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Bericht Samuel Shaws, des ersten amerikanischen Konsuls in Kanton, über die Gepflogenheiten des Handels in Kanton im Jahr 1784, o. O. , o. D. [nach dem 11. Mai 1784]

Erinnerungsbericht

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Regest:

In dem Bericht über seine erste Spekulationsfahrt nach Kanton, zu der er im Auftrag verschiedener amerikanischer Kaufleute aus New York und Philadelphia im Februar 1784 als Supercargo mit der Empress of China aufbrach, gibt der Autor detailliert Auskunft über die Gepflogenheiten des Handels in Kanton. Er hebt die Bedeutung der Cohong-Gilde hervor, u. a. bei der Festsetzung von Preisen, beschreibt die Anforderungen und Routinen bei der Abfertigung ankommender und auslaufender Schiffe, nennt Größenordnungen für die dabei anfallenden Kosten, etwa für die Anwerbung von Kompradoren, für den Zoll und für Schmiergelder. Darüber hinaus schildert er die eingeschränkte Bewegungsfreiheit der Europäer in Kanton, die wenigen, eher förmlichen Begegnungen mit chinesischen Kaufleuten, sowie das karge kulturelle und gesellschaftliche Leben der Europäer in Kanton. Samuel Shaw betont die besondere Freundlichkeit der Franzosen ihm gegenüber, erwähnt aber auch die Rivalitäten zwischen Briten und Franzosen und die Ignoranz der Chinesen gegenüber den USA als potenziell interessantem Handelspartner. Deutsche Seefahrer und Kaufleute wie Carl Philip Cassel spielen in seinem Bericht keine Rolle.

[1. Seite, 174]

[...]

The trade on the part of the Chinese is conducted by a set of merchants who style themselves the *co-hoang*, a word expressing our idea of a trading company.¹ This co-hoang consists of ten or twelve merchants, who have the exclusive privilege of the European and country trade, for which they pay a considerable sum to government; and no other dealers, if we except the petty shopkeepers, who are also licensed by government, can be concerned in it but by their permission. The co-hoang assemble as often as is necessary, communicate the information each has obtained respecting the commodities at market, agree on the prices at which they will purchase, and fix those of their own goods in return. When it happens that a ship has but a small cargo, an individual of the co-hoang is unwilling to be its fiador, as perhaps his profits will not pay the duties. In this case, a fiador is nominated in the co-hoang, and the vessel's business done on their joint account. There is generally no material variation from the prices fixed by the co-hoang.

Each ship and factory² must also have a *comprador*; this is a person who furnishes provisions and other necessities, for which he contracts at certain prices. There is[2. Seite, 175] much imposition in these articles,

1 Diese Bemerkung bezieht sich auf das chinesische Wort „hong“. Zur Konstituierung und Geschichte der Cohong-Gilde: CH'EN, Insolvency; Carroll, The Canton System.

2 Mit dem Begriff „factory“ ist hier eine Faktorei angesprochen, keine Fabrik mit industriellem Produktionsbetrieb.

and if the ship is small, the comprador, besides being paid for all supplies, will have a *douceur* of a hundred or a hundred and fifty taels.³ This must be submitted to, as the government derives a stated revenue from every ship, of whatever size, which the comprador has permission to supply.

All company ships, on coming to Whampoa, have each a banksall on shore, for the reception of their water-casks, spars, sails, and all the lumber of the ship, and containing, besides, apartments for the sick. The French have theirs, separate from the other Europeans, on an island, thence called French island; the others are on the opposite side, and confined to the ground they occupy, – for the remainder being rice-fields, and constantly watered, renders it impossible to go beyond the limits of the banksall; whereas French island is a delightful situation, and the resort of the gentlemen generally, of all nations, who go on and off at pleasure. Except those of the French and Americans, no common sailors are allowed to go there. For the exclusive privilege of this island, every French ship adds one hundred taels extra to the *hoppo's*⁴ present. The banksalls are large buildings, framed with bamboo reeds, and covered with mats and straw. They are erected by the Chinese,[3. Seite, 176] who pull them down immediately on their being left, in order that they may have the advantage of setting up new ones. The price of a banksall is about two hundred dollars. As our ship was small, the French gentlemen advised us not to have a banksall, and offered us as much room in theirs as we should want. The Chinese mandarins,⁵ of whom there are four on the island, before they would permit us quietly to send any thing ashore, demanded a *douceur* to the amount of the price of a banksall, – alleging that it was the same thing to them, whether we had one of our own, or made use of another. After altercating with them for several days, till our ship's provisions were stopped, I found it necessary to compromise for thirty dollars a month.

