

# A Globetrotter in the 17<sup>th</sup> century

*The Travels of Jacques Cailhaut de La Tesserie: in service of  
the VOC and the royal colony of Nouvelle-France*

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## List of Abbreviations

CFIO: *Compagnie française des Indes orientales* (French East India Company)

CNF : *Compagnie de la Nouvelle France* (New France Company)

CO: *Compagnie de l'Occident* (French West Indies Company)

VOC: *Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* (Dutch East India Company)



## Introduction

Somewhere shortly after the twenty-fourth of September 1666, Leonard Du Fresnes, secretary to the French minister of Foreign Affairs, received a package sent from the colony of Nouvelle-France. Inside were a letter and an account of a certain Jacques Cailhaut de La Tesserie, prominent colonial bureaucrat and one-time member of the Sovereign Council, the highest judicial body in the colony. The letter was a thank-you note for the interest shown by Du Fresnes' enquiry concerning de La Tesserie's prior occupations. It also contained details on recent events in the colony, most prominently that of a campaign against the Iroquois, who had tormented the French colonials for the better part of the century, and with whom the French local authorities now hoped to deal once and for all.

The account itself detailed the career of de La Tesserie in the service of the Dutch *Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*. The writer was hoping to convince Du Fresnes to use his authority within the civil service to procure for him a position in the new *Compagnie française des Indes orientales*, created in 1664 with the express intent of taking over part of the lucrative Asian trade from de La Tesserie's erstwhile employers, the VOC. The author stated that he was very knowledgeable of the places and routes of the southeastern lands, and that he had long experience in the navigation of ships there.<sup>1</sup> Because of this experience, de La Tesserie believed that he would be capable of doing the French state a great service.

From the above account and letters, as well as sources in the colonial archives of France, Canada and the Netherlands, a picture can be formed of de La Tesserie as an all-round colonial careerist straddling early modern boundaries. In the span of thirty years he served in such far-flung places as the jungles of Formosa, the empire of Japan, the trading hub of Batavia, the coasts of Persia and India, the Canadian Shield and the Hudson and St. Lawrence river valleys. During this time he fought the Spanish, Chinese and Iroquois, participated in trading ventures across the Chinese Sea and Indian Oceans, was an associate of a pelt-trading consortium in northern Canada and member of the highest governmental organ of French North America, even serving shortly as its governor-general.

The sheer intrepidity and courage of men like de La Tesserie making the long, arduous and deadly voyage to trade with, explore, conquer and settle distant places have always been the stuff of myth, story and history-writing. Out of interest,

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<sup>1</sup> J. Cailhaut de La Tesserie, 'à Léonard Du Fresnes, 1666, 24 Septembre', *A. Arch. Des Aff. Étrang.*, *MD France 2135*, fol. 51.

if not simple necessity due to the radically different environments in which they arrived, such persons often fell into a category of people whom recently have become of interest; the so-called cosmopolitans. In the words of Margaret C. Jacob: ‘being cosmopolitan in Europe during the early modern age meant – as now – the ability to experience people of different nations, creeds and colors with pleasure, curiosity and interest’. Cosmopolitans were in effect citizens of the world, transcending the boundaries which early modern society drew between people, such as religion, class or nationality.<sup>2</sup>

The divisions which separated early modern people, and which were thus traversed by these cosmopolitans, were very real, however. Even if people in the 17th century did not share our modern concepts of nationalism or class, they did envision divisions between groups of people, and often acted upon these. A certain group identity was very much present in the thoughts of early modern people, as can be inferred from such acts as the formation of regional societies in foreign countries, the contrasting of different peoples by writers, or wholesale discrimination of marginal groups.<sup>3</sup> State organizations would often actively reinforce such cultural boundaries by barring certain groups from lucrative positions, higher taxations, occasional harassment, prosecution, expulsion or eradication. As Sanjay Subrahmanyam has shown through several case studies in his book *Three Ways to be Alien*, those with cosmopolitan identities were rarely valued by their host societies. More often than not, such men were tolerated for their knowledge or connections, or saved for political use in the future, but states could never really bring themselves to trust those who had proven a propensity to shift identity.<sup>4</sup>

To describe this process of self-invention and identity adjustment, Stephen Greenblatt coined the term “self-fashioning”. Greenblatt postulated that early modern societies had a firm image of how they expected its members to behave, dress and speak. More often than not, the potential of individual opportunity and freedom was closely tied to public conformation of this ideal, with those choosing a different path ostracized as pariahs. Many men were thus prone to fashion their public identity in response to cultural pressure from their surroundings, so that it was more congruent

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<sup>2</sup> M.C. Jacob, *Strangers nowhere in the World. The Rise of Cosmopolitanism in Early Modern Europe* (Philadelphia, 2006) 1.

<sup>3</sup> J. Leerssen, *National Thought in Europe* (Amsterdam 2006).

<sup>4</sup> S. Subrahmanyam, *Three Ways to be Alien: Travails and Encounters in the Early Modern World* (Brandeis, 2011) 43.



with reigning social mores. Doing so enabled opportunities and ensured respectability in the eyes of their peers.<sup>5</sup>

However, in the areas where political and cultural control was weaker, such as the outlying colonial areas of the early modern European states, and where influences of other cultural systems were stronger, friction could easily arise between the old-rooted identities and new insights; it is not an aberration that all of Subrahmanyam's case studies took place in the colonial sphere. In their book on the imperial careers of British inside the British Empire of the 19th century, Lamberts and Lester made the case that whenever people moved, they were obliged to align homegrown concepts of gender, race and class with their new surroundings. Through this continuous interplay between the situation on the ground and the more abstract concepts related to group identities, methods of interaction between European colonizers and indigenous groups developed. This effect proved especially dominant when attempts were made to transplant ideas and systems from one area to another, in which a process of generalization, comparison and eventual hybridization took place. Often enough, the travelers reinvented themselves, adjusting their identity to the situation at hand.<sup>6</sup>

Travelers were thus especially prone to cosmopolitan tendencies, and the concomitant problems with cultural boundaries these tendencies created. Because integration into a different host society by default necessitated a certain assimilation of local customs, such men were often required to adjust their own identity and beliefs in profound ways. These adjustments, and the consequences thereof, included among others more considered articulation of local peoples and customs, engagement in the local society, the creation of new networks of family and friends, or the yearning for an idealized home.<sup>7</sup> In light of this propensity of early modern men to fashion different identities in response to different cultural mores, the lives of travelers thus hold important lessons regarding the cosmopolitan for the historian. In many ways such men formed the cockpits in which different identities were formed, came into contact, shared and clashed, and from whom thoughts on identity were passed on to others. Because cosmopolitan careerists had knowledge of multiple cultures and countries, they often formed the primary vector through which knowledge from one area to another was passed on. In effect, with his carrying over

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<sup>5</sup> S. Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago, 1980) 9.

<sup>6</sup> D. Lambert, and A. Lester, 'Imperial Spaces, Imperial Subjects', in: Lambert and Lester eds., *Colonial Lives across the British Empire: Imperial Careerism in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge 2006) 25-30.

<sup>7</sup> B.Y. Casalilla, "'Localism', global history and transnational history. A reflection from the historian of early modern Europe', *Historisk Tidskrift*, 127:4 (2007) 672.

of experience obtained in his various occupations, de La Tesserie became part of what Huigen, de Jong and Kolfin call a 'knowledge network', through which knowledge of faraway places and potential methods of interaction were carried by various individuals along the networks of colonial posts and strongpoints back to Europe.<sup>8</sup> Many took with them the notions of places where they had resided prior to their move and the memories and ideas they formed of these places could also steer the action undertaken in their new occupations.<sup>9</sup>

Cosmopolitans like de La Tesserie could thus use the knowledge acquired during their travels to create further opportunities for the advancement of their own lives. This did not mean however that they could react to every opportunity, as choices were often restricted by the demands made by potential employers. Furthermore, the above-mentioned friction between home and abroad could as easily put off the travelers as form an incentive for them to broaden their horizon.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, choice could as easily be driven by the mundane, such as illness, personal loss, or simple wanderlust or boredom. As such, many factors were in play when an individual was to decide on a course of action, ranging from those which are often the purview of historical writing, such as culture, warfare or politics, to the events only of importance to the individual, such as family, loss, and marriage.

It is the aim of this paper to bring into focus which factors were present in the decision-making process of de La Tesserie, and to what extent they were significant. To answer the question posed, this work will retell the three distinct phases through which the life of de La Tesserie ran. During each of these phases he attempted to carry through, a choice which would radically alter his life. The first is de La Tesserie joining the VOC, the second is him exchanging the VOC for the colony of Nouvelle-France, and the third is his attempt to join the CFIO. Every choice has been divided into three further parts, each detailing the background in which the choice was made, which factors might have contributed to it, and how the decision eventually played

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<sup>8</sup> S. Huigen, J.L. de Jong and E. Kolfin eds., *The Dutch Trading Companies as Knowledge Networks* (Leiden 2010) 332-333.

<sup>9</sup> A. Games, *The Web of Empire. English Cosmopolitans in an Age of Expansion, 1560-1660* (Oxford 2008) 8-10.

<sup>10</sup> In a rebuke to Greenblatt's work, John Martin brought up the point that according to his own reading of the early modern sources, many men were easily able to reconcile the stress between the cultural mores and the inner person by accepting that there is a difference between the personal and the public, and that a discrepancy herein was perfectly natural. See Martin, J., 'Inventing Sincerity, Refashioning Prudence: The Discovery of the Individual in Renaissance', *The American Historical Review*, 102:5 (1997) 1309-1342.

out. Thus a picture has been painted of how a young man from France ended up in Canada, with a detour through the Far East.

One practical problem needs to be addressed before tackling the subject. This is the relative shortage of documents giving direct insight into the mind of de La Tesserie, not uncommon when writing about the early modern period. Such a shortage however need not be an insurmountable barrier. As Michael McDonnell puts it, regarding his effort to write the life story of Charles de Langlade, Franco-Indian in the *pays d'en haut* of Canada in the 18<sup>th</sup> century: '[...] I set about trying to re-create the different contexts in which Langlade lived, to understand the conditions in which he was able to live such a mobile and seemingly rich life.'<sup>11</sup> By sketching the circumstances in the different regions and of the peoples with whom de La Tesserie interacted (and was interacted upon) and using the memoirs of contemporaries who lived and worked in similar conditions in addition to the sources directly and indirectly mentioning him, it is possible to create a window into the world of de La Tesserie, and see the underlying currents and events which drove his life.

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<sup>11</sup> M.A. McDonnell, 'Dancing with Shadows: Biography and the Making and Remaking of the Atlantic World', in: Deacon et al, *Transnational Lives*, 57.



## Chapter 1: Noble mercenary of the Dutch

The background and upbringing of Jacques Cailhaut de La Tesserie in and of itself formed one of the most important factors in the way his later career with the Dutch East Indies Company and the colony of Nouvelle-France would take shape. This chapter is dedicated to the circumstances of his birth and education, and the vistas these opened up to him concerning his potential career possibilities.

