, which he hoped to achieve either by meeting the Hoppo and complaining to him orally, or, should that not work, by submitting a written paper against Hunshunquin.¹¹⁵ But the problem was that he had no-one to

¹¹¹ Ann Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1981), 6; Elizabeth Rivlin, *The Aesthetics of Service in Early Modern England* (Evanston, IL, 2012), 10–11.

¹¹² Pedro Cardim, ‘Amor e amizade na cultura política dos séculos XVI e XVII’, *Lusitania Sacra*, 2/11 (1999), 42–3, 45.

¹¹³ Richard John Lufrano, *Honorable Merchants: Commerce and Self-Cultivation in Late Imperial China* (Honolulu, 1997), 108, 112.

¹¹⁴ Lufrano, *Honorable Merchants*, 109–11.

¹¹⁵ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fos. 135, 139, 140.

translate for him. First, he tried Father Basset, whom he knew ‘could both speak and write Chinese’ and had ‘pretended a great deal of French kindness to us’.¹¹⁶ But no promised kindness was worth the danger that Father Basset thought he would be in if he set himself against so many senior figures, whom he claimed ‘might in revenge raise the mob on him’.¹¹⁷ Once again, courage was the determining factor. Douglas tried instead sending messengers to several places where he thought he could obtain a new linguist, but they all refused ‘for fear of incurring the displeasure of their countrymen’.¹¹⁸ Finally, he turned to Bonac, who, he wrote, ‘all along has appeared at everything our real friend’, which he attributed to Bonac feeling sympathy having also suffered similar troubles.¹¹⁹ Here at last was somebody seemingly willing to help. Bonac had already dismissed his linguist, the *Amphitrite* having already sailed, but he sent a servant to find this linguist and bring him to Douglas, where they agreed to go together to the Hoppo the next day.¹²⁰ But when morning came, the linguist, ‘afraid of our merchant’, was nowhere to be seen.¹²¹ The same was repeated the next day, when he turned to a broker whom he was familiar with. The broker ‘pretended to a great deal of courage and boldness’ and Douglas promised him a great reward, but the next day he too had thought better of it and disappeared.¹²²

Helpless, Douglas had to go to the Hoppo’s *bithesi* (*bitieshi* 筆帖式), or bilingual Manchu secretary, and tell him that he had no linguist.¹²³ He recorded that this conversation was in ‘Indian *lingua franca*’, the Portuguese-based creole of maritime Asia, showing that the secretary, who was already used to multilingual working by the nature of his job, must have learnt at least some basic conversation to talk without a linguist.¹²⁴ Indeed, one of the crew of the *Amphitrite* wrote around the same time that ‘a very great number of people there understand Indian Portuguese’ (*un très grand nombre de gens y entendent le Portugais des Indes*).¹²⁵ But the specialised task of a linguist was

¹¹⁶ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 135.

¹¹⁷ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 135.

¹¹⁸ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 136.

¹¹⁹ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 139.

¹²⁰ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 136.

¹²¹ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 137.

¹²² BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 138.

¹²³ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 138.

¹²⁴ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 138.

¹²⁵ Froger, *Relation du premier voyage*, 143.

beyond the secretary, and Douglas asked if he knew of any linguists to send for.¹²⁶ The secretary told him that he could use Hunshunquin, upon which Douglas stated explicitly for the first time that Hunshunquin ‘could not serve’ because Douglas wanted to complain against him.¹²⁷ Eventually, to break the deadlock, Hunshunquin himself convinced the elderly *jurubaça* to come, so weak and sick that he was carried in a chair and accompanied by another man to hold him.¹²⁸ The meeting itself was brief: the Hoppo attempted to mediate between both parties, telling Hunshunquin and the other merchants to make greater haste in fulfilling their contract, and telling the English merchants that he could do no more unless they submitted a petition formally requesting it.¹²⁹