Besides a fiador and comprador, each ship must also have a linguist, at an expense of about a hundred and twenty taels. This person is absolutely necessary, as he is employed in transacting all business with the customhouse, – which is in the city, where no stranger can be admitted, – provides *sampans*⁶ for unloading and loading, and is always at call.

When the *hoppo* goes to measure the shipping at Whampoa, which he does as often as there are three or four that have not been visited, he is attended by the co-hoang. On these occasions, the captains produce their clock-work and other curiosities, of which the *hoppo* lays by such as he likes, and the fiador for the ship is obliged to send them to him. Some time after, the *hoppo* demands the price, – for he will not receive them as a present. The merchant, who understands matters[4. Seite, 177] perfectly, tells him about one twentieth part, or less, of their value, and takes the money. On our ship being measured, the *hoppo* inquired if we had any *sing-songs*, – the name they give to this sort of articles, – and, on being answered in the negative, seemed rather displeased. However, when we told him that we were from a new country, for the first time, and did not know that it was customary to bring such things, he appeared satisfied, but did not forget to enjoin it upon us to bring some when we should come again.⁷ As soon as the ship is measured, the fiador takes out a permit for unloading, and the linguist provides two sampans to receive the goods, which are hoisted out of the ships in presence of two mandarins, who live in their sampan alongside. When the goods arrive at Canton, one of the principal mandarins, with his assistants, attends to weigh, measure, and take account of every thing, after which liberty is granted to sell. Such articles as the fiador or the co-hoang do not want may be disposed of to any other person, from whom the linguist receives the duty, and settles with the fiador. When the return cargo is to be sent on

3 In der gedruckten Quelle erscheint an dieser Stelle eine Fußnote folgenden Inhalts: „The Chinese arithmetic is altogether decimal. In money: 10 cashes = 1 candareen; 10 cand. = 1 maz; 10 mazes = 1 tael. - An old Mexican dollar is taken at its weight, 7 maz 2 cand. New dollars add two to every hundred in all contracts, and pass at 7 m. 2 c. - Weights. 1 catty = 21 1/3 oz. Avoirdupois; 100 catties, or a picul, = 133 1/3 lbs., Avoirdupois. - Measures. 10 punts, or 1 covid, = 14 5/8 inches.“

4 In der gedruckten Quelle erscheint an dieser Stelle eine Fußnote folgenden Inhalts: „Chief officer of the customs.“

5 In der gedruckten Quelle erscheint an dieser Stelle eine Fußnote folgenden Inhalts: „A name common to officers of every rank, whether civil or military.“

6 In der gedruckten Stelle erscheint an dieser Stelle eine Fußnote folgenden Inhalts: „Boats.“

7 In der gedruckten Quelle erscheint an dieser Stelle eine Fußnote folgenden Inhalts: „Extract from the ship's log-book, Thursday, 14th September: – "At 10, A. M., came on board the grand mandarin, with his attendants, and the principal merchants of Canton, to measure the ship. Saluted them with nine guns. At 11, they left the ship, in order to visit and measure the other ships, – after which we saluted them with nine guns, as did the other ships. P. M. – The grand mandarin sent on board, as a present to the ship, two bulls, eight bags of flour, and seven jars of country wine.“

board, the mandarins attend, as before, and each package must have the seller's *chop*⁸ upon it, in order that the linguist may know [5. Seite, 178] where to apply for the duty; otherwise, the purchaser is himself obliged to pay it. No fees are paid to these officers, either by the buyer or seller, their salaries being fixed by the emperor. The expense of unloading is paid by the Europeans, and the Chinese deliver the return cargo alongside the ship, free of all duties and charges whatever. All merchandise must be unloaded and loaded by Chinese sampans.