### 1.1 Noble backgrounds

De La Tesserie was born in the late 1620's in the small village of Saint-Herblain, near the city of Nantes. According to a census made by Jean Talon, intendant of Nouvelle France, in 1666, de La Tesserie was thirty-seven at the time, making his date of birth 1629.<sup>12</sup> He was the second son of Samuel Cailhaut, seigneur of La Grözardière, and Louise Le Tessier, the daughter and only child of the lord of La Tesserie. The Cailhauts could trace their ancestry back to seigneurs from the Breton pays de Retz in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century at the least and belonged to the *noblesse d'épée*, the old French martial nobility. They were also active in the local administration, holding positions in local councils and the French military.<sup>13</sup> Another branch of the family owned a seigneurie called La Chevrotière nearby, and further members of the family lived near the port of La Rochelle, where de La Tesserie still had connections in 1666.<sup>14</sup>

In 1621 the lands of La Tesserie were added to the holdings of the elder Cailhaut in the will of his mother-in-law. In the tradition of splitting up the family lands between the different sons, these were subsequently given to Jacques Cailhaut, most likely upon his majority. It is from these lands that he probably derived his last name, as it was common in early modern France for the nobility to add the name of their largest holding to their given and family name.

As second son and possible seigneur in his own right, de La Tesserie would have gotten a thorough education in the courses deemed relevant by contemporaries

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<sup>12</sup> J. Talon, *Recensement de Nouvelle-France de 1666* (Québec, 1666) 65.

<sup>13</sup> E.H.E Beauchet-Filleau and C.L.G. de Chergé, *Dictionnaire historique et généalogique des familles du Poitou, vol 2* (Poitiers 1891) 97-98. The family surname can be found written both as Cailhaut (by de La Tesserie himself) and Cailhaut (in the documents used as sources by the *Dictionnaire historique*). In this paper Cailhaut will refer to the family in France, while Cailhaut will be used when referring to de La Tesserie himself.

<sup>14</sup> J. Cailhaut De La Tesserie, '1666, 24 Septenbre', fol. 53.

for young noblemen towards a life in the French military and bureaucracy.<sup>15</sup> These would have included the studies of history, geography, mathematics and languages, training in arms and horseback riding.<sup>16</sup> The most important aspect of education however was writing, as young nobles needed to be able to emulate the conduct of the higher nobility, which laid large stress on the maintenance of networks of family, kin, friends and superiors.

By the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a formulaic manner of writing had been created which was necessary for any aspiring nobleman to adhere to if he was to be heard. The manner of writing was one clear indicator of birth and capacity, with a predilection for long flowing sentences, the result of a society which was still to a large extent an oral one. Because of this, the ‘saying’ and ‘hearing’ of what was written obliged the reader to a response, much as is the case in spoken language. These features can also be seen in the writing of de La Tesserie, who in one of his letters states that ‘[...] *je vous diray que la campagne a mieux reussi que je ne croyois [...]*’, emphasizing the great success of a campaign against the Iroquois in Canada by explicitly assuming personal responsibility for what he was claiming.<sup>17</sup> However, writers were often also apt to claim they saw an event to underscore both the importance and the certitude of its happening.<sup>18</sup>

Another important aspect was the content. ‘Letters between nobles are arenas for exchange. Their exchanges include courtesies as well as the seemingly more concrete favors – what is usually regarded as patronage.’<sup>19</sup> The letters nobles wrote each other were often filled with individual professions of esteem, as well as more formulaic salutations and other forms of address. By naming himself ‘*vostre tres humble et tres obeissant serviteur*’ de La Tesserie puts himself in a position of supplication towards Du Fresnes, from whom he hopes to get a position in the new French East Indies Company. The extensive memoire he added to his letter is thereby meant as a currency of exchange for attaining this goal. The exchange was reinforced by the addition of two otter pelts with the letters, which were meant not only as a

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<sup>15</sup> M. Fournier, *Les Bretons en Amérique française 1504-2004* (Rennes 2005) 412.

<sup>16</sup> M. Motley, *Becoming a French Aristocrat. The Education of the Court Nobility, 1580-1715* (Princeton 1990) 94.

<sup>17</sup> De La Tesserie, ‘1666, 8 Novembre’, fol. 56.

<sup>18</sup> K.B., Neuschel, *Word of Honor. Interpreting Noble Culture in Sixteenth-Century France* (London 1989) 106-116.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, 72-73.

favor, but also to have Du Fresnes forward him money for his trip to France, in case he was granted a position.<sup>20</sup>

It is clear from the above that Jacques Cailhaut was knowledgeable in the art of letter writing and the maintenance of patronage networks, indispensable skills in the noble society of early modern France. Furthermore, his extended family could have given him the advantage of a potential network along which he could have gained information and obtained favors. Some hints and possible payoffs hereof will be discussed in later chapters.

## 1.2 French Huguenots

The other important aspect of de La Tesserie's youth were the Protestant beliefs of his family. The writings of John Calvin had found a fertile breeding ground in France. By the 1560's over two million out of a total population of eighteen million called themselves Huguenots. The urban middle classes and the gentry proved especially susceptible to these teachings, and many converted to the new faith, with large congregations concentrated in the northern cities and the southern countryside.<sup>21</sup> The Cailhauts themselves were Huguenots of the old stock, and de La Tesserie himself stated that during his time in the VOC he too professed the faith.<sup>22</sup>

The Huguenot predominance in the bureaucracy soon created friction between it and the Catholic majority, exploding in bouts of internecine warfare all throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> century, commonly known as the French Wars of Religion. For more than three decades this conflict tore France apart, causing hardship and hatred on both sides. By 1598 the fighting had died down and Henry IV, himself a converted Huguenot, ensured the veneer of a Catholic victory by converting to Catholicism as a condition to gaining the crown in 1589.<sup>23</sup> However, he also placated his Huguenot subjects by issuing the Edict of Nantes: Catholicism became the state religion of France, but the Huguenots were given a large degree of religious freedom and political rights, as well as the control of certain cities to safeguard them from possible Catholic reprisals.

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<sup>20</sup> De La Tesserie, '1666, 24 Septembre', fol. 53.

<sup>21</sup> P. Benedict, *The Faith and Fortunes of France's Huguenots, 1600-1685* (Aldershot 2001) 15.

<sup>22</sup> '[...] *qui sont chrestiens huguenos ainsi que j'estois en ce temps-là.*' Here de La Tesserie clearly implicates that during his time with the VOC he too was a Huguenot. de La Tesserie, 'Mémoires', fol. 139.

<sup>23</sup> He is rumored to have said '*Paris vaut bien une messe*', indicating a large degree of pragmatism in his public expression of faith. Henry IV's subsequent actions make it questionable if he had lost all personal goodwill towards the protestant faith upon his conversion.

During the first decades of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the balance was maintained by the Crown. Catholic discontent over the political rights of the Huguenots however caused their rights to be progressively rescinded in those areas falling outside the purview of the Edict of Nantes. The Huguenots, fearing a resumption of bloodshed, undertook to resist the Crown in 1620, fortifying their remaining strongpoints and awaiting the royal assault. Unlike the years before these uprisings proved unsuccessful, and under the vigorous leadership of the Cardinal de Richelieu the last embers of resistance were stamped out during the siege of La Rochelle in 1628 (in which other Cailhauts might well have been involved).

The peace of Ales a year later concluded the last organized Huguenot uprising in France, whereby the Huguenots lost all rights to hold political assemblies and garrison fortified towns which they had held previously; they thereby lost their political independence, and were left at the mercy of the Crown.<sup>24</sup> In the years between 1629 and 1660, French domestic policy alternated between curbing Protestant legal rights and gaining their loyalty as counterweight against Catholic hardliners.<sup>25</sup> Because the personal safety of the Huguenots was increasingly dependent upon the goodwill of the Crown, Huguenot identity became strongly intertwined with the stressing of their loyal submission to the state, as it was the state which upheld the Edict of Nantes, defining the parameters of their congregation and political rights and obligations.<sup>26</sup>

However, the state-spanning organization which the Huguenots had created during the upheavals of the Religious Wars had also fostered a distinct feeling of community, further reinforced by the uniform 'French' tongue which came to be used during their services. This was even more so for the growing flood of Huguenots moving abroad to escape the stifling atmosphere of France. These refugees continued to seek contact with family and co-religionists from their home country, forming networks which reached between many of Europe's larger towns but centered on France where the majority of Huguenots still lived.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> B. van Ruymbeke, 'Minority Survival', in B. van Ruymbeke, and R.J. Sparks, *Memory and Identity. The Huguenots in France and the Atlantic Diaspora* (Columbia 2003) 4-5.

<sup>25</sup> Benedict, *The Faith and Fortunes of France's Huguenots*, 297. Especially notable was the appeal for Huguenot support against the Fronde; a conflict between the state and the nobility.

<sup>26</sup> van Ruymbeke, 'Minority Survival', 40.

<sup>27</sup> S. Lachenicht, 'Huguenot Immigrants and the Formation of National Identities, 1548-1787', *The Historical Journal*, 50 (June 2007) 313.



### 1.3 Huguenot mercenaries serving abroad

For a young nobleman like de La Tesserie the start of a career with the state was through distinguished service in the army. By attaining glory and getting one's name known to superiors, young noblemen could quickly rise in rank, unlocking new possibilities for more advanced service or a position in a lucrative government position as a result. Where the scions of the larger noble houses would often start as an aide-de-camp to a commander, the less well-off served as simple foot soldiers in the ranks.<sup>28</sup> As most armies held a bias towards the promotion of men of noble stock, young aristocrats could expect rapid advancement if they came to the attention of commanding officers.<sup>29</sup>

The remembrance of the vicious ending of the last Protestant revolts by the Crown early in his youth, and the growing number of barriers which were thrown up to block Huguenots from more and more bureaucratic and military posts might have caused disenchantment for de La Tesserie's chances in France itself. Next to serving in the French army and bureaucracy there were however other ways to find the glory and experience de La Tesserie was looking for. From its origin, French Calvinism had been heavily militarized, both because of the large numbers of the *noblesse d'épée* within its ranks, and because of the high degree of organization the small Protestant congregation had needed to impose on its members to resist the larger numbers of Catholics.

During lulls in the fighting in France itself, large numbers of Huguenot nobles would travel to other countries as mercenaries. The most notable of these employers were the rebellious states of the Low Countries. Lacking a solid population base to recruit soldiers but abounding in money, the protestant United Provinces hired whole regiments of foreign troops to fight in their wars against the Catholic Spanish. In 1599 the Huguenots made up a whole regiment in the Dutch army, and by 1602 over three thousand men were active in twenty-one companies.<sup>30</sup> For the Huguenot nobility it became a rite of passage to serve for a season in one of the permanently maintained mercenary companies. Their mobilization often happened via affinity connections such as kinship networks and extended clienteles, and it would therefore

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<sup>28</sup> Motley, *Becoming a French Aristocrat*, 202-204.

<sup>29</sup> O. van Nimwegen, *'Deser landen krijchsvolck'. Het Staatse Leger en de Militaire Revoluties, 1588-1688* (Amsterdam 2006) 37.