Douglas turned to ‘several of our friends’ for advice, who unanimously told him not to petition given the dangerous unpredictability of formal legal processes that, once started, could not be stopped.¹³⁰ Now with nobody willing to help him, Douglas was forced to turn again to Hunshunquin, despite their differences. Hunshunquin took advantage of this to shift the target of Douglas’s attacks away from himself, convincing Douglas to let him draw up an informal memorandum against the other merchants.¹³¹ But this paper, which Douglas had checked at the French factory to ensure that it was written ‘faithfully’, had little effect.¹³² He soon found himself looking again for contacts to help him draw up another paper, this time against Hunshunquin. Again, he made use of his ‘friend’ Bonac, but the writer whom Bonac found for him was not good and he dared not submit a poorly-worded document.¹³³ He attempted to turn to Father Basset again, but the priest was away from Canton.¹³⁴ The *jurubaça* was out of the question because he was Hunshunquin’s ‘creature’ and ‘of his procuring’, that is, chosen for them by the merchant.¹³⁵ Even Rosário refused to help. ‘We

¹²⁶ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 138.

¹²⁷ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 138.

¹²⁸ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 138.

¹²⁹ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fos. 138–139.

¹³⁰ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 139.

¹³¹ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 140.

¹³² BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 140.

¹³³ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fos. 144, 146.

¹³⁴ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 146.

¹³⁵ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 146.

could not tell what to do,' he wrote despairingly, 'and knew nobody that we could trust that would be faithful to us.'¹³⁶

But one enterprising linguist saw in Douglas's desperation an opportunity. Quiqua stopped Douglas's palanquin in the street, asking to speak with him.¹³⁷ Like Paulo Neretti, Quiqua was a practiced negotiator and knew how to smooth over their previous difficulties. He began by expressing sympathy for Douglas's predicament, saying that 'he was much concerned to hear of the troubles that we were in'.¹³⁸ Diplomatically, he said that he knew that Douglas was not responsible for dismissing him and it was Hunshunquin who was to blame.¹³⁹ Having put aside any remaining rancour and established that he had reason as well to dislike Hunshunquin, he told Douglas confidently that 'he did not question but that yet he could do me good service'.¹⁴⁰ Douglas was surprised and pleased, although a little wary, and took Quiqua's address so that he could consult first with his assistants.¹⁴¹ When he talked it over with Biggs and the other Englishmen, they all agreed that Quiqua had two great advantages: he was courageous, and, most importantly, 'a most inveterate and irreconcilable enemy to our merchant Hunshunquin'.¹⁴² With this, they decided he would indeed perform 'better service' and decided to win him over with the promise of a large reward and a letter of recommendation to the next English ship that came.¹⁴³ They met the next day. Foregoing their previous secrecy, Douglas and his assistants explained their situation to him—which Douglas noted in a wry aside that Quiqua knew entirely anyway.¹⁴⁴ This was no surprise given the importance for the linguists of keeping constantly abreast of the political and commercial situation of the Delta, as we have seen in previous chapters.

He asked Quiqua directly whether he would 'serve us faithfully' and say everything that they wanted him to say to the Hoppo without fear of anybody else.¹⁴⁵ In a flurry of 'promises and

¹³⁶ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 146.

¹³⁷ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 146.

¹³⁸ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 146.

¹³⁹ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 146.

¹⁴⁰ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 146.

¹⁴¹ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 146.

¹⁴² BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 146.

¹⁴³ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fos. 146–147.

¹⁴⁴ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 147.

¹⁴⁵ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 148.

protestations', Quiqua told them that he would not only do that but also have their ship dispatched in a matter of only days.¹⁴⁶ Reaching his climax, he thumped his chest and declared 'Quiqua does not fear the devil!'.¹⁴⁷ He might not fear the devil, but service still required payment, and Douglas repeated the offer of a large reward and employment as the East India Company's linguist in future.¹⁴⁸

At last, Douglas had somebody in service to him, and, best of all, an energetic 'enemy' of Hunshunquin.¹⁴⁹ But this was also a final defeat for his long-standing plan of avoiding official interference by refusing to use the linguists. Now he was firmly within the scope of official control and beginning to feel its pressure. The end of the monsoon was fast approaching, and the senior officials of the province were becoming angered at their subordinates' failure to avert the prospect of an armed foreign ship remaining in the Delta into the summer, which was strictly prohibited. Bonac, 'very friendly of late', warned that the English could not overstay their welcome.¹⁵⁰ As the following discussion shows, Douglas was realising all too late that he needed not only servants who could translate, draw up papers, and negotiate, but friends among officialdom as well.