In the customs of Canton, as of other parts of the world, instances of knavery sometimes occur. The duty on silks may be compromised with the mandarin, who will accept a present of about half the amount of the duty for letting them go free. In these cases, the ship's boat, carrying the flag of its nation, attends at the time appointed, and takes in the goods, for which the mandarin's chop is produced, and the boat passes without further examination. All boats are searched, on coming to or going from Canton, and must have a chop; besides which, they must, unless carrying the national flag, stop and be searched at three different chop-houses on the river.

The factories at Canton, occupying less than a quarter of a mile in front, are situated on the bank of the river. The quay is enclosed by a rail-fence, which has stairs and a gate opening from the water to each factory, where all merchandise is received and sent away. The limits of the Europeans are extremely confined; there being, besides the quay, only a few streets in the suburbs, occupied by the trading people, which they are allowed to frequent. Europeans, after a dozen years' [6. Seite, 179] residence, have not seen more than what the first month presented to view. They are sometimes invited to dine with the Chinese merchants, who have houses and gardens on the opposite side of the river; but even then no new information is obtained. Every thing of a domestic concern is strictly concealed, and, though their wives, mistresses, and daughters are commonly there, none of them are ever visible. We dined with four of the co-hoang, at separate times, two of whom entertained the French gentlemen and us at their country-houses. On these occasions, the guests generally contribute largely to the bill of fare. Both at Chowqua's and Pankekoa's, the French supplied the table furniture, wine, and a large portion of the victuals. The gardens belonging to Chowqua are extensive; much art and labor are used to give them a rural appearance, and in some instances nature is not badly imitated. Forests, artificial rocks, mountains, and cascades, are judiciously executed, and have a pleasing effect in diversifying the scene. The Chinese, however, discover a vitiated taste in their fondness for water. Every garden must have abundance of this element, and where it does not flow naturally, large, stagnant ponds, in the middle of which are summerhouses, supply the deficiency. Chowqua says that his house and gardens cost him upwards of one hundred thousand taels.

The Europeans at Canton do not associate together so freely as might be expected, – the gentlemen of the respective factories keeping much by themselves, and, excepting in a few instances, observing a very ceremonious and reserved behaviour. At the Danish factory, there is, every Sunday evening, a concert of instrumental music, by gentlemen of the several nations, which every body [7. Seite, 180] who pleases may attend. This is the only occasion when there appears to be any thing like a general intercourse. On the whole, the situation of the Europeans is not enviable; and, considering the length of time they reside in this country, the restrictions to which they must submit, the great distance they are at from their connections, the want of society, and of almost every amusement, it must be allowed that they dearly earn their money.

When any European dies at Canton, the chief of the nation to which he belonged sends and acquaints the different factories with the event. The flags are dropped, and remain at half-mast till the corpse is sent off to Whampoa, when they are hoisted up; the friends of the deceased, in the meanwhile, receiving visits of condolence from the other Europeans. The ships observe the same ceremony, and when the corpse appears in sight, the commodore of the nation to which it belongs begins to fire minute-guns, which are repeated by the other ships in port, and continued till the corpse is interred, on French island, when the flags are again hoisted as usual. Next day, the chief, with one or two gentlemen of his nation, returns the visits of the other Europeans, and thanks them for their attention on the occasion.

About ten days previous to our leaving Canton, Mr. Randall and I visited the respective chiefs (a ceremony not to be omitted), thanked them for their civilities, and informed them of our intended departure. Invitations from every nation followed, and we were obliged to receive from each another public dinner and supper, the

8 In der gedruckten Quelle erscheint an dieser Stelle eine Fußnote folgenden Inhalts: „Chop is a word of most extensive use. Here it means mark. Sometimes it is taken for the duty itself, to pay the chop; at other times it signifies a permit; and chop-chop! in speaking to any one, means make haste!“

consul of France insisting also upon paying us this honor in his separate right. The attention paid us at all times by the Europeans, both in a national and personal[8. Seite, 181] respect, has been highly flattering. From the French it was peculiarly friendly. They aided us in mooring our ship, insisted on our making ourselves at home in their factory, and accommodated us with part of their banksall, for the use of which they would not suffer us to make them any remuneration. “If,” said they, “we have in any instance been serviceable to you, we are happy, – and we desire nothing more than further opportunities to convince you of our affection.”

The Swedes, the Danes, the Dutch, and the Imperialists⁹ paid us every proper attention; nor were the English behindhand with them. Besides the gentlemen of the factory, many of their captains visited us, gave invitations, and accepted ours in return. During this intercourse, it was not difficult to discover their jealousy of the French; nor could they conceal their dislike of the good understanding we kept up with them, which would sometimes appear, in spite of their breeding. One evening, in particular, at the English factory, after the company had risen from table, the chief asked us if we could not take a sociable bottle together. This was a proposition to which we were not disposed to object, as he had always been particularly civil to us. In the course of our tête-à-tête, after professing much regard for us, and hoping that our nation and theirs would ever maintain a friendly correspondence, he observed, that there had been a small mistake in the *mode* of our reception, with respect to which he wished to set us right. “As soon as it was known,” said he, “that your ship was arrived, we determined to show you every national attention; and when, in company with the French gentlemen, you returned our visit, it was our intention that *you* should dine with us the next day, and the[9. Seite, 182] *French* the day after. We were, therefore, not a little disappointed at your coming together, and you may remember we then told you there had been a mistake on your part, for which we were exceedingly sorry; for, trust me, gentlemen,” added he, with a smile, “that we would not designedly have put you in such company.”

Exclusive of the country ships returning to India, there sailed last year from Canton and Macao forty-five ships for Europe, sixteen of which were English. The present season the numbers were as follows (Dec. 27): –

English, 9,¹⁰ – French, 4,¹¹ – Dutch, 5, – Danish, 3, – Portuguese, 4 } 25 for Europe.

American, 1 } 1 for America.

English country ships, 8,¹²}

Danish snow, 1, } 9

In all, 35[10. Seite, 183] The Swedes lost their passage; and the Imperialists and Spaniards, as has been remarked, had no ships here.

Ours being the first American ship that had ever visited China, it was some time before the Chinese could fully comprehend the distinction between Englishmen and us. They styled us the *New People*, and when, by the map, we conveyed to them an idea of the extent of our country, with its present and increasing population, they were not a little pleased at the prospect of so considerable a market for the productions of their own empire.

The knavery of the Chinese, particularly those of the trading class, has become proverbial. There is, however, no general rule without exceptions; and though it is allowed that the small dealers, almost universally, are rogues, and require to be narrowly watched, it must at the same time be admitted that the merchants of the co-hoang are as respectable a set of men as are commonly found in other parts of the world. It was with them, principally, that we transacted our business. They are intelligent, exact accountants, punctual to their engagements, and, though not the worse for being well looked after, value themselves much upon maintaining a fair character. The concurrent testimony of all the Europeans justifies this remark.

9 Samuel Shaw nutzt den Begriff „Imperialisten“ hier für die Briten.

10 In der gedruckten Quelle erscheint an dieser Stelle eine Fußnote folgenden Inhalts: „Sullivan, Captain Williams; Calcutta, Captain Thompson; Hawke, Captain Rivington; Ponsborne, Captain Hemmet; Middlesex, Captain Rogers; Contractor, Captain McIntosh; Foulis, Captain Blatchford; Latham, Captain Robertson; Nassau, Captain Gore.“

11 In der gedruckten Quelle erscheint an dieser Stelle eine Fußnote folgenden Inhalts: „Triton, Captain M. D’Ordélin, 64 } armed en flute; Provence, Captain M. Mancel, 64 } armed en flute; Sagittaire, Captain M. Morin, 50 } armed en flute; Pondicherry, Captain M. Beaulieu, chartered at the Isle of France.“

12 In der gedruckten Quelle erscheint an dieser Stelle eine Fußnote folgenden Inhalts: „Biram Gore, Captain Maughan; Bellona, Captain Jas. Richardson; Pallas, Captain O’Donnell; General Elliot, Captain McClew; Le Neckar, Captain Woolmore; Triumph, Captain Wm. Richardson; Lady Hughes, Captain Williams; Nonsuch, Captain Stevenson.

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