

of the Western Christian art, which can be seen in the interpretation of Macao art works. Second, Macao's Christian art is not a simple copy. It has integrated its unique Chinese cultural elements into it. The merging and conflict of two cultures form Macao's unique culture—coexistence of different cultures. Furthermore, the Christian art in Macao has a diverse cultural characteristic. It is not only influenced by Western Christian art, but also influenced by other Asian cultures, such as Japan and India. All in all,

Macao's early fine arts are a unique work of art with the integration of Chinese culture and painting features on the basis of Christian art as the main themes and forms and symbolic style of the Western Christian art. Macao's early fine arts play an important role in the communication and integration between Chinese and Western cultures through the absorption and creation of Christian works of art. This phenomenon plays a positive role in establishing the city image as well as the cultural orientation of Macao today. **RC**

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The French as Architectural Trendsetters in Canton, 1767-1820

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From fashion to philosophy, the French influence in the 18th century was widespread. Paris was the cultural capital of Europe; French painting and architecture exerted an influence well beyond France's borders; and French was the language of the upper class in such diverse locations as Sweden and Russia.

It is therefore not surprising to discover that from the late 1760s to the 1830s, this influence also extended to the international trading community at Canton. Here, in what was already a thriving commercial district situated on the riverfront just southwest of the Canton city walls, Europeans and (after 1784) Americans, as well as Armenians and Parsees, were housed in buildings known as hongs 行. These hongs are also sometimes referred to as 'factories' or 'foreign factories'; the word derives from a former usage of the word 'factor,' meaning 'business agent'.

Plans dating from the first half of the 19th century show that the hongs were built on a north-south axis and were rectangular in shape.¹ The length was several times the width; a French resident described the French hong as being 130-150 *pieds* (41.6-48

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metres) long and about 50-60 *pieds* (16-19.2 metres) wide.²

The short sides of the buildings faced north and south, while the long sides faced east and west. The Chinese considered the front of the building to be the north side, which faced Thirteen Hongs Street, while the international community considered the south side, which faced the river, to be the front.

The hongs were not unique to the international community; they were an already extant building type that served as business premises for the Chinese merchants who owned them. A number of the hongs, however, were rented out to (and later, sometimes owned by) the various nations coming to Canton to trade.³

The owners of the hongs belonged to that select group of Chinese traders known as hong merchants. According to 19th-century American merchant William Wood, it was the buildings themselves that gave this group their name.

The hong merchants derive their title from their warehouses, which are long ranges of buildings, with a wide avenue, or passage, from one extremity to the other; these in Chinese are called *Hung*, and by corruption *Hong*.⁴

As the volume of international trade with China increased during the 18th century, so did the number of merchants and ship's officers involved in that trade. The hong provided accommodations as well as office space and warehouse space, thereby fulfilling a triple function for members of the international community. While some of the hongs remained in use wholly by

local merchants, others were rented out, in part or in entirety, to the various nations, and later to individuals, coming to Canton to trade.⁵

But a hong was far more than just a useful building, especially during the third quarter of the 18th century. That period was marked by keen competition among the various European nations trading with China, and one of the ways that this rivalry came to be manifested was in the hong. As the most visible symbol of a nation's presence at Canton, the hong became the face of that nation—and the outward expression of its success in the highly competitive Canton trade.

It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that paintings created by Cantonese artists and presenting views of the hongs were in high demand by members of the international community, who purchased the paintings as souvenirs of their time in China. Such paintings show not only what the hongs looked like, but also enable us to follow the evolution of their façades. Backed up by written descriptions and other information provided by traders of the era, they show that Cantonese artists paid considerable attention to changes taking place on the riverfront, which they rendered, sometimes in considerable detail, in their portrayals of the hongs.

The earliest renovations that can be documented, whether in writing or in painting, date from the late 1760s, when several nations carried out alterations to their building's façade. This façade, or front, was the south elevation of the building, that is, the side facing the river, which the international community (though not the Chinese) regarded as the principal side.