<sup>30</sup> M. Glozier and D. Onnekink, *War, Religion and Service, Huguenot Soldiering, 1685-1713* (Aldershot 2007) 12-22.

not have been difficult for a young Huguenot nobleman to find a place in one of them.

This seems to be exactly what de La Tesserie did. In 1644, when he was fifteen or sixteen, he was present at the siege of Sas van Gent (see map 1).<sup>31</sup> In an attempt to further isolate the port of Antwerp from the outside world by closing of the Scheldt to shipping, the Dutch government had decided to capture the town, which would give them a strong base from which to control the route to Antwerp. Commencing the siege on the 28<sup>th</sup> of July, the Dutch dug extensive fieldworks, closing in the city from all sides. During this siege de La Tesserie stated that he learnt the art of surveying and the building of fortifications, which he mentions as a great help in later endeavors.<sup>32</sup> It is possible that he was attached to one of the military engineers trained and employed by the Dutch to direct the laying of entrenchments. University-trained, these engineers were accomplished mathematicians and physicists who formed a special branch attached to, but not part of, the army. This innovation was the result of long years of besieging and defending the Dutch cities against the Spanish, and they were often instrumental in the quick and methodical capture by the Dutch of major Spanish strongholds throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>33</sup>

So too in the case of Sas van Gent. Shortly after the completion of the Dutch siege works a Spanish relief force arrived. It restricted its actions to ineffectively bombarding the Dutch entrenchments, withdrawing shortly afterwards, when the Dutch positions proved too powerful. This in turn led to the surrender of the Spanish garrison on the 5<sup>th</sup> of September 1644. After leaving a garrison of their own, the Dutch army marched back to its permanent encampments at Bergen op Zoom, where most troops were decommissioned.<sup>34</sup> By November de La Tesserie was again free to choose a new career, and present in the heart of the Netherlands to do so.

#### 1.4 Contained cosmopolitanism?

Up to this point de La Tesserie was clearly following a path trodden by many others of his background. Service with a friendly Protestant nation abroad ensured the full range of options denied to the Huguenot nobility in France. Furthermore, fighting in the armies of the Dutch Republic did not mean an act of disloyalty towards the French Crown. The Dutch campaign against Sas van Gent had been part of the larger

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<sup>31</sup> De La Tesserie, 'Mémoires', fol. 132.

<sup>32</sup> '[...] comme je sçavois l'arpentage et les fortifications[...]', *ibidem*, 139.

<sup>33</sup> van Nimwegen, 'Deser landen krijchsvolck', 120-121.

<sup>34</sup> F.J.G. ten Raa and F. de Bas, *Het Staatsche Leger 1568-1795, vol 4* (1918) 140-141.

drama of the Thirty Years War, fought by the Protestant forces against the Catholic Habsburg Emperor and King of Spain. France, for reasons other than religion, had chosen the side of the Protestants in 1635, invading the German Empire and the continental possessions of Spain. The campaign leading to the siege of Sas van Gent had formed part of a larger invasion of the Spanish Netherlands in 1644, where the French had invaded from the south, capturing the fortress of Gravelines on the 28<sup>th</sup> of July that year.<sup>35</sup>

To the French Crown, the mercenary service of its Huguenot populace was therefore not necessarily a negative thing, as it propped up one of its allies, while at the same time removing a troublesome group of men from its territory. An added advantage to the French Crown was the expertise these men brought back to France. The Dutch army was regarded as the most advanced army of its time, and men who had served in its ranks were eagerly sought elsewhere for their expertise. It is no strange thing that a large number of the generals in French service were Huguenots, as they were some of the most veteran soldiers the Crown could hire at the time.<sup>36</sup>

What might be said about the cosmopolitan character of de La Tesserie's endeavors at this time is much less clear. Although he clearly left his home to experience other cultures and peoples, this still happened through a distinctly Huguenot framework. As mentioned, the Huguenot regiments were recruited mostly through old networks of allegiance, and would therefore not have contained many with backgrounds differing from those of the young, noble soldiers-for-hire. Serving in such a regiment might thus to a large extent have mitigated the necessity of interacting with those of other beliefs and affiliations, even if said regiment served on battlegrounds abroad. It is possible that a soldier of its rank-and-file interacted with others outside his immediate circle only on an irregular basis, so that development of concepts of interaction might well have been impossible. If this is true, then the cosmopolitan character of such a career-path might well have been minimal.

One final detail to point out is that Huguenots in general proved to be highly apt at adopting the culture of a host country. Many of the Huguenots quickly took on the identity which adapted most readily with that of their hosts. This was in large part possible because the culture the Huguenots brought with them was that of the French upper classes, which was increasingly becoming the norm in 17<sup>th</sup> century Europe. Through imitation, the culture of their hosts came to resemble their own, facilitating

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<sup>35</sup> van Nimwegen, *'Deser landen krijchsvolck'*, 226.

<sup>36</sup> D. Parrott, *Richelieu's Army. War, Government and Society in France, 1624-1642* (Cambridge 2001) 29.

integration.<sup>37</sup> Trim called to attention the fact that “rather than being only strangers in strange land, Huguenots had multiple identities they could adopt, facilitating their adaption and assimilation [...]”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> T. Wijzenbeek, ‘Identity Lost: Huguenot Refugees in the Dutch Republic and its Former Colonies in North America and South Africa, 1650 to 1750: A Comparison’, *South African Historical Journal*, 59:1 (2007) 99.

<sup>38</sup> D.J.B. Trim ed., *The Huguenots: History and Memory in Transnational Context* (Leiden 2011) 4.

## Chapter 2: Foreign service with the VOC

Having been discharged from the army, de La Tesserie was faced with deciding if he should return home or find employment elsewhere. In the end, de La Tesserie took service with the VOC, drawn to the East because of a '*curiosité de veoir les Indes orientalles*'.<sup>39</sup> This was not an unprecedented decision for young men to make, but it did involve circumstances which were wholly different from those of a Huguenot nobleman in the Dutch European military, as the following chapter will show.

### 2.1 Joining the VOC

De La Tesserie's above reason to make the arduous voyage into the unknown was hardly uncommon among contemporaries, many of whom also stated a similar reason for their travels. However, those men who left strictly for pleasure were a happy few. Most hoped to combine learning or curiosity with commercial activities, so they could return from the Orient rich in experience as well as money. Others went as missionaries, to convert the heathens to Catholicism, or as emissaries to Eastern potentates.<sup>40</sup>

Nor were the reasons to leave always positive ones. Many joined to escape poverty or debt: Anthony van Diemen, who would later climb the hierarchical ladder of the VOC to become Governor-General in 1636, was originally a merchant from Amsterdam gone bankrupt, who had joined the Company to get away from his debtors.<sup>41</sup> Some fled to escape oppressive regimes, such as Guillaume Chenu de Chalezac, a Huguenot who escaped Huguenot persecution in France in 1686. He was shipwrecked near the Cape, where he was found by the Dutch. De Chalezac subsequently joined the VOC until the time family members secured his discharge and return journey.<sup>42</sup> Others were instead pushed to join by family members, to escape an awkward home situation caused by 'certain passions', in the words of Jean Guidon de Chambelle, a Parisian Huguenot who joined the VOC the same year as did de La Tesserie.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> De La Tesserie, 'Mémoires', fol. 132.

<sup>40</sup> D. van der Cruysse, *Le noble désir de courir le monde. Voyager en Asia au XVIIe siecle* (Lille 2002) 31-33.

<sup>41</sup> D. De Iongh, *Het Krijgswezen onder de Oost-Indische Compagnie* (Den Haag 1950) 79.

<sup>42</sup> R. Vigne, *Guillaume Chenu de Chalezac, the 'French Boy'* (Cape Town 1993) 17-21.

<sup>43</sup> D. van der Cruysse, *Mercenaires français de la VOC: La Route des Indes hollandaises au XVIIe siècle* (Paris 2003) 73.

Furthermore, the presence of others of the same city, country or religious affiliation already with the Company could be an important facilitator for men making the choice to travel to the East. As will be shown later this chapter, patronage and affiliation were important factors in success, especially for those men starting low on the hierarchical ladder, but with aspirations to climb it as quickly as possible. De Chambelle, mentioned above, stated that he had letters of recommendation which would facilitate his stay in Batavia. On the strength of these letters he was even capable of swaying another Frenchman he had met in Amsterdam to join him to the East, instead of heading to America, as had been that man's original plan.<sup>44</sup> A friend who had accompanied him to the Netherlands to see him off safely was even capable of acquiring for him a place in the captain's cabin for the voyage to Batavia, a sure sign of the power of his connections as this exempted de Chambelle from all work on board, a privilege normally only granted to high officials.<sup>45</sup>

A well-known example of such potential connections was that of Francois Caron; a Huguenot whose parents had fled to Brussels around the time of his birth, he signed on as cook's mate in 1617, climbing up to become leader of the VOC factory in Japan in 1639-1640, and Director-General in 1647.<sup>46</sup> Another was that of Isaac de l'Ostal de Saint-Martin. Born into a noble Huguenot family in Béarn in 1629, he joined the VOC as common soldier somewhere in the 1650's, being named lieutenant in 1662 and rising to be the commander of all troops in Batavia by 1672. Ultimately, de l'Ostal was appointed to the General Council of Batavia in 1687, in which position he remained until his death in 1696.<sup>47</sup>

## 2.2 Servants of the Company

Much as was the case with the Dutch army, the VOC lacked a component of vital importance: manpower. A lot of research has been done into the manpower requirements of the VOC, and it is generally accepted by modern scholars that in the years between 1595 and 1795 nearly one million men were transported to Asia to

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<sup>44</sup> Ibidem, 76-77. Interestingly enough, after arriving in Batavia these letters are never mentioned again. It is probable the men to whom they were addressed had moved on or died, underscoring the relative transitory nature of serving with the VOC.

<sup>45</sup> J.R. Bruin, F.S. Gaastra and I. Schoffer, *Dutch-Asiatic Shipping in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century*, vol. 1 (The Hague 1987) 148.

<sup>46</sup> C.R. Boxer ed. *A True Description of the Mighty Kingdoms of Japan and Siam by Caron & Schouten* (Amsterdam 1971).