Quiqua had the advantage of enmity with Hunshunquin, but what he lacked was personal influence with senior officials. As we have seen, Douglas always took care to record who had ties with whom, and he mentions no friendship between Quiqua and the Hoppo or any other officials. This must be why he took a surprising step, choosing to offer a Chinese Christian, Don Pedro Mariano, a reward if he would 'befriend' the Hoppo for them.¹⁵¹ He made it plain in his diary that he did not trust Mariano, who, he said, 'was certainly engaged to befriend the three merchants'.¹⁵² But Mariano still seemed the best choice to win the Hoppo's friendship, because unlike Quiqua he was 'very intimate at the Hoppo's', as well as being in Douglas's eyes a 'covetous greedy' man who might well be induced to help them by the promise of substantial compensation.¹⁵³ To Quiqua, instead, Douglas

¹⁴⁶ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 148.

¹⁴⁷ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 148.

¹⁴⁸ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 148.

¹⁴⁹ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 146.

¹⁵⁰ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 150.

¹⁵¹ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fos. 148–9.

¹⁵² BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 149.

¹⁵³ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 149.

gave the perhaps easier task of trying to befriend a subordinate of the Hoppo's whom he called the 'dispensero', who seems to have been some kind of doorkeeper and assistant.¹⁵⁴ They had dealt with this man before but had not yet done anything specifically to establish a relationship between them, and Douglas worried that they had 'no assurance' of his 'friendship'.¹⁵⁵ Meanwhile, Hunshunquin, too, was not blind to the consequences of Quiqua's return. He brought the sick old *jurubaça* to Douglas, attempting to convince the English merchants to abandon Quiqua, who he said was a 'rogue'.¹⁵⁶ Douglas refused, and a heated argument broke out between the two men, showing what importance they both attached to the choice of linguists.¹⁵⁷

The following weeks saw a tortuous and complex set of negotiations and debates as all parties attempted with increasing urgency to finish the matter before the end of the monsoon. Although Douglas tried his best to present himself to the directors in his diary as unfairly wronged, in his more candid moments even he admitted that the heart of the problem was the poor quality of his goods, which nobody was willing to take, and the fact that the arrival of a heavily-laden ship from Manila had created such an oversupply of wares that his own goods were now seriously overpriced.¹⁵⁸ Back and forth went the arguments, with almost daily changes in position on both sides: could he offer a discount? What if he just took all the goods back and returned the payment for them? What if they could be split up among the different merchants? How could the complex set of contracts he had signed be used to enforce a resolution? All the while, senior officials piled increasing pressure on all involved to see the English gone as soon as possible.

Douglas continued to emphasise personal ties as the path to victory in these disputes, as did Quiqua, although they disagreed on whom to target. Quiqua was insistent on the need to win over Shemea, Governor-General Shi Lin's merchant, who he said was doing them 'great kindness' in stopping them being forced straight out of the Delta without the opportunity to finalise their business.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁴ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 156. The terms means something like a 'steward'. It is not clear exactly what Chinese title this corresponds to.

¹⁵⁵ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 158.

¹⁵⁶ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 151.

¹⁵⁷ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 151.

¹⁵⁸ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 165.

¹⁵⁹ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 177.

Douglas was sceptical, thinking that Quiqua was probably trying to ingratiate himself at Douglas's expense with a powerful merchant, but grudgingly agreed to send a gift of cloth, spirits, and objects such as a telescope.¹⁶⁰ Douglas preferred to target the Hoppo. In his diary, he was now not only recording the details of who had a relationship of friendship or service with whom, but also evaluating the strength of those relationships. The Hoppo's friendship, he thought, was only 'pretended', despite the efforts of Don Pedro Mariano and his claims to 'kindness', and now he also wanted Quiqua to try again to win him over.¹⁶¹ Quiqua was reluctant, perhaps because he thought it was dangerous, unrealistic, or less useful than friendship with Shi Lin, but eventually was prevailed upon to go.¹⁶²