Renovations were often functional in nature, such as when rooms were added to provide additional needed space. But they quickly became an arena for competition—not merely keeping up with rival nations, but of surpassing them. The French almost immediately became a model to emulate.

The French carried out the first documented renovations on their hong in 1767, seventeen years after they began renting it from the hong merchant Tinkoa.⁶ The renovations immediately set their hong apart visually from its neighbors. But it did not remain unique for long. Within a year and a half, similar renovations were underway on the Swedish hong, which was adjacent to the French on the east.

Thus began a trend that lasted for approximately half a century. By 1772, three hongs showed a south

elevation that resembled that of the French. Three more showed a strong French influence in the upper storey alone. By 1822, when a major fire swept through the area and all of the buildings were destroyed, no fewer than eight of the hongs bore a south elevation influenced by the French.

A closer examination of the renovations, however, shows that the French were not only trendsetters; they were also agents—we might call them go-betweens—who married features of Cantonese vernacular architecture to those of European origin in their transformation of their hong's façade.

THE HONG AS AN EXAMPLE OF LOCAL CANTONESE BUILDING TRADITIONS

Descriptions of the hongs as they looked prior to renovation, in accounts written by members of the 18th- and early 19th-century international trading community, suggest that the hongs not only exemplified Cantonese vernacular architecture, but also retained a number of local features for several decades.

Many of these features were climate-related and were intended to minimise the effects of the hot sun and high humidity of South China. The building's exterior, for example, was plain and unadorned. To lessen the build-up of heat in the walls and the interior, the surface of the exterior was light-colored, and often whitewashed. There were few windows. The main entry was through a door on the north side of the building, which did not receive direct sunlight.

The building's interior was composed of a series of built and open spaces that were laid out on a single axis, and included a feature known as a skywell (*tian jing* 天井). Open to the sky and accessible only from within the building or from above, the skywell was a type of atrium or interior courtyard. Most importantly, it allowed light and air to enter, and provided ventilation. Although skywells were used in other parts of the country, it was a particularly important consideration in the sultry climate of South China, for not only did it contribute to comfort, but it also helped to stave off mould. This was an important consideration, for mould and damp could spell disaster for a merchant's inventory.

Building materials consisted primarily of brick and stone, while tiles were used for the roof. Stone

was used for the foundations, and brick and flagstone to pave both the ground floor and the yard; these were measures against damp. These materials were also used in a type of dwelling known as the 'bamboo tube,' which may have been related in structure and layout to the hongs. Typical of urban Guangzhou, the bamboo-tube type is believed to have appeared there in the early 19th century as a response to crowding and increased land prices.⁷

Such, then, were the characteristics of the building on which the French carried out a series of renovations in 1767. The French had been renting that particular hong since 1750.⁸ Their landlord, the hong merchant Tinkoa, apparently did not object to the renovations, perhaps because they did not alter the core structure of the building, or perhaps because the French bore a significant portion of the cost of renovations.

But there might also have been a third reason, one that until now has not been recognised: that Tinkoa regarded the renovations as a variant of local architectural traditions, to which he had little, if any, reason to object.

The renovations that set the French on their path as architectural trendsetters may be readily identified in paintings of the hongs. As has already been noted, the Cantonese artists who executed them seem to have kept very much up-to-date on changes occurring on

the riverfront, for their paintings record such details as renovations to individual buildings and the presence—or absence—of national flags, which flew outside the respective hongs. Details of this type could easily change from one year to the next.⁹

Though precise written details about the French renovations in 1767 have yet to surface, a scene dated to 1769-1770 on a porcelain punchbowl from Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts, gives us an idea of what those initial renovations of 1767 included.¹⁰ The bowl shows a centrally-placed front door, flanked on both sides by three tall, narrow windows whose proportions echo the tall, narrow shape of the door. Surmounting the door is a pediment. The pediment appears to be practical as well as decorative, for it would have offered protection from sun and rain to persons about to enter the building.

The upper storey features a balcony edged by a balustrade. The roof of the balcony is supported by four columns without capitals. With the exception of the turned forms of the balusters (the short spindles supporting the balcony railing), the entire elevation is rectilinear in nature. Only the curves of the balusters soften the severity of the design.

Not shown on the punch bowl but most likely in place in 1767, and certainly by 1770, is the upper storey's veranda.¹¹ The veranda was a long, narrow rectangular space covered by a roof, and was built out

Plate 1. *View of the Hongs*, 1773. Courtesy Martyn Gregory Gallery, London.



along the entire length of the façade on the hong's upper floor.

Its most visually striking feature was its arcade. The arcade was composed of seven arched openings; their lower part included a balustrade. [Plate 1] In addition to marking the outer edge of the veranda, the arcade also formed an open-work screen through which light and air could pass to the space immediately behind it—that is, the veranda itself.

Thus the veranda offered shelter from the sun, allowed air to circulate, and provided a space where people could walk or stand. A member of the French community described it as an open terrace for strolls that was situated above the [front] door of the hong and from which one could view all the movement on the river, a very pleasant view in a country where nearly all communications were carried out via the water.¹²

EMULATING THE FRENCH

The first emulators of the French were the Swedes, whose hong (Building #11) was adjacent to that of the French and which the Swedes remodeled just a year or two later, in 1768-1769. The same punch bowl shows the French influence in both the vocabulary of motifs—the roofed balcony, the columns, and the balustrade—as well as in the placement of these features. On the ground floor, the centrally placed door is flanked on each side by symmetrically placed windows. As in the French hong, the windows are noticeably taller than they are wide. The upper storey features a veranda with an arcade.

A letter written in 1769 by one of the Swedish traders at Canton indicates that the renovations included the addition of a *collonade* [*kolonnad*].¹³ By 'colonnade,' the letter-writer undoubtedly meant 'arcade,' as a drawing by Capt. Ekeberg dated to 1770 suggests. According to the Swedish Academy, the first mention of a more specific word for 'arcade,' *pelargång*, did not occur until 1765, just three to four years before the feature was added to the hong. As this new term would have taken some time to come into common use, the writer may not have been familiar with it, whereas *kolonnad* had been in use since at least 1712.¹⁴

The differences between the Swedish and French hongs are minor: the Swedish hong has two

windows on each side of the front door instead of three, and five arches in the arcade instead of seven. Pilasters are used instead of columns (though there is some similarity in the fact that the columns, like the pilasters, are engaged, not free-standing). And instead of a single pilaster to flank, and thus emphasise, the central arcade, the Swedish hong makes use of a pair of pilasters.

The most significant difference between the two hongs, in fact, occurred not in the windows or arcade, but in the addition of five rooms to the upper floor.

The first few years of hong renovations show that the chief characteristics that would be emulated were already present by 1770. These characteristics would continue to appear on façades influenced by the French during the half-century from 1767 to 1822, and included:

- (a) The concentration of renovations on the exterior of the south elevation of the hong, with no apparent alteration to the building's interior structure;
- (b) A sensitivity to considerations of climate;
- (c) A preference for symmetrical design, exhibited in the central placement of windows (fenestration), doors and arches;
- (d) A fondness for tall, narrow elements in windows and arches, as expressed in a width-to-height ratio of approximately 1:4 or 1:3;
- (e) A basic vocabulary of forms, or elements, consisting of the following:

Ground floor:

- Single, centrally-placed entrance
- Pediment surmounting the front door
- Rectangular windows

Upper storey:

- Veranda with an arcade and balustrade
- Use of an uneven number of arches in the arcade
- Use of strongly defined columns or pilasters in the arcade.

ORIGINS OF THE RENOVATION FEATURES: WHERE DID THEY COME FROM?

Until now, the sources of the features added during renovations have been presumed to be of Western origin, and their incorporation in the hongs has been considered a form of Westernisation. However,



Plate 2: *View of the Hongs*, 1781. Courtesy Martyn Gregory Gallery, London.

little, if any, attention has been given to the possible influence of Cantonese vernacular architecture.

The Western sources lie primarily in the Baroque, the style that was dominant in Europe in the 17th and early 18th centuries. In France, it is closely associated with the centralisation of power under a strong monarch, and is especially linked to the reign of Louis XIV (personal reign 1661-1715). In architecture, it is characterised by a sense of grandeur, monumentality, or great size, and symmetry. Pediments as well as Corinthian columns and pilasters, placed in symmetrical fashion, are typical elements of the style, which continued to be influential even after the death of Louis XIV.

While Western-inspired features became increasingly more evident in the years approaching the end of the 18th century, yet it is possible, especially in the early years of hong renovation, that the renovations

represented local as well as imported sources of inspiration. As Dutch records show, repairs and renovations to the hongs were carried out by carpenters, bricklayers, masons and other craftsmen hired locally.¹⁵ In the 1760s and 1770s especially, when renovation was still a new phenomenon, the builders and artisans brought a knowledge of local styles and practices to their work, even as they were acquiring familiarity with Western architectural features. Gradually, the local influence waned, and European designs became more prevalent.

This is not to say that European features were entirely absent in the beginning. Certain features, such as the pediment or the style of the windows, were of Western inspiration. So were some of the materials used in making them; glass, for example, had to be imported from Europe.

ADDITIONAL EXAMPLES OF EMULATION OF THE FRENCH

A 1781 painting shows the hongs as they looked in 1781. [Plate 2] The features of the French hong are familiar from earlier paintings: the front door, for example, is flanked by three windows on each side. Like the door, the windows are tall and narrow, with a height-to-width ratio of close to 4:1. On the upper floor, seven arches constitute an arcade.

The central arch is slightly wider than the other six, and it is the only arch that has a keystone. The arches are separated from each other by Corinthian columns, the most elaborate of the three orders of columns. The components of the balusters are rounded, echoing the rounded form of the arches and contrasting with the more severe straight lines of the windows, doors, and other vertical elements. Symmetry is widely apparent in the three windows

on each side of the door, which in turn are echoed by the three arches on each side of the central arch of the arcade above. Symmetry may also be seen in the balusters (five balusters per bay, except for the central arch, which has six) and their turned components (seven per baluster, ranging in size from small to large, and arranged in a pattern: medium, small, large, large, large, small, medium).

The Swedish hong (Building #11), which is located in between the French (Building #10) and Old English (Building #12) hongs, clearly owes a debt to the French. The centred front door is flanked on each side by tall, narrow windows with a height-to-width ratio of approximately 3 to 1, including the semicircular blind fanlight above the window. On the upper floor, an uneven number of arches run the length of the elevation, and the central arch is slightly wider than the others. The balusters of the balustrade are almost identical in shape to those of the French. Through

Plate 3: *View of the Hongs*, 1796. Courtesy Martyn Gregory Gallery, London.



Plate 4: *View of the Hongs*, 1820. Courtesy Martyn Gregory Gallery, London.

the archways, one can see the paned windows of the building's exterior wall.

The Swedes have also made variations that echo the renovations of the French while yet distinguishing their hong from the French building. The doorway, for example, is crowned not by a pediment but by a fanlight, and is flanked by two rusticated pilasters that jut out just slightly from the wall surface. On the upper floor, there are only five arches, not seven, and every arch has a keystone. The arches are flanked not by engaged columns but by pilasters, and the central arch is flanked not by one pilaster, but by two. As in the French hong, however, these, too, are topped by Corinthian capitals. Each bay of the balustrade contains six, not five, balusters.

Elements of French inspiration may also be seen in the Old English hong, which is on the east (the viewer's right) side of the Swedish hong. The upper storey is very similar to the French-inspired Swedish upper storey. The arcade is composed of five arches, with

the central one slightly wider than the other four. The ground floor is somewhat less similar in the detailing, though like the Swedish hong, it features two windows on each side of the front door.