<sup>47</sup> F. de Haan, *Priangan; de preanger-Regentschappen onder het Nederlandsch Bestuur tot 1811, I, Personalia* (1910) 15-17.

work as merchants, sailors and soldiers, a third of whom in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>48</sup> On a year-to-year basis for the 17<sup>th</sup> century, this amounted to nearly three thousand able-bodied men. For a country which at the time held no more than two million inhabitants such a drain would have been intolerable. The VOC made up for this shortage by drawing recruits from the surrounding countries. Drawn at first to the Netherlands by the plentiful job-possibilities in that country's booming economy, many joined the VOC lured by tales of riches, or simply to see the world. In the later 1630's the percentage of foreigners in the Company had been about thirty percent, and this number had risen further to forty-two by 1660.<sup>49</sup>

It is impossible to create an accurate picture of the national composition of the servants of the Company, or the percentage of Frenchmen it contained. However, some insight can be gleaned through the study of the records of the VOC. From a sample of five hundred eighty-four men recorded on twenty-two ships between 1633 and 1699, twenty-two hailed directly from France. This would mean that a rough four percent of all men on board were French, or twelve thousand men for the 17<sup>th</sup> century alone. To this should be added such men who had drifted to Dutch towns earlier, and put those down as their places of origin. However, it must be noted that most of the data which has survived comes from the VOC-factory at Middelburg. This port, geographically the closest to France, would thus naturally also have attracted most French recruits. Many more ships departed from Amsterdam, and these ships held lower numbers of Frenchmen. All in all, the number of Frenchmen sent out to the East was probably lower than the twelve thousand calculated earlier, but to state that the VOC employed a large number of servants from foreign extraction seems plausible.<sup>50</sup>

In his extensive research on Germans in service of the VOC, van Gelder furthermore found that the average age of forty-eight Germans upon their hiring was twenty-four. Eighteen did leave their parental home around the age of seventeen to be apprenticed or to enjoy schooling before they joined the VOC. However, even these

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<sup>48</sup> J. Lucassen, 'A Multinational and its Labor Force: The Dutch East India Company, 1595-1795', *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 66 (2004) 14.

<sup>49</sup> K. Davids, 'Maritime Labour in the Netherlands, 1570-1870', in: P. van Royem, J. Bruijne and J. Lucassen, "*Those Emblems of Hell*"? *European Sailors and the Maritime Labour Market, 1570-1870* (St. John's 1997) 50.

<sup>50</sup> In a collaborative work called VOC Opvarenden, Dutch historians have created a comprehensive database of all the men who travelled to Asia on Company ships. Although the amount of data for the 18<sup>th</sup> century is profuse, similar entries for the 17<sup>th</sup> century are much more scant due to lower standards of recording at the time, and destruction of archives due to time. <http://vocopvarenden.nationaalarchief.nl/> (ret. 16-5-2013).

men were around twenty-five upon their departure.<sup>51</sup> This meant that de La Tesserie was both part of a relative minority when he travelled to the East, and was very young compared to his colleagues. These facts would have a large impact upon his subsequent career.

### 2.3 Institutional discrimination

For all the great numbers of foreigners the VOC hired, it was however an extremely discriminatory institution. According to Pieter van Dam's *Beschryvinge van de Oostindische Compagnie*, the VOC was unwilling to recruit people who were suspected to adhere to 'de paepsche religie' or those 'van eenige delicten betigt'. Furthermore, the VOC was not allowed to hire 'Franschen, Engelsche of Schotten, selfs niet als bootsgesellen, soldaten of andersints'. An exception could be made for 'Oosterlingen en Noorluyden', i.e. Germans and Scandinavians, but this was only allowed in times of extreme shortage.<sup>52</sup>

The aforementioned manpower shortages ensured that these regulations were honored mostly in the breach, but the VOC nonetheless ensured that the highest positions were exclusively given to Dutchmen, preferably those with ties to its administrators. Its employees of foreign stock were restricted to the lowly positions of soldiers or sailors. This ensured that an overwhelmingly large part of the troops in the garrisons and armies of the VOC in the east were of foreign descent, to the extent that one observer noted that the language of the majority of the garrison in Batavia was German.<sup>53</sup>

The Dutch commanders and governors often belittled the quality of their foreign soldiers, citing unpreparedness and lack of loyalty and commitment. Late in 1649 de Chambelle, who has been cited previously, quarreled with a Dutch lieutenant from another company in Malacca. Over drinks the two men argued over the martial spirits of the French people, a situation only diffused by a superior sending the Dutch lieutenant away. A few days afterwards the lieutenant again insulted de Chambelle, with both men coming to blows. Before blood could be spilled the head merchant passed by, who had de Chambelle apprehended and thrown in jail. The VOC maintained the death penalty on any of its employees pulling a sword to injure

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<sup>51</sup> R. van Gelder, *Het Oost-Indisch Avontuur, Duitsers in dienst van de VOC* (Nijmegen 1997) 65.

<sup>52</sup> D.W. Stapel, *Pieter van Dam's Beschryvinge van de Oostindische Compagnie, vol. 1* (Den Haag, 1927) 555. The *Beschryvinge* was a book on the history of the Company until 1701 written by its legal advisor for internal use.

<sup>53</sup> J.G. Taylor, *The Social World of Batavia: European and Eurasian in Dutch Asia* (London 1983) 6.



another, but de Chambelle had the luck that several onlookers had been present, who insisted he acted in self-defense. After spending ten days in prison, de Chambelle was released without charges and in full honor, while the lieutenant was ordered to ask for forgiveness.<sup>54</sup>

Another important aspect of Dutch discriminatory policies was its virulent anti-Catholicism. It accepted none in its ranks who were avowed Catholics, nor did it allow sermons in the territories under its control. Van Hille lamented that there was nowhere to express his Catholic faith, as there were no priests for him to confess to.<sup>55</sup> However, this did not mean that there were no Catholics serving with the VOC. Religious affiliation could be easily hidden, and we shall see in later chapters that there were Catholic congregations and priests present in Batavia. Nor did such affiliation bar men from climbing the social ladder, as long as they did not publicly express their beliefs. One high official on Formosa would remark to a Portuguese spy that he was a convinced Catholic, but that officials did not really mind as long as he held the outward appearance of a Reformed Protestant.<sup>56</sup>

This drawing of ethnical or national boundaries was not only institutional, but felt with the rank-and-file also. The different nationalities held an antagonistic relationship to each other, and brawls between the groups were common.<sup>57</sup> Many servants instead had a powerful feeling of community with those people hailing from the same cities or areas as they themselves did, and formed supportive communities for new arrivals from the same areas. Jan van Hille, doomed in as sense not because of his language (he was Flemish) but his religion (he was Catholic) stated he often received news from his hometown of Bruges through new arrivals from the city, and regularly sent word himself to his parents to notify the families of others that their son was still alive.<sup>58</sup>

## 2.4 Dutch colonial hierarchy

Another peculiarity with which de La Tesserie would have to contend was the colonial hierarchy which the Dutch had created in the East. The upper layer of the

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<sup>54</sup> Van der Cruysse, *Mercenaires français*, 160-163.

<sup>55</sup> V. Arickx, 'Jan van Hille en zijn verblijf in Batavia (1655-1662). Zuidnederlanders in de Noordnederlandse expansie tijdens de 17e Eeuw', *Handelingen van het Genootschap voor Geschiedenis gesticht onder de benaming Société d'Emulation te Brugge*, 101 (1965), 190.

<sup>56</sup> T. Andrade, *How Taiwan became Chinese. Dutch, Spanish and Han Colonization in the Seventeenth Century* (Columbia 2008), Ch. 2:1.

<sup>57</sup> Taylor, *The Social World of Batavia*, 8.

<sup>58</sup> Arickx, 'Jan van Hille en zijn verblijf in Batavia', *HGGSEB*, 101 (1965) 192.

VOC was formed by the Dutch merchants; these men held absolute power over all the servants in the possessions of the VOC. The Council of Batavia, which governed the VOC in Asia, consisted of the governor-general, who was assisted by fifteen advisors, assembling twice a week to discuss matters pertaining to the Company at large. Administrative positions in outlying factories were headed by men similarly appointed from the merchant class, as were most of the trading missions and diplomatic functions.<sup>59</sup>

For most of the early 17<sup>th</sup> century the appointment to such sectors happened exclusively in the Netherlands, and was exclusively reserved for Dutchmen. Even for well-educated young men from foreign extraction, pedigree was not an assurance for obtaining a good position. The case of Johann Sigmund Wurffbain is instructive. The son of the major of Nuremberg, he had obtained a good education, spoke Dutch and French and possessed many letters of recommendation. However, he was only allowed to join as midshipman in 1632, much as was the case with de La Tesserie twelve years later.<sup>60</sup> As the colonial community grew in the East however, foreign servants of long experience in the VOC could be promoted to the post locally. This opened the possibility for foreigners of long service and sufficient integration to also aim for the top of the hierarchy. However, to be eligible, these men had to be of proven ability as well as be ‘Dutch’, i.e.: speak Dutch and be of the Reformed faith.<sup>61</sup>

As mentioned earlier, no foreigners were allowed to ship out to the East with a rank in the civil service, instead commonly being placed in the military arm. The social gap between the two arms of service was wide, and very few saw chance to jump it. Even if the criteria of ‘Dutchness’ and proven ability were reached; promotion to the ranks of civilian personnel could prove elusive. A regular system of advancement was missing, causing promotion to be largely dependent upon connections with superiors, cover letters, recommendations and other forms of patronage. The connections to others with a high post was all-important; Gerrit Aansorgh, a Dutchman who had arrived in Batavia as *onderkoopman* in 1755, lamented his passing by the Council for lucrative positions in one of the outlying posts, in favor of new arrivals with better letters of recommendation. Because his resources of living were reaching their limit, he wrote that his only salvation could come from his uncle obtaining better recommendations in the Netherlands for his

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<sup>59</sup> J. van Goor, *De Nederlandse Koloniën, Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Expansie, 1600-1975* (Den Haag 1993) 124.

<sup>60</sup> van Gelder, *Het Oost-Indisch Avontuur*, 56, de La Tesserie, ‘Mémoires’, fol. 132.

<sup>61</sup> Taylor, *The Social World of Batavia*, 6-7.

use.<sup>62</sup> De l'Ostal, who we saw at the end of the previous chapter, had been a soldier who had made the jump through his connections to Rijcklof van Goens and van Reede tot Drakestein, both important men in the Company.

Such a network could be built while on the job, through showing intelligence and wits, but this took time. Many of the men who reached the highest ranks through climbing the hierarchical ladder often took decades to get there. In a detailed study on the Company personnel serving in Bengal in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, dividing up the hierarchy in six steps, Lequin estimated that it took on average six years to progress one step, with advancement often taking place upon reenlistment after each further stint of five years. Many of the servants in his study served for several decades before they could reach one of the higher posts, and most never got there at all.<sup>63</sup>

Potential climbers of the hierarchical ladder thus had some moments of opportunity. The most important one was the high death rate with VOC servants from all ranks. Simply through longevity men could outlast their superiors, and take their place. Another possibility, especially important in the early period of VOC control, were the new opportunities created by the expansion of its territory, and the new posts created to ensure their control. Military men, who normally saw few of their members cross over to the civilian class, could win distinction in the field, using their renown to boost themselves to higher posts. This meant that, even though the hierarchy of the VOC was quite prohibitive to quick advancement, there were possibilities regardless for those of lower ranks and other nationalities to climb the hierarchy.<sup>64</sup>

## 2.5 De La Tesserie's opportunities

The examples above show that there were a number of important Frenchmen in service of the VOC, and that contact was maintained between those at home and abroad, possibly facilitating the decision for others to join. The help of such powerful men could have greatly influenced the decision by a young man like de La Tesserie to travel to the East, in the expectation of support and a lucrative position upon arrival.

Nonetheless, de La Tesserie's chances for a profitable career with the VOC would have seemed slim at the outset of his voyage. He shipped out as a common

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<sup>62</sup> V. Roeper and R. van Gelder, *In dienst van de Compagnie. Leven bij de VOC in honderd ooggetuigenissen* (Amsterdam 2002) 137-138.