Friendship under tension

But alongside the ongoing work of creating, evaluating, and maintaining relationships, as matters came to a head, there was also sometimes a need to disrupt these relationships. Increasingly, the turning-points in the final pages of Douglas's narrative are moments of outbursts of anger and threats. These followed a similar logic to the threats and use of violence in the previous chapter, disrupting normal sociability as a signal of the seriousness of the unfairness or insult that was felt to have been suffered, and requiring an effort to reconcile on potentially changed terms that recognised the existence of a grievance, if the situation was not to deteriorate. This reflects the understanding of historians who have argued that for Englishmen around the end of the seventeenth century heated outbursts of anger were a 'socially acceptable script', entirely justified in certain contexts and requiring no apology, but clearly understood as forcing 'rapprochement and reconciliation'.¹⁶³ When, for example, the dispensero refused to let Douglas and Quiqua in to meet his master and then spoke in favour of the three merchants, Douglas concluded that not only had Quiqua's attempts to win over the dispensero failed, but the three merchants were now going to

¹⁶⁰ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 177.

¹⁶¹ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 165.

¹⁶² BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 165.

¹⁶³ Linda A. Pollock, 'Anger and the negotiation of relationships in early modern England', *The Historical Journal*, 47/3 (2004), 571–90.

use their friendship with him to prevent the English from even meeting the Hoppo.¹⁶⁴ Out of options, Douglas flew into a rage, no doubt partially a spontaneous outpouring of emotion, but also, as he implicitly recognised in his diary, a symbolically powerful act.¹⁶⁵ He threatened first to stay all night at the door, and then, when that did not work, made as if to beat the ‘great tambour of justice’, the *mingyuangu* 鳴冤鼓 used as a last resort to call for redress from otherwise inaccessible officials.¹⁶⁶ ‘This threatening,’ he wrote, ‘... I did seem to do with very great passion, stamping and tearing like a madman’, while also making wild claims that he would go straight to the Governor and the Governor-General to complain.¹⁶⁷ The dispensers had no choice but to fetch the Hoppo, who came immediately and told him to come inside the Customs House to talk it over.¹⁶⁸ The three merchants, hearing of the drama, sent Hunshunquin with a message that they had changed their minds and would take his goods after all.¹⁶⁹ But Douglas was not yet ready to calm down and declared that they were all ‘lying deceitful rogues’, telling Quiqua to ignore them.¹⁷⁰

Inside the Customs House, Douglas continued an aggressive line, telling the Hoppo that if he was forced to accept the goods being returned to him, he would dump them at the Hoppo’s house.¹⁷¹ In response, the Hoppo took a conciliatory tone, attempting to mediate between the parties and saying that he ‘advised [Douglas] as a friend’.¹⁷² Over the course of the discussion, Douglas and the three merchants, who by now had come in person, convinced Solbi to order Hunshunquin to take the goods instead.¹⁷³ On the face of it, this was a sensible solution for the Hoppo that avoided conflict with either the enraged Douglas or the three powerful merchants, and one that Hunshunquin should be unable to resist by himself.¹⁷⁴ But now, out of options just as Douglas had been, it was

¹⁶⁴ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 153.

¹⁶⁵ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fos. 153–154.

¹⁶⁶ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 153. For the *mingyuangu*, see Zhang Xiaoping 姜曉萍, “‘Ji gu ming yuan’ de youlai “擊鼓鳴冤”的由來’ [The origins of ‘striking the drum to claim a grievance’], *Faxue Zazhi* 法學雜誌, 4 (1992).

¹⁶⁷ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fos. 153–154.

¹⁶⁸ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 154.

¹⁶⁹ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 154.

¹⁷⁰ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 154.

¹⁷¹ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 154.

¹⁷² BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 154.

¹⁷³ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 155.

¹⁷⁴ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 155.

Hunshunquin's turn to burst out in fury, 'stir[ring] up his passion against the three merchants to such a degree that we thought he would beat them before the Hoppo' and threatening like Douglas to take the matter to more senior officials.¹⁷⁵ At this, the Hoppo now 'seemed affronted and enraged', telling the English that he had always sought to 'advance our interest'.¹⁷⁶ Abandoning the conciliatory language of friendship, he warned them in the authoritative tone of Chinese officialdom that he had 'advised us always for the best as a father', ordering them all to leave and solve the matter among themselves.¹⁷⁷

Farcical as the meeting may seem, it left Douglas with a strong impression. When Bonac and the Jesuits suggested a petition to 'a friend of theirs', the Grain Commissioner, asking him to intervene, Douglas remembered how the Hoppo had 'appeared so much concerned a few days ago' and how insulted he was by the suggestion of bypassing his authority and seeking influence with others.¹⁷⁸ And it must be noted that the respective outbursts of anger had also succeeded in preventing unacceptable outcomes, either Douglas or Hunshunquin being forced to take the goods, or the Hoppo's authority being circumvented. But if the Hoppo had had to accept that he could not impose such damaging terms, Douglas had been forced into accepting even more explicitly that he was now subject once more to the established means of controlling foreign merchants through the linguists under the supervision of the Hoppo. The consequences of this for Quiqua were inevitably severe. Unsurprisingly, with the foreign merchants showing no sign of any imminent departure despite the lateness of the season, and meetings in person seeming unable to bring home to them the urgency of leaving as soon as possible, the officials turned to a familiar technique.

On 6th April, the General of Nantou, having attempted on several occasions to summon them before him to explain why they had not left, sent one of his officers bringing an elderly man who served as the *baojia* head for the street where Quiqua lived and demanding to know why they were ignoring him.¹⁷⁹ Bringing the *baojia* head was clearly intended to threaten Quiqua, because after a short

¹⁷⁵ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 155.

¹⁷⁶ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 155.

¹⁷⁷ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 161.

¹⁷⁸ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 161.

¹⁷⁹ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 172.

discussion the officer ‘in a great rage pulled out an iron chain, which he clapped about [the *baojia* head’s] neck, and dragged him downstairs like a dog’.¹⁸⁰ Douglas understood the significance immediately, writing afterwards that ‘his only crime was because he had not obliged our linguist to prevail with us’.¹⁸¹ But still Douglas resisted, and, inevitably, the officer ‘clapped another chain’ on Quiqua. Quiqua pleaded with Douglas to go to the general, but he wanted to consult with the Hoppo first, and so the general’s officer ‘dragged them away in a great rage’.¹⁸² Eventually, having taken some advice from the Hoppo on what to say, Douglas went to the General’s residence and after much waiting was admitted to speak to him.¹⁸³ Quiqua interpreted still in chains while the general asked detailed questions about the situation.¹⁸⁴ He then suddenly had Quiqua hustled out of the room, initially confusing Douglas until a second linguist was brought in and they went through the same questions again to check that the interpreting was accurate.¹⁸⁵

Eventually, Quiqua was released, but the responsibility was now clearly entirely on his shoulders. After another stormy meeting at the Customs House, in which the Hoppo was only dissuaded from imprisoning all the merchants when they fell on their knees and pleaded with him, Douglas was realising that his attempts to ‘befriend’ the Hoppo and the dispensero had failed.¹⁸⁶ Now Quiqua was being prevented from carrying out anything that would disadvantage the three merchants by simply being refused entry by ‘the three merchants’ friends’ in the Customs House.¹⁸⁷ Trying a technique that had worked before, Douglas wrote that ‘I stormed and fretted because the linguist could not be admitted’, but now it was to no avail.¹⁸⁸ He sent Quiqua twice to remind the Hoppo of ‘his promise to befriend us’, but he was not allowed in.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁰ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 172.

¹⁸¹ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 172.

¹⁸² BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 172.

¹⁸³ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 173.

¹⁸⁴ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fos. 173–174.

¹⁸⁵ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 174.

¹⁸⁶ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fos. 178–179.

¹⁸⁷ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 181.

¹⁸⁸ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 181.

¹⁸⁹ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 182.

This was an impossible situation for Quiqua, who emphasised his difficulties in demanding payment against Douglas's will before continuing.¹⁹⁰ The Hoppo was still expecting Quiqua to solve the matter despite all the constraints the linguist faced. It was no surprise that Quiqua was unsuccessful, and by the 7th June, the monsoon being long past, the Hoppo had Quiqua chained again and imprisoned at the Regional Commander's residence, which Douglas wrote in his diary was clearly because they had not yet left the Delta.¹⁹¹ This time, getting Quiqua released was much more difficult. Douglas tried to explain that arresting Quiqua would only delay their departure because he needed a linguist every day, but the Hoppo and Regional Commander simply returned excuses for not being able to do anything.¹⁹² Douglas attempted again to solve the problem through creating ties of obligation and managed to convince the Hoppo's son with a gift of pistols and some glassware to ask the Hoppo 'to befriend us in sending to get our linguist set at liberty'.¹⁹³ Only half an hour later, the Hoppo sent a messenger to ask for a petition, after receiving which he sent an order requiring Quiqua to be freed.¹⁹⁴ But the Provincial Administration Commissioner, who outranked the Hoppo, sent a countervailing order, and the linguist remained in prison.¹⁹⁵ Eventually, the Englishmen turned to João Baptista Lima, Hunshunquin's cousin mentioned earlier, who had just arrived in Macau, and 'our good friend Senhor Luis', the Chinese Christian who had helped them when they first arrived.¹⁹⁶ Through these means, they managed to draw up a petition that was so tightly worded that the merchants were astonished and demanded to know who had written it.¹⁹⁷ The diary ends without detailing exactly how the situation was solved, although we know that Douglas left on the 18th July with about 45,000 taels of goods purchased and nearly three-quarters of his original goods sold.¹⁹⁸ Unable to return to England having overstayed the end of the monsoon, he went on to Fujian, and eventually returned to England in 1701, with what was described as a 'full

¹⁹⁰ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fos. 184–185.

¹⁹¹ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fos. 201–202.

¹⁹² BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fos. 202–203.

¹⁹³ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 203.

¹⁹⁴ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 204.

¹⁹⁵ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fos. 204.

¹⁹⁶ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fos. 204–205.

¹⁹⁷ BL/IOR/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 205.

¹⁹⁸ Morse, *Chronicles*, i., 97.

and rich cargo'.¹⁹⁹ As for Quiqua, the last sentence in Douglas's diary records that he was still in prison, and 'what they further design with him we know not'.²⁰⁰

Conclusion

Despite its stormy twists and turns, the voyage was a commercial success and has been seen as a turning-point for the permanent establishment of an English Canton trade.²⁰¹ But although Douglas's commercial achievements and familiarity with the broader environment of the Pearl River Delta were signs of the East India Company's increasing penetration of the Delta, this chapter has suggested that increased familiarity was also manifesting itself in a growing dissatisfaction with the linguists used by Chinese officialdom to manage the trade. Whereas Weddell and Mundy had been most concerned in 1637 to ensure that Paulo Neretti was indeed a 'petty mandarin' whom they could trust as a representative of the senior officials from whom they needed permission to trade, now in 1700 the English merchants were chafing at the restrictiveness of a trade so effectively kept within the boundaries established by the Qing state, which they felt prevented them from getting lower prices and better deals through a more open market. The vocabulary of friendship, kindness, service, and enmity, drawn from early modern English ideas about the structure of society and relationships of obligation and mutuality, became the language in which they articulated an increasingly sophisticated understanding of the personal ties that structured the Pearl River Delta market, evaluated against criteria of honesty, faithfulness, and courage, which underscore their central concerns. It is here, at the end of the seventeenth century, that we see the beginnings of the mistrust of the linguists as a group. This view, transformed and bolstered by later ideas about the ethics of translation and the relationship between public office and private interest, would eventually feed into the narratives of corrupt and unreliable linguists that have dominated the historiography of the Canton trade. But in the seventeenth century, this was a product not of the marginality or corruption of the linguists, but their excessive weakness in the face of powerful

¹⁹⁹ Morse, *Chronicles*, i., 97.

²⁰⁰ BL/IOE/L/MAR/A/CXXIII, fo. 205.

²⁰¹ James Bromley Eames, *The English in China: Being an Account of the Intercourse and Relations Between England and China from the Year 1600 to the Year 1843 and a Summary of Later Developments* (repr., London 1974).

officials who had found in the linguists an effective and low-stakes way of indirectly controlling the foreign merchants of the Pearl River Delta. Although in 1700, Douglas was unable finally to circumvent the linguists, the seeds had been sown for their decline over the eighteenth century, as the task of translation was increasingly handled by others and the linguists came to be dismissed as insignificant customs clerks.

Conclusion

How should maritime trade with Europeans be managed in the sixteenth and seventeenth-century Pearl River Delta? This thesis has suggested that the answers to this question as understood by the officials and merchants who participated in the trade had little to do with the attitudes popularly associated today with the foreign relations of late imperial China, such as a focus on tribute, indifference to trade, the separation of Chinese and foreigners, and a denigration of the study of foreign languages. They relied on Portuguese-speaking linguists who had arisen initially in the context of the Portuguese private trade on the margins of the south China coast. These had then been co-opted into the heart of the governance of the Pearl River Delta by the creation of a formal political community in Macau that saw heavy investment of time and resources into the acquisition, education, and training of a group of bilingual translators as essential to its survival. Chinese officials also saw these linguists as essential to the management of the frontier and actively supported their central role in the trade. Because of their origins, they represented an entanglement of state and commerce that has often been the starting-point of studies that see the linguists as corrupt and distorting Chinese relations with foreigners by focussing on their own self-interest rather than acting as neutral translators. But, in fact, it was precisely the entanglement of state and commerce that enabled the Chinese state to expand its reach, co-opting the linguists into a system of frontier management that relied on the motivation of private commercial interest rather than modern ideals of public office as a trust.

This form of managing the trade through linguists ambiguously positioned between state and commerce was inherited by the Qing, although set within a new institutional context of the Maritime Customs House and a new radical openness to trade with all European nations. Importantly for the linguists, the transition to Qing rule was one of the most significant events for seventeenth-century maritime Asian trade, and this new openness reflected a shift from the Ming emphasis on trade as essential for security to a new active encouragement of trade for its economic and financial benefits. In fact, a little-recognised fact about the early Qing was that the bureaucracy on the south coast was made up of men experienced in coastal affairs who were by no means anti-commerce, and whose greatest priority was to encourage a continuous stream of foreign merchants

to visit Canton in an atmosphere of relative peace, while making a substantial profit for themselves. This meant that the disputes that arose were no longer over the fundamental principle of the right to trade, as had been the case under the Ming, but over immediate commercial advantage. But this did not eliminate the danger under which linguists worked, but rather exacerbated it. Senior officials, caught between their need to avoid provoking conflict with foreign merchants and their personal interest in resolving commercial disputes to their own advantage, found in the linguists a perfect target, increasingly subjecting them to beatings and other violence to force a resolution. Linguists were enough a part of the state that beating them would not cause the same escalation as beating an English merchant or sailor, and violence against them could be legitimated as a quasi-judicial punishment. Meanwhile, they were also collaborators of the foreign merchants, whose writings reveal that they clearly felt some obligation towards the linguists and would make substantial concessions to avoid them being beaten. This violence was an essential part of frontier management, powerfully symbolic and universally understood and accepted as part of an early modern trading environment. Its most important purpose was to force a process of reconciliation on new and changed terms acceptable to Chinese officials.

Although this pervasive albeit contained form of violence would later come to be read as a sign of the pre-modern irrationality of the Canton trade, the constant measuring of forces by officials and traders in fact formed an important part of how early modern markets worked and was seen as entirely legitimate in seventeenth-century sources. In practice, it proved a remarkably effective system for controlling foreigners at arm's length, significantly reducing the risk of direct conflict between Qing officials and visiting merchants. However, as this thesis finds, it was this effectiveness that was also its undoing. By the end of the seventeenth century, English merchants were increasingly chafing at the restrictions imposed by the official linguists, writing ever more frequently of their frustration at linguists refusing to perform dangerous tasks such as translating complaints or excessive negotiating demands. Their writings focused ever more on 'freedom', the ability to choose for themselves whom they might work with. As the merchants became more familiar with Canton and Macau, and this knowledge became increasingly institutionalised within the East India Company, they began to circumvent official channels by calling on a growing network

of personal contacts, including merchants, doctors, and other literate bilingual figures. This was the beginning of the downfall of the official linguists as the primary translators and negotiators of the European merchants. When early nineteenth-century observers noted that linguists had been long since been reduced to customs clerks, translators in name only with nothing approaching the linguistic skill of their predecessors, this was perhaps the culmination of a multi-faceted process that began with the search for alternative bilingual contacts in the late seventeenth century.

The eventual downfall of the linguists, widely recognised as being complete by the late eighteenth century and identified in this thesis as beginning from the late seventeenth century, had its roots in the practicalities of the trade, rather than official suppression of contacts with foreigners. In the debates over the linguists examined in this thesis there is no discernible inherent resistance to foreign languages or to deep understanding of foreigners, but rather situational judgements of how to make profitable use of those who had these skills while keeping their activities within the boundaries of conduct that did not harm the Chinese state's interests. Multilingualism in early modern China was both an 'art of government', but also in the Pearl River Delta an underappreciated fact of daily life, not just for the linguists, but for many others as well.¹ And although the narrative arc of the rise and the beginning of the fall of the linguists is full of moments of conflict, there is no neat line between the disputes of the seventeenth century and the open warfare of the nineteenth. The eventual descent into armed conflict would require a transformation in thinking about commerce as a matter of national interest and national honour, driven by the symbiosis of capital and state—the joint-stock ventures that funded empire and the national debt that placed empire in the service of merchants—that would make war over opium thinkable.² But jealousy of trade did not animate the disagreements of the seventeenth century, which were largely prompted by the day-to-day problem of how the management of the frontier by semi-state semi-commercial agents would play out in terms of immediate commercial advantage.

¹ Yuxia Gao and Riccardo Moratto, 'Language and translation policies in China's multilingual governance: A study of the early and mid-Qing dynasty', *Language Policy*, (2024), 3.

² Richard Whatmore, *The End of Enlightenment: Empire, Commerce, Crisis* (London, 2023); Song-chuan Chen, *Merchants of War and Peace: British Knowledge of China in the Making of the Opium War* (Hong Kong, 2017), 2.

Finally, the study of translators such as the Pearl River Delta linguists still has a relevance today. Away from the conference interpreter's booth and the rarified circles of diplomatic interpreting, in fact translator-brokers still play an important role on China's borders.³ These brokers have been seen as 'transnational locals', people embodying complex entanglements of loyalties and interests who mobilise their linguistic and cultural knowledge in realising, sustaining and sometimes subverting and resisting what has been called 'China's global integration' at the local level.⁴ This description covers a huge array of people, from locally-rooted intermediaries with deep local knowledge, to internally-mobile bilinguals such as rural Korean-Chinese migrants, to those whose ties span vast distances, such as the African broker living in Hong Kong who, being Muslim, speaks Arabic and is trusted to broker deals with no contract between Saudi and Chinese businesses.⁵ Some are highly economically successful and become elites among their own communities.⁶ In this light, the linguists of the Pearl River Delta are not an aberration in a march to modernity where translation becomes progressively depersonalised, neutral, and invisible. And yet modern translation theory is driven precisely by this latter model of translation. But the vocabulary elucidated in this thesis, while going against much of modern Anglophone translation ethics, perhaps offers us an alternative genealogy of thinking about translation, in which some of the problems of translation, such as fidelity—loyalty, in the seventeenth-century phrasing—and accuracy—honesty or faithfulness—are articulated in terms shaped in encounters on the Chinese border that acknowledge the agency, interests, and active involvement of the translator. Thinking about translators in this way still has potential for understanding borderland life on its own terms today.

³ Gordon Mathews, 'African Cultural Brokers in South China', in Karsten Giese and Laurence Marfaing, eds, *Chinese and African Entrepreneurs: Social Impacts of Interpersonal Encounters* (Leiden, 2019); Irna Hofman, 'Opening up markets or fostering a new satellite state? Detangling the impetuses of Chinese land investments in Tajikistan', *BICAS Working Paper Series*, 4 (2015), 15.

⁴ Julie Michelle Klinger and Joshua S. S. Muldavin, 'New geographies of development: grounding China's global integration', *Territory, Politics, Governance*, 7/1 (2019), 4.

⁵ Hofman, 'Opening up', 15; Sharon J. Yoon, 'Cultural Brokerage and Transnational Entrepreneurship: South Korean and Korean Chinese Entrepreneurs in Beijing's Koreatown', *Korea Observer*, 48/2 (2017), 387–423; Mathews, 'African Cultural Brokers', 73–4.

⁶ Mathews, 'African Cultural Brokers', 73, 81–2.

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