By 1796, the number of hongs showing a strong French influence in their façades had increased from three (Buildings #10, 11, and 12) to seven (Buildings #3, 4, 7, and 17 as well as #10, 11, and 12). [Plate 3] In this 1796 view of the hongs, we see in Buildings #7 and #17 the familiar central doorway flanked by two or three windows on each side, and the upper storey arcade with balustrade. Buildings #3 and #4 show a similar elevation, but they lack the balustrade.

Three additional hongs—Buildings #1, 9 and 13—exhibit a modified version of the French. Although the ground-floor door and windows, and their symmetrical placement, are reminiscent of the French, the building is lower in height and more squat in its proportions, an impression that is emphasised by the treatment of the upper storey and by the dimensions

of the windows, which are almost square. Instead of the veranda with its fenestrated arcade, there is a roofed balcony with a simple balustrade. Four columns support the roof. In the absence of an arcade, the exterior wall of the building, and the windows set into it, are clearly visible. Symmetry is still a factor, as evidenced, for example, by the alignment of the upper storey's windows with those of the ground floor.

In 1806, the Danes remodeled their hong for the fourth time, as documented in considerable detail in the Danish records.¹⁶ The changes were significant. Previously, the building had belonged to the open-balcony model, but in 1806, the roofed open-air balcony was replaced by a French-style arcade and balustrade, thus displaying a clear French influence in the upper storey. The ground-floor changes were also considerable, though their resemblance to the French was confined largely to the symmetry of their placement, for the ratio of height to width is less dramatic; the windows appear to be almost square in shape; and like the door that they flank, each displays a fantail.

By 1820, almost fifteen years later, no fewer than eight hongs bore façades that testified to the French influence, showing elements and layout that had been associated with the French for half a century: Buildings #1, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 13 and 17. [Plate 4].¹⁷

A closer look at the painting reveals that individual variations are generally slight. With the exception of the number of windows and arches, the most noticeable variation occurs in proportions and treatment of the ground-floor windows. In Building #1, for example, the windows are only slightly taller than they are wide; the ratio of height-to width appears to be approximately 5:1, rather than the nearly 4:1 of the French hong. Furthermore, the windows are topped by an element that resembles not a fantail but a lintel.

The role of the French as trendsetters in architectural renovations carried out by the international trading community showed itself not only in a number of hongs on the Canton riverfront but also over an extended period of time. Beginning with the renovations to their own hong in 1767, the French served as a model for over 50 years, well into the first half of the 1800s. Whereas the British influence was confined largely to the Dutch hong, as many as six or seven hongs emulated the French.

This may seem surprising, especially since the French role in the Canton trade has often been overlooked in favor of the Dutch and the English. Yet as one of the two most powerful countries in Europe during the 18th century, the significance of France in the political and trade history of that period cannot be overlooked.

Furthermore, the French stylistic influence continued even after the French moved out of the style-setting hong (Building #10). In the autumn of 1782, for example, the Imperialists took over the French hong. They had been co-leasing it from the French since 1779, and when the French moved out in the fall of 1782 in an effort to cut costs, the Imperialists took over the building.¹⁸ They retained it as it was. Another example may be found in the Danes when they remodeled in 1806. Almost 25 years had passed since the French last occupied the trendsetting hong. Yet in the Danes' 1806 renovation, they abandoned the open-style balcony that they had had for decades and replaced it with a French-style veranda and arcade. Thus the French stylistic influence remained, even when the French moved elsewhere.

The influence of the French on the hong façades at Canton raises another question: Does the role of the French in the Canton trade itself also need to be reassessed? RC

NOTES

- 1 See sketch in William C. Hunter, *The 'Fan-Kwae' at Canton before treaty days, 1825-1844*. London: Kegan, Paul, Trench & Company, 1882, following p. 24.
- 2 Archives des Affaires Etrangères (AAE), La Courneuve, France: 8 MD Asie 17. f° 335: '130 à 150 pieds de long sur environ 50 à 60 de large'. 1 pied = 0.32 m, or 1.06 feet.

- 3 For further discussion of ownership of hong buildings by members of the international trading community, see Paul Van Dyke, 'Rooms for Rent: Inn Keepers and the *foreignization* of the Canton Factories 1760-1822'. Unpublished paper presented at conference 'Private Merchants of the Canton Trade 1700-1842', Sun Yat-sen University, 16 November 2013.

- 4 William Wood, *Sketches of China: with illustrations from original drawings*. Philadelphia: Carey & Lea, 1830, p. 221.
- 5 Ibid., p. 68.
- 6 Aix-en-Provence, Archives nationales d'outre-mer (ANOM), C.1.12: f° 117 verso.
- 7 Works on the vernacular architecture of Guangzhou and Guangdong by architectural historians and cultural geographers such as Wu Qingzhou 吴庆洲, Lu Yuanding 陆元鼎, and Ronald G. Knapp describe the features of local Cantonese and South Chinese building traditions. See especially Wu Qingzhou, 'Guangzhou', in *Encyclopedia of Vernacular Architecture of the World*, edited by Paul Oliver, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, vol. 2, p. 900; he includes the bamboo tube. For practices common to South China in general, see Ronald G. Knapp, *China's Vernacular Architecture*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989; and Ronald G. Knapp, *The Chinese House*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990. See also Johnathan A. Farris, 'Dwelling on the Edge of Empire', Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, 2004, and Lu Yuanding, 'Guangdong minju' 广东民居, in *Jianzhu xuebao* 建筑学报 (Architectural Journal), 1981, 157, pp. 29-40.
- 8 Aix-en-Provence, ANOM, C.1.12: f° 117 verso.
- 9 Paul A. Van Dyke and Maria Mok have done extensive research to date the hongs. 'Dating the Canton Factories 1765-1822'. Paper given at ICAS 8 (International Convention of Asia Scholars), 25 June 2013.
- 10 Unless otherwise specified, the dates given in reference to paintings in this paper are those assigned by Paul A. Van Dyke and Maria Mok in 'Dating the Canton Factories, 1765-1822', a paper that was presented at the ICAS 8 (International Convention of Asia Scholars) conference in Macao on 25 June 2013.

- 11 The 1770 date is taken from the dating of the Ekeberg drawing in Carl Gustav Ekeberg, *Capitaine Carl Gustav Ekeberg Ostindiska Resa, Åren 1770 och 1771*, Stockholm: Henr. Fougt, 1773; facsimile reprint, Stockholm: Rediviva, 1970.
- 12 Archives des Affaires Etrangères (AAE), La Courneuve, France: 8 MD Asie 17, f° 402: 'Au-dessus de cette porte il y avoit une terrasse découverte en forme de galerie pour la promenade et de laquelle on découvrait tout le mouvement de la rivière, vue très agréable dans un pays surtout où presque toutes les communications se font par eau'. Nordic Museum Archive, Stockholm, Sweden. Grill records, NM: F17. Letter dated 4 February 1769 from John Chambers in Canton to Joh. Abr. Grill in Gothenburg, p. T1_01335-7.
- 13 Lisa Hellman, email message to author, 3 June 2013.
- 14 See Van Dyke, Paul, 'Port Canton and the Pearl River Delta, 1690-1845', (Ph.D. dissertation), p. 214, Table 11: Expenses to Repair the Dutch Factory in 1789. From: ARA: VOC 4444, 'Onkosten op Koopmanschappen'.
- 15 Paul A. Van Dyke and Maria Mok, 'Dating the Canton Factories, 1765-1822.' Paper given at ICAS 8 (International Convention of Asia Scholars), 25 June 2013.
- 16 Though financial difficulties and the French Revolution had significantly decreased French participation in the Canton Trade, the nation's architectural influence was nevertheless still visible in the 1820s. The hong that exerted such an influence had not been occupied by the French since 1782-1783, when financial difficulties had obliged them to move to a smaller building (first #7, and later #4).
- 17 This is based on conversations with Paul Van Dyke and on examinations of the sources and paintings.