<sup>63</sup> F. Lequin, *Het personeel van de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie in Azië in de Achttiende Eeuw, meer in the bijzonder in de vestiging Bengalen* (Leiden 1982) 149-152.

<sup>64</sup> U. Bosma and R. Raben, *De Oude Indische Wereld, 1500-1920* (Amsterdam 2003).

soldier, the lowest rank in the Company, and he was of a national minority, which, due to the discriminatory policies and outlook of the VOC, would seriously hamper his chances of advancement. In van Gelder's study on Germans serving for the Company, it becomes clear that very few ever reached a higher post. For those lucky few who did, the most important route of advancement were through connections and the contacts with higher-placed persons. Talent and hard work alone were only rarely rewarded; instead, a soldier looking for advancement was to make himself known to his superiors, build local networks and comport himself admirably, so as to catch the attention of the higher echelons.<sup>65</sup>

However, de La Tesserie also held several advantages. Firstly, to put it bluntly, he did not die on the voyage to Batavia, nor in the years afterwards. De L'Ostal's story shows that, if circumstances permitted, a soldier could climb the hierarchical ladder. To do so however also meant that said soldier would have to stay alive, a difficult prospect in the disease-ridden possessions of the VOC. This de La Tesserie seemed to have done admirably: leaving the Dutch East Indies in 1655, he would serve the Company for ten years, which would have turned de La Tesserie into an experienced colonial servant simply by virtue of his time in service. Secondly, from a remark made about de La Tesserie in later sources it was clear that he had learnt Dutch either during his time in the Dutch army or during his service with the VOC.<sup>66</sup> This made him much more amenable to the Dutch command, who were adamant that all of its higher personnel spoke Dutch. Lastly, de La Tesserie's French Calvinist background would have ensured that he was also admissible to the Company on the basis of his religion and, as has been pointed out earlier, French noble culture was highly conducive to integration elsewhere in Europe.

For de La Tesserie, a cosmopolitan approach would thus have been paramount if he wanted to establish himself in the East. Only by understanding the laws of the VOC, learning the Dutch language and imitating Dutch customs could he hope to be appointed to more lucrative positions. To do so required long years in often lowly service to the Company. Furthermore, it was entirely possible not to do so at all, as the case of de Chambelle showed. After four years, de Chambelle's contract had expired, and due to his inability to learn Dutch, he had decided to return to France.<sup>67</sup> Such men, possibly the majority of the foreign servants of the VOC, remained in their own circles, suffering discrimination by the Dutch merchants as a result. For them,

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<sup>65</sup> van Gelder, *Het Oost-Indisch Avontuur*, 184.

<sup>66</sup> R.G. Thwaites, *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents 1610 to 1791*, vol. 50, 190.

<sup>67</sup> Jean Guidon de Chambelle, *Voyage des Grandes Indes Orientales*, 166-167.

not trying to understand the Dutch rules in the East would only lead to disappointment. De La Tesserie however seemed to have escaped this fate.



## Chapter 3: De La Tesserie's first years in the East

The first years of de La Tesserie with the VOC are primarily marked by a dearth of information on his own career in general, as well as grievous shortcomings in his account of events. Nonetheless, they laid the basis for his subsequent travels. The following chapter will deal with these events, as well as the world into which de La Tesserie arrived when he set foot ashore at Batavia.

### 3.1 Travel to Batavia

Having made the decision to travel to the East, de La Tesserie sailed for Batavia from Middelburg on the 8<sup>th</sup> of January 1645. His fleet carried 647 men, of whom 236 were soldiers and the remainder sailors.<sup>68</sup> The route taken to get to Batavia was extensively detailed by the cartographers of the VOC. Having knowledge of the prevailing winds and currents, the directors sent out their ships in the months between Christmas and Easter. This ensured the fleets could catch the winds and tides which enabled the swiftest voyage to the East, a necessity as long sailing times had a deleterious effect on the personnel.

The fleet of de La Tesserie passed along the Canaries before turning southwest, towards the coast of Brazil, to catch the favorable winds. From there the ships turned east again, reaching the Cape, which they passed without stopping. In short notice, the ships then crossed the Indian Ocean, passing through the Strait of Sunda before arriving at Batavia on the 18<sup>th</sup> of June 1645.<sup>69</sup> The whole voyage had taken 162 days, which lay far below the average measured for the period of 1640-1649 of two hundred days.<sup>70</sup> The short duration did not however prevent a similar number in deaths as on the longer journeys that year. De La Tesserie himself stated that the total number of deaths on both ships was fifty-four men, a number corroborated by the Council of Batavia.<sup>71</sup> This meant that eight percent of the men onboard had died, exactly the same for that decade in general. The relative high death rate was probably caused by the skipping of layover moment at the Cape, which meant that the sailors had been confined to their ships for far longer than was normally the case.

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<sup>68</sup> *Generale Missiven II, 1639-1655*, 276, According to de La Tesserie the number of soldiers was 172, but the difference is small enough to write it down as an effect of recollection.

<sup>69</sup> De La Tesserie, 'Mémoires', fol. 133.

<sup>70</sup> Bruijn et al, *Dutch-Asiatic Shipping*, 74.

<sup>71</sup> De La Tesserie, 'Mémoires', fol. 133, and *Generale Missiven II, 1639-1655*, 276.

Regardless, somewhat less than 236 soldiers landed at Batavia, to be distributed between the guard units and the main garrison.

### 3.2 Describing Batavia

The Batavia De La Tesserie arrived to was a colonial society in the grip of rapid growth. Founded in 1610 as safe alternative to the port of Bantam, the VOC had permanently shifted its headquarters to the new town in 1619. Batavia quickly became the focal-point from where trading ventures were organized, military expeditions prepared and goods stocked for eventual shipment to Europe. The town also attracted large numbers of foreigners, drawn by the unprecedented trading opportunities the city offered.<sup>72</sup> By the time of de La Tesserie's residence the most important fortifications had been built, but the great population surges of the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, which would turn the town into a metropolis, were still a decade away.<sup>73</sup>

According to de La Tesserie, the main fort was very large, cornered by four large bastions and covered by channels, which protected its walls from direct assault and connected it to the main town. The town itself was a square, surrounded by walls, which were protected by three bastions and several smaller redoubts, all of which were topped with cannons. The main citadel contained the residence of the Dutch governor, as well as the principal magazine and a garrison of two hundred soldiers. The number of soldiers in the town itself fluctuated due to demands on Dutch manpower elsewhere. Both the troops in the fortress and whoever was present in the town were headed by a colonel, while the policing of the town was in the hands of a force of seven hundred local citizens. In the event of a siege these troops could be augmented by twelve hundred black freedmen, as well as three hundred Javanese, '*armés que de piques et christes*'. There were also many Chinese, but they were not allowed to carry arms.<sup>74</sup>

The primary occupation of the soldiers in the town was garrisoning the central fortress and the surrounding strongpoints. The garrison also formed a reservoir of men from which the Company could draw for the manning of expeditions. De La Tesserie himself would remain in Batavia for two years, in which time he was engaged hunting pirates in the employ of the sultan of Mataram, a longtime enemy of

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<sup>72</sup> F.S. Gaastra, *De Geschiedenis van de VOC* (Bussum 1982).

<sup>73</sup> R. Raben, *Batavia and Colombo. The Ethnic and Spatial Order of Two Colonial Cities, 1600-1800* (Leiden 1996) 15-17.

<sup>74</sup> De La Tesserie, '*Mémoires*', fol. 133-134.



the Company.<sup>75</sup> An example of this activity was when, according to the *Daghregisters* of Batavia, fifty Mataramese prows were active near Batavia, where they had attacked Javanese shipping sailing for the city.<sup>76</sup> The work would have been tedious to the soldiers involved, but it was an important activity to the Company, which relied upon clear lines of trade and communication for its ventures.

Such descriptions permeated the account of de La Tesserie's travels. As his work was meant to inform the French government of the holdings in the East, and what they could expect if they would ever try to capture strongpoints of the other European powers, this type of information would be exactly what his requesters would have wanted. As he himself stated that he was well educated in fortifications, it is implicit that the knowledge he had of local strongholds would be very accurate and specialist. Strangely enough, however, he makes no comments on the weakness of the surrounding walls, which were of an older design than was in use in Europe at the time, and would not have afforded sufficient protection to the town in the event of a European-style siege. This was a conscious policy used by the Dutch everywhere they built, as they promoted the defense of their main strongholds and depots over that of the abutting town. This might call into doubt over his claim of being trained in fortification-building, as it was a defect many similarly trained contemporaries did note.<sup>77</sup>

### 3.3 The Dutch colony of Fort Zeelandia

After participating in a disastrous naval campaign in the Philippines, de La Tesserie was sent as part of reinforcements to the Dutch garrison of the colony on Formosa in 1647 (see map 2).<sup>78</sup> There he was made a lieutenant, opening a dynamic career in the Far East. Fort Zeelandia, the central fortress on Formosa, was built as part of a plan by the Dutch to reroute Chinese trade into their own hands, working in concert with their attempts to concentrate power and the commerce of the Chinese Sea trade at Batavia, and the subsequent campaigns against their major rivals, the Spanish in Manila and the Portuguese in Macau. A fleet had been sent to the coast of Fujian in 1622 to force access to major Chinese outlet ports, but was defeated shortly

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<sup>75</sup> *Ibidem*, 134.

<sup>76</sup> J.A. Chijs, J. de Hullu eds., *Dagh-Registers gehouden int Casteel Batavia vant passerende daer ter plaetse als over geheel Nederlandts-India, 1628-1682, vol. 4 (The Hague 1888-1931)* 244.

<sup>77</sup> Raben, *Batavia and Colombo*, 35.

<sup>78</sup> Present day Taiwan. The term Formosa stems from the name given to it by its first Portuguese visitors, *ilha formosa*, or 'beautiful island'.

afterwards. However, not wanting to lose the possible assistance of the Dutch against the Portuguese, the governor of Fujian convinced the former to settle on Formosa instead. There the VOC possessed a good position to keep in contact with Chinese merchants on the mainland and to control the (illegal) trade between China and Japan, for which the unclaimed island proved a perfect go-between.<sup>79</sup>

Formosa was also the source of large herds of deer roaming the western plains of the island. The natives hunted the animals, using deer products for such various purposes as clothing, food or currency. The author was not the only European to comment how healthy and well-dressed the locals were, because of the abundance of deer meat and skins.<sup>80</sup> However, the majority of venison and skins were bought, refined and shipped abroad by Chinese merchants, who had been doing so long before the arrival of the Dutch. Fujian province, ever on the brink of starvation, bought venison in great numbers, while the Japanese used skins for the production of armor and ceremonial clothing. Even before the Dutch started commercializing the process in the 1640's, Formosa was already exporting tens of thousands of skins to Japan, often with profits double the buying in price.<sup>81</sup>

To tap into these trades, the VOC chose to base their warehouses at a natural harbor on the southwestern portion of the island.<sup>82</sup> The harbor consisted of two sand dunes separating the sea from the bay behind, with a canal with the distance of a six-pound cannon shot separating both. According to de La Tesserie, this entrance was difficult to navigate, and many ships were lost there.<sup>83</sup> However, the harbor itself ensured a safe haven for ships traveling between Batavia and Japan.

The northern tip of the southern island contained the fortress and storehouses. Built in 1624, these structures were connected to the mainland by a dike which was crossable at low tide. The fortress itself consisted of four bastions, placed upon a piece of land overlooking the entrance. The remainder of the island was also well-

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<sup>79</sup> Van Goor, *De Nederlandse Koloniën*, 88.

<sup>80</sup> de La Tesserie, 'Mémoires', fol. 140. He also stated that the only way to distinguish Formosan tribesmen from Europeans was by the color of their skin.

<sup>81</sup> T.O. Hollmann, 'Formosa and the Trade in Venison and Deer Skins', in: R. Ptak and D. Rothermund, *Emporia, Commodities and Entrepreneurs in Asian Maritime Trade, C. 1400-1750* (Stuttgart 1991) 263.

<sup>82</sup> The ruins of these buildings now stand in modern Anping, although the harbor at which it was built has long since disappeared in the modern developmental projects of the Taiwanese government.

<sup>83</sup> Although later events would certainly have soured de La Tesserie's views of the harbor, many other travelers also noted the shortcomings of the harbor, where navigation was difficult for low-lying ocean ships. See T. Andrade, *How Taiwan became Chinese. Dutch, Spanish and Han Colonization in the Seventeenth Century* (Columbia 2008) Ch. 2:7.

fortified: a heightened road stretched along the harbor, ending in two other bastions, and another redoubt protected the entrance to the dike. The garrison contained some two hundred men, forming the military reserve of the colony.<sup>84</sup>

The town abutting the fortress held some one hundred-fifty European civilians. The majority of its population however consisted primarily of Chinese who, according to de La Tesserie, numbered around ten thousand inhabitants by 1647.<sup>85</sup> Serving as merchants, workers, fishermen and the other myriad jobs which kept colonies running, these Chinese communities were prevalent in all European colonial positions, and indeed in most trading hubs in East Asia. The Spanish city of Manila often had to deal with unrest stemming from its large population of Chinese, while Batavia also held several thousand Chinese in the same period. It was the hope of the Governor-general and the Council to eventually ensure that Fort Zeelandia would take up the same position as Batavia did as central entrepôt for all trade in the area, and other travelers commented that the new town held all possibilities of becoming exactly that.<sup>86</sup>

### 3.4 The Formosan countryside under Dutch governance

Ever since building Fort Zeelandia, the Dutch endeavored to take control over the hunting and trading of deerskins on the plains inland. To do so, they were forced to expand their control over the native villagers, first in the immediate surroundings, collectively known as the Siraya, and later further to the North and South (see map 4). Opposition however was harsh and sustained. In an extensive description of the peoples of the island, Olfert Dapper in his work *Gedenkwaardig Bedryf der Nerderlandsche Oost-Indische Maetschappye* mentioned that the island was dotted by large numbers of villages, which lived in a continuous state of warfare with each other. This warfare consisted largely of raids and counter raids, in which subterfuge and treachery were commonplace. The men fought mostly with bow and arrow, taking up shields and axes only when they went in for the kill. The Formosans preferred to take the heads of the men they killed, which afforded them status at

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<sup>84</sup> De La Tesserie, 'Mémoires', fol. 136.

<sup>85</sup> Ibidem. This number is however an exaggeration. The *Generale Missiven* of 18 December 1639 mention the presence of nine thousand Chinese on the island as a whole, of whom the majority lived not in the town, but among the native villages elsewhere. Coolhaas *Generale missiven*, vol. 2, 81.

<sup>86</sup> van der Cruysse, *Mercenaires français de la VOC*, 223.

home, and possibly was a prerequisite for the advancement to manhood.<sup>87</sup> De La Tesserie concurred that warfare was their inclination, and that they did not give quarter, although neither were they cruel. Peace between villages was made with the exchange of pigs as payment for the kills made during the conflict.<sup>88</sup>

The Formosan natives farmed the coastal plains, planting rice, corn, wheat, millet and fruits. Dapper made note that their farming techniques were very primitive compared to those of the Dutch or Chinese, and that the Formosans only produced enough food to sustain themselves and their families.<sup>89</sup> De La Tesserie himself mentioned the same, and added that the local people on the plain left much land uncultivated, sowing only around the immediate surroundings of their houses. They also fished large quantities of fish immediately off the coast, although by the time of de La Tesserie's presence, this work had largely been taken over by Chinese newcomers, who exported their catches back to China, paying taxes to be allowed to do so.<sup>90</sup> The agricultural shortcomings eventually moved the Dutch government to rely much more on Chinese colonists for the production of foodstuffs to maintain their garrison and for the export to their other posts.

Although the VOC had not planned for its colony to be anything more than a strongpoint and safe harbor from which to dominate the nearby trade routes, it was quickly drawn into the local power politics of the Siraya, the southwestern plains area. This extension of Company power was largely a reaction to rogue Chinese, Japanese and Spanish competition for the island's natural resources, but the internal logic was driven by the Protestant preachers who had followed the soldiers ashore. These men went out to the native villages, trying to convert the locals to the Protestant faith. Their conversion efforts proved especially effective in the village of Sinkan, where they soon had a small congregation built up.<sup>91</sup>

When these congregations came under attack by rival villages, the preachers pushed the Dutch government to intervene in favor of their flock. Initially met with setbacks, one of which involved the ambush and massacre of sixty-three soldiers in

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<sup>87</sup> O. Dapper, *Gedenkwaardig Bedryf der Nederlandsche Oost-Indische Maetschappye, op de Kufte en in het Keizerrijk van Taising of Sina*, (Meurs, 1670) 27-28, and Andrade, *How Taiwan became Chinese*, Ch. 1:10.

<sup>88</sup> de La Tesserie, 'Mémoires', fol. 140-141.

<sup>89</sup> Dapper, *Gedenkwaardig Bedryf der Nederlandsche Oost-Indische Maetschappye*, 12.

<sup>90</sup> de La Tesserie, 'Mémoires', fol. 140.

<sup>91</sup> To the Sinkanners, a large amount of pragmatism was probably involved; one of the smaller villages of the region, they were able to secure the alliance of the powerful Dutch through their conversion. This alliance stood them in good stead, especially when attacked by more powerful neighbors. Andrade, *How Taiwan became Chinese*, Ch. 3:11.

1629, the Dutch were obliged by their alliances and for the maintenance of their status as most powerful group in the Siraya to chastise the hostile villages one by one, and ensure their subjugation to Dutch control. This ensured that throughout the first decade of their presence on the island they were involved with expeditions and fighting against the neighboring towns, trying to gain a peace through the show of force. By 1636 eventually, this process had largely been completed, and the local villagers had either been pacified or exterminated.<sup>92</sup>

To govern their new allies and secure continued peace, the Dutch set up a bureaucratic system which incorporated the various areas into its structure. The structure revolved around the meeting of regular *landdagen*. These *landdagen* were forums where Dutch military power could be displayed, and where the right to govern could be conferred by the VOC to the local chieftains through the handing out of regalia supposedly connected to the position. Although the *landdagen* were annual events in the western areas which formed the heartlands of Dutch power, they also assured at least a formal presence in the less controlled areas to the North, East and South of the island, a point also observed by de La Tesserie himself.<sup>93</sup>

He would have been in a good position to notice such politics, for soon after serving in the garrison of Fort Zeelandia, de La Tesserie was made *politiek* (political minister) in one of the allied native towns.<sup>94</sup> This employee was tasked with overseeing the application of Dutch law where matters of importance for the VOC were concerned, especially maintaining the peace between the tribes and the regulation of the produce of the deer hunts. Initially, the position was filled by the clerics already present in the villages, who had done so much to expand Dutch control over the countryside. The VOC preferred to use them over its own employees, both because of the knowledge of native languages of the former, as well as the contact they had built up during their residency.<sup>95</sup>

As the colony became better established, and its interests in the local countryside increased (of which the reasons will be discussed in the next chapter), more use was also made of regular servants. Partially, this might have been the result of a greater affinity of its administrators with the local language and culture. De La

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<sup>92</sup> L. Blussé, 'Dutch Protestant Missionaries as Protagonists of the Territorial Expansion of the VOC on Formosa', in: D. Kooiman, O. van den Muijzenberg and P. van der Veer, *Conversion Competition and Conflict. Essays on the Role of Religion in Asia* (Amsterdam 1984) 179-180.

<sup>93</sup> de La Tesserie, 'Mémoires', fol. 141, see also Chiu Hsin-Hui, *The Colonial 'Civilizing Process' in Dutch Formosa, 1624-1662* (Leiden 2008) 113-119.

<sup>94</sup> de La Tesserie, 'Mémoires', fol. 141.

<sup>95</sup> Hsin-Hui, *The Colonial 'Civilizing Process' in Dutch Formosa*, 121.

Tesserie himself stated that, in the two years he spent in the countryside, he learnt to speak their language naturally.<sup>96</sup> Also, the VOC increasingly tried to separate the clerical and political duties. This process was completed when, during an extensive re-organization of the administration in 1651, clerics were officially barred from political duties.<sup>97</sup>

For de La Tesserie, these changes would have meant much in the way of career opportunities. The need of observers and administrators in the countryside of Formosa meant that ready jobs were available for ambitious men, and political expansion of Company control over the countryside meant a corresponding net increase in such employments. If his claim of having learnt the language is to be believed (and his insights in their culture seem to reaffirm this claim), he would have joined a select group of Company officials whom the VOC was willing to advance in position and pay extra.<sup>98</sup>

### 3.5 Trading on the high seas

However, de La Tesserie did not only confine his activities to the island itself. Halfway into 1649, under pretext of a bad health and thus needing to recuperate in other climates, he was able to convince the governor to let him join a ship sailing to Japan. The ship arrived at Deshima, the main Dutch outpost, on the 17<sup>th</sup> of September 1649.<sup>99</sup> The island must have made a large impression on de La Tesserie, because he devoted several pages of the manuscript to its description. Prominent herein was his treatment of the Japanese persecution of native Christians. De La Tesserie noted that the emperor had barred the Portuguese from trading in the country, and had massacred the native Catholic community with help of the Dutch, whom he gave the position of preferred trading partner, previously held by the Portuguese. Other observations made by de La Tesserie concerned the Japanese treatment of the Dutch, whom they had confined to an island in the bay of Nagasaki. The Dutch were not allowed off the island with express permission of the Japanese governor, nor were they allowed to show any signs of their religious affiliation, to the extent that the

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<sup>96</sup> de La Tesserie, 'Mémoires', fol. 141.

<sup>97</sup> Hsin-Hui, *The Colonial 'Civilizing Process' in Dutch Formosa*, 122.

<sup>98</sup> J.L. Blussé, W.E. Milde and T. Yung-Ho, *De Dagregisters van het Kasteel Zeelandia, Taiwan 1629-1662*, vol. 3 (The Hague, 1986-2000) 304.

<sup>99</sup> de La Tesserie, 'Mémoires', fol. 145, J.L. Blussé, *The Deshima dagregisters : their original tables of contents, 12 vols.*, (Leiden 1986-2005) 1648/49, fol. 83-84.

Japanese forced incoming ships' crews to collect all religious representations and burn them.<sup>100</sup>

By the end of 1649 de La Tesserie was again on Formosa. There, he heard that peace had been signed between the Netherlands and Spain. To earn something of the new opportunities this offered, he participated in a trading expedition consisting of three Chinese junks to Macau (then a Habsburg holding). However, they found no opportunity to trade, deciding to return to Formosa. Subsequently, at the end of October 1650 de La Tesserie set out on a longer voyage with a Dutch trading fleet to Bandar Abbas (see map 2). It is unclear what de La Tesserie's position was in this fleet, but it is probable that he was part of the detachment of soldiers meant for the protection of the ships. Traveling for nearly one and a half years, the fleet sailed to many of the Dutch factories in the Indian Ocean, taking on and unloading goods where possible. Later, two more voyages would follow to Japan.<sup>101</sup>

Apparently these voyages were very lucrative to de La Tesserie. Although technically forbidden, the VOC often allowed a measure of personal trading, and especially where those high on the hierarchy were concerned, fortunes could be made.<sup>102</sup> This also seems to have been the case with our subject, who by 1655 claimed to have garnered a substantial sum, probably from just such ventures.<sup>103</sup> Such growing personal wealth was for many men the primary lure to the East, as has been mentioned, and for de La Tesserie also this personal fortune proved important, as we will see in a later chapter.

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<sup>100</sup> de La Tesserie, 'Mémoires', fol. 145-147. The large amount of information proffered by de La Tesserie might indicate the special interest of the French foreign service in the circumstances of trade on Japan, which was an important potential partner.

<sup>101</sup> Ibidem, 150-154.

<sup>102</sup> Lequin, *Het Personeel van de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*, 190-191.

<sup>103</sup> de La Tesserie, 'Mémoires', fol. 154.





## Chapter 4: Deer-trade and the Chinese Revolt

Having returned to fort Zeelandia from his voyage to Bandar Abbas early in 1652, de La Tesserie again was active in the administration of the island. The next three years would see him involved in increasingly important posts concerning native trade, and participate in the suppression of an insurrection of the Chinese farmers near Fort Zeelandia.

### 4.1 Wanckan; cork in the deer-trade bottle

Shortly after his return, de La Tesserie was given the command of a fortification near Wanckan, a fishing village populated by Chinese fishermen (see map 3).<sup>104</sup> The village was situated north of Fort Zeelandia, holding a *wachtpost* called fort Vlissingen. The fort was there to protect the villagers against headhunters and, more importantly, to secure the area north of Fort Zeelandia.<sup>105</sup> In 1636 the Dutch had built a fort on a dune in the bay, which controlled the major river running inland. It proved badly situated however, needing continued investments to protect it from erosion from seawater. The fortress was given up on the 25<sup>th</sup> of January 1644, when it was completely dismantled.<sup>106</sup> Nonetheless, a form of power projection was necessary, so shortly afterwards a fortified house was built on a nearby location to house a detachment of soldiers.

Next to central citadels such as fort Zeelandia, the network of fortifications maintained by the VOC in its various colonies also consisted of '*grote halve maanen, redouten, halve maanen en buytenposte*'. These were either meant to supplement the main citadels, or form independent but smaller posts. Although most citadels were meant to project maritime control, many smaller fortifications were constructed to maintain control over the interior. These fortifications were meant to resist local attackers who did not possess cannons, and were therefore placed in open terrain, with steep, high walls. This ensured that its garrisons could not be surprised

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<sup>104</sup> De La Tesserie called the town Quanquan, but his description fits that of the '*wachtpost*' at Wanckan. De La Tesserie, 'Mémoires', fol. 143.

<sup>105</sup> Hsin-Hui, *The Colonial 'Civilizing Process'*, 68.

<sup>106</sup> J.L. Blussé, W.E. Milde and T. Yung-Ho, *De Dagregisters van het Kasteel Zeelandia, Taiwan 1629-1662, vol. 3 (The Hague, 1986-2000)*, 218, fol. 32. It is clear that de La Tesserie is exaggerating his importance for the VOC in stating that the '*wachthuis*' was an actual fort. Commanding what was essentially a fortified house, he would have commanded no more than a dozen soldiers at best.

by a sudden attack, and enabled them to hold out until reinforcements could arrive.<sup>107</sup> A post such as Vlissingen did not have operate on its own, but instead performed the function of knot in a wider net. This net was centered on Fort Zeelandia and held together the lands between, while simultaneously denying entry to foreign competitors.

If de La Tesserie's statement that he was nominated as its commander is correct, several mentions of his activities can be found in the *Dagregisters van het Kasteel Zeelandia*. These included furnishing commissioners with escorts when they were visiting the local allied villages and apprehending criminals. One entry was a request by fort Zeelandia to 'den gebiedenden sargiant' to provide information on such things as the local lime supply.<sup>108</sup> However, the most important task of the sergeant in charge was supervising the trade in deerskins from the plains inland, gathering information on local trade, selling hunting licenses and apprehending smugglers trying to peddle those skins without paying taxes to the Dutch.<sup>109</sup> These roles were of especially vital importance to the VOC due to the presence of Chinese traders and hunters in the surrounding lands.

#### 4.2 The Formosan deer hunt

Most commonly noted by Europeans was the proclivity of the Formosans for hunting and consuming large numbers of deer. All the villages organized communal hunts, forming annual hunting parties which went out to hunt deer (or interloping neighbors). Such parties were armed with spears and bows, but primarily they relied on snares to trap their prey. Afterwards, the whole village was occupied with skinning the deer, preparing the hides for use as clothing material or sale. De La Tesserie himself had participated in such expeditions, where he stated that five hundred men were mobilized, catching over two thousand deer.<sup>110</sup>

The island-wide peace instituted by the VOC opened up access to the interior for Chinese fortune seekers, who were eager to find new sources of animal hides for the perpetually short Chinese and Japanese industries. To increase output to meet

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<sup>107</sup> K. Zandvliet, 'Vestingbouw in de Oost', in: G.J. Knaap, G. Teitler eds., *De Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie: tussen oorlog en diplomatie* (Leiden 2002) 167.

<sup>108</sup> Blussé, Milde and Yung-Ho, *De Dagregisters van het Kasteel Zeelandia*, vol. 3, 201, fol. 682 and 349, fol. 420 and 305 fol. 366.

<sup>109</sup> T. Andrade, 'Pirates, Pelts, and Promises: The Sino-Dutch Colony of Seventeenth-Century Taiwan and the Aboriginal Village of Favorolang', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 64:2 (May 2005) 304.

<sup>110</sup> De La Tesserie, 'Mémoires', fol. 140-141.

demand, these new Chinese interlopers introduced novel hunting practices in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, making use of large pits into which whole herds of deer were driven, to be speared at leisure.<sup>111</sup>

Initially the Dutch were hostile to the Chinese living with the indigenous communities, regarding them as subversive elements, intent upon goading the local townspeople into overthrowing Dutch control. However, the VOC soon came to see the advantages which the Chinese hunters could offer to Company finances. Instead of controlling the deer trade directly (a practice which had been attempted but failed miserably, the Company decided to instead sell licenses to Chinese hunters. In an important work on this licensing system, Heyns signaled out four advantages thus obtained by the Company. The first was that their sale gave the Dutch an annual influx of cash. Secondly, through allowing independent Chinese to export skins on their own in return for ten percent tax instead of demanding all produce be sold to the Company, the Dutch lessened the problems of smuggling. Thirdly, the Dutch could buy the necessary skins for export to Japan more easily, both because the Chinese had increased supply and were keen on trading them to the Dutch. Lastly, local towns could be taxed by demanding set amounts of skins instead of cash or other goods.<sup>112</sup>

To ensure the continuation of this model, men like de La Tesserie were vital. The *wachthuis*, which lay at the nearby river inlet, ensured control over the most important waterway towards the northern hunting fields, and its seaboard had long been the joint of pirates and smugglers. Supported by the fortification and its garrison, officials were in a good position to screen the fields from foreign competition, ensuring the continued adherence of the Chinese hunters and traders to the licensing system instituted by the Dutch. Furthermore, as the very center from which the licenses for the northern regions were sold and checked, the *wachthuis* held an important regulatory position. Although its soldiers always acted under orders from the General Council in fort Zeelandia, its sergeant was nonetheless intimately involved with the system of pelt-trading which dominated the Formosan colony at the time.

For de La Tesserie the position of sergeant of the *wachthuis* Vlissingen provided invaluable experience in regulating deer-skin trade and how to operate a military and commercial outpost removed from the main center of Company power. Furthermore, he would have gained first-hand knowledge of the vital importance of working together with the local population to attain these goals. This would have

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<sup>111</sup> T. Andrade, 'Pirates, Pelts, and Promises', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 64:2, 303.

<sup>112</sup> P. Heyns, 'Deer Hunting in Dutch Formosa', in: K. Wei-ying, *Missionary Approaches and Linguistics in Mainland China and Taiwan* (Leuven 2001) 68-69.

included gathering knowledge on the local situation, maintaining local friendships and apprehending those violating the law.

### 4.3 “Co-colonization” and divide-and-conquer

After the Dutch had secured control over the native tribes, attempts were made to introduce modern agriculture to Formosa, so as to secure a good source of local foodstuffs, as well as sugar cane for sale in Europe. The local natives however were unreceptive to these novel agricultural techniques, forcing the Dutch to look elsewhere for colonists. As the number of Europeans in its service was completely inadequate, the Company turned to another source of farmers: Chinese from the coastal province of Fujian. Although Chinese merchants and hunters had been active on Formosa before the arrival of the VOC, actual settlement had not taken place due to native hostility. In a process which Andrade called ‘hybrid colonization’, Dutch military power secured a safe region to which Chinese farmers could migrate, bringing previously wild fields under cultivation. In return, the Dutch were allowed first rights to the produce of the fields, and levy taxes on the Chinese colonists. De La Tesserie mentioned that all the Chinese paid poll tax, as well as ten percent of all goods bartered.<sup>113</sup>

This model was so successful that by the 1650’s the overall Chinese population had increased to some twenty thousand individuals: VOC incomes from taxation were equivalent to the revenue from the deerskin-trade.<sup>114</sup> The tax system used by the VOC however proved extremely harsh on the underprivileged Chinese agricultural migrants. The collection of the taxes by Company soldiers often went hand in hand with abuse and depredations, especially where the weaker social groups were concerned. Furthermore, there seemed to have been an agricultural slump the years just prior to the revolt which ensured further hardship with the Chinese farmers, who were mostly landless farmhands.<sup>115</sup>

In addition, the Chinese hunting techniques introduced to Formosa had caused a precipitous collapse in the animals stocks, impoverishing local villages of native Formosans and Chinese alike. The VOC was forced to impose strict limits on hunting

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<sup>113</sup> de La Tesserie, ‘Mémoires’, fol. 134.

<sup>114</sup> T. Andrade, ‘The Rise and Fall of Dutch Taiwan, 1624–1662: Cooperative Colonization and the Statist Model of European Expansion’, *Journal of World History*, 17:4 (2006) 440.

<sup>115</sup> J. Huber, ‘Chinese Settlers Against the Dutch East India Company: the Rebellion led by Kuo Huai-I on Taiwan in 1652’, in: E.B. Vermeer, *Development and Decline of Fukien Province in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (Leiden 1990) 281-282.

to give the local deer populations time to recuperate. These limitations were deeply resented by the Chinese hunters, further exacerbating problems between them and the Company.<sup>116</sup>

#### 4.4 The Chinese Revolt of 1652

In 1652 the simmering grievances erupted into full-blown revolt. The Chinese living around Sakkam, the village on the other side of the bay from fort Zeelandia, rose up in revolt under command of one Gouqua Fay It, attacking VOC servants living in the surrounding area. According to de La Tesserie over fourteen thousand Chinese colonists joined the rebel army, although the *Generale missiven van gouverneurs-generaal en Raden aan Heren XVII* gave a more conservative estimate of four thousand. During the night the Chinese killed and mutilated eight Dutch, cutting off ears and noses and carrying the heads around on bamboo sticks. Twenty-six others, including women and children, sought refuge in the company stables, the only defensible structures in the town. The Chinese quickly brought this makeshift position under siege, although the Dutch were able to send for help to the main garrison in Fort Zeelandia before they were closed off from contact.<sup>117</sup>

The VOC response was swift: drawing one hundred fifty soldiers from the garrison, a makeshift army was sent across the bay the next morning under the command of a Swiss officer. Being met on the beach by the majority of Chinese soldiers, the detachment made an amphibious landing, breaking the untrained and lightly armed Chinese farmhands with concentrated volleys of musket fire. The rebels fled to the fields beyond the town, pursued by the victorious Dutch until nightfall. The commander then decided to return to the stables, wary of being ambushed by the still-numerous Chinese roaming the countryside. There the Dutch awaited the arrival of reinforcements called up by the governor from the hinterland.<sup>118</sup> By this time de La Tesserie entered the conflict. Being at Wanckan at the time, he was ordered south, and to bring as many native mercenaries with him as possible from the villages in between.<sup>119</sup> When he finally joined up with the Dutch regulars, six hundred

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<sup>116</sup> Hollmann, 'Formosa and the Trade in Venison and Deer Skins', 275.

<sup>117</sup> de La Tesserie, 'Mémoires', fol. 143, W.Ph. Coolhaas, ed., *Generale missiven van gouverneurs-generaal en Raden aan Heren XVII der Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie, vol II* (The Hague 1960-1968) 610.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibidem*, 610

<sup>119</sup> de La Tesserie, 'Mémoires', fol. 143.

Formosans had followed de La Tesserie south.<sup>120</sup> The natives were promised a bounty for every Chinese head they brought back, causing a manhunt in which, over the period of two days, five hundred Chinese were slaughtered in the surrounding fields.

Not long afterwards the remainder of the Chinese host was found, encamped on a spit of land protruding into the river. Across the neck the Chinese had built a palisade, behind which their fighters had massed. The Dutch quickly marched towards the encampment, intent on stamping out the revolt permanently. Because the Formosans were unwilling to attack the Chinese head on, the Dutch soldiers were instead drawn up to break the enemy by musket volleys and charges. Several descriptions are in existence of the battle which followed. According to himself, de La Tesserie was given the command over the left wing, which consisted of fifteen soldiers and a sergeant, with the orders to pierce the palisade and attack the Chinese behind. His detachment proved successful, losing one soldier but shooting several volleys into the waiting Chinese in return. This gave the native mercenaries the confidence to attack the Chinese and rout them, hunting down the remnants for several days afterwards.<sup>121</sup> Dapper also mentions the battle in his relation. According to him the Dutch had to cross a fortified hill to get to the Chinese camp. A sergeant was sent to capture the hill with twenty men, which he accomplished without much trouble. With the remainder of the Dutch following directly afterwards, the Company soldiers shot several volleys into the Chinese, who scattered when the Formosans attacked.<sup>122</sup> The *Generale Missiven* only state that the Dutch marched up to the camp (the palisade having been bypassed previously), shooting four volleys into the Chinese before the enemy broke, only after which the local mercenaries followed in pursuit.<sup>123</sup>

Regardless of how the first attack was carried out (and it is well possible the unnamed sergeant of Dapper's account was in fact de La Tesserie), the result was an utter rout for the Chinese. The Formosan auxiliaries hunted down the fugitives with a vengeance, killing over two thousand. Together with the dead of the prior engagements, more than three thousand had thus been killed in a span of only two weeks. It was reported to the Council of Batavia that most of the ringleaders had been apprehended and tortured to death at fort Zeelandia. The bloodletting quieted the Chinese, and was the only large scale conflict fought on the island between 1636 and its fall in 1662.

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<sup>120</sup> Interestingly, both de La Tesserie and the *Generale Missiven* give the exact same number.

<sup>121</sup> de La Tesserie, 'Mémoires', fol. 143.

<sup>122</sup> Dapper, 40.

<sup>123</sup> Coolhaas, *Generale missiven van gouverneurs-generaal en Raden*, 610.

#### 4.5 A VOC career

It is useful by this point to consider the experiences and skills which de La Tesserie had collected during his ten years in service of the VOC. By mastering Dutch and maintaining his Calvinist religion, he would have been a potential candidate for integration into the power structure. He had shown reliability (if not heroics) in combat, and had learnt the local language, serving as administrator and overseer in the Formosan countryside. Such local knowledge was invaluable to the VOC, and the Company was often willing to put one of its servants on the fast track to advancement just to retain their services.

Another valuable skill was de La Tesserie's apparent capacity to act as navigator on the ocean going traders of the VOC; he had learnt how to navigate while on campaign in the Philippines.<sup>124</sup> The Company did not have a central institution where it trained navigators, instead often recruiting them from the merchant marine in Europe.<sup>125</sup> De La Tesserie would thus probably have learnt navigation by way of handbooks, which had become readily available by the middle of the 17th century, and by practicing with a knowledgeable skipper. By 1654, his skills in this respect would seem to have become substantial, as he claimed that at that point he had been ordered by the governor of Formosa to take over the control of the ship he was on, in case its current captain was incapacitated.<sup>126</sup> This would also indicate that de La Tesserie was held in increasingly high respect by the governing bodies of the VOC, and which would become even clearer in the events of his final years with the Company.

The above seemed to indicate that de La Tesserie indeed did have a cosmopolitan bend to try to incorporate dissimilarities with different groups of people, and learn valuable skills from many different sources. However, he was forced to do so because his position was that of a supplicant to the Dutch colonial system, and it remained to be seen if his acceptance of this new identity was anything more than pragmatic, and could sustain potential hardships.

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<sup>124</sup> de La Tesserie, 'Mémoires', fol. 134.

<sup>125</sup> C.A. Davids, 'Het navigatieonderwijs aan het personeel van de VOC' in: P. van Mil and Scharloo, M. eds., *De VOC in de kaart gekeken: cartografie en navigatie van de Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie, 1602-1799* (s'Gravenhage, 1988) 65. Only after 1743 would the VOC create a special school for training navigators in sailing in Eastern waters.

<sup>126</sup> A likely occurrence, as the captain was already grievously sick before the ship left Formosa. de La Tesserie, 'Mémoires', fol. 154.





## Chapter 5: Life Choices

Although de La Tesserie had become a trusted servant of the VOC, his stay was cut short by the type of disaster which could have a massive impact on individual lives. However, such changes could also open new vistas. These changes which would lead de La Tesserie from being a Protestant foreign soldier in the VOC on Formosa to becoming a French Catholic administrator with the government of Nouvelle-France are the subject of the following chapter.

### 5.1 Leaving the VOC

The disaster which set the train in motion leading to de La Tesserie's eventual abandonment of Formosa was that of the sinking of a sea-going ship while in a friendly harbor. After a failed trip to de La Tesserie had decided to travel to Batavia instead. By the 28<sup>th</sup> of October 1654 he had loaded most of his belongings on the ship *De Vrede*.<sup>127</sup> Before setting out however, the captain was ordered to confer with the governor on loading issues. Taking a sloop with fourteen men, including de La Tesserie, to fort Zeelandia, the captain was therefore not present when a freak storm cut his ship loose from its anchors. According to the *Dagregisters van het Kasteel Zeelandia* the ship was blown on the northern reefs, where it keeled over and sank to the bottom. Except for two men, the entire crew was lost, as well as most of the cargo it carried.<sup>128</sup>

The *Generale Missiven* state that the sinking of *de Vrede* and its accompanying ship *de Witte Lam* cost the Company some 94.000 florins lost in trade goods, as well as the death of one hundred-thirty sailors. Twenty nine members of the crews of both ships were saved, not including those with captain on shore.<sup>129</sup> For de La Tesserie the blow was furthermore a personal one, as he lost most of his belongings, which had remained on *De Vrede*, including his diary and a considerable amount of money he had earned during his stay in the East.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> de La Tesserie, 'Mémoires', fol. 154.

<sup>128</sup> Blussé et al, *De Dagregisters van het Kasteel Zeelandia*, vol. 3, fol. 511.

<sup>129</sup> Coolhaas, *Generale missiven van gouverneurs-generaal en Raden*, 1639-1655, 781. De La Tesserie mentions that the Dutch lost two ships and two galleys, as well as two million florins in cargo. Only two men from his own ship and around thirty of the other could be saved. De La Tesserie, 'Mémoires', fol. 154.

<sup>130</sup> de La Tesserie, 'Mémoires', fol. 154.

Although de La Tesserie managed to retain his life by pure chance, the disaster nonetheless seems to have had a large effect on his mindset. By 1655 his star had seemed on the rise, and with some luck de La Tesserie could have expected further promotion. He might however have taken issue with the slow rate of advancement which would have been his part as well. Conversely, if de La Tesserie's account was biased to show his career as more positive than it actually was, exactly the fact that he was not making promotion might have caused him to contemplate returning to France, much as de Chambelle had done four years prior.<sup>131</sup> Regardless, the loss of his fortune apparently decided the dilemma for de La Tesserie. It must not be forgotten that he was twenty-five at the time, and a certain youthful impetuosity might in the end have overridden more levelheaded choices.

Thus de La Tesserie decided he had had enough of the East, wanting to return to France to see '*quelle fortune il y avoit a faire*'.<sup>132</sup> He quickly embarked for Batavia, where he found a berth on a returning ship. The fleet left somewhere in February 1655. After an uneventful voyage, passing the recently built VOC fortress at the Cape of the Good Hope and St. Helena, the fleet arrived at Amsterdam in May.<sup>133</sup> There, the men were ordered to mark their belongings, and disembark without their luggage. Subsequently, the directors of the VOC had the luggage carried off to their warehouses. There they were checked for contraband, for returning sailors were not allowed to possess trade goods with a total worth higher than two months' wage. Four days after disembarking, the sailors were allowed to pick up their baggage and collect their wages before they could return to their place of origin.<sup>134</sup>

Upon disembarkment the Company habitually stressed the fact that its employees were barred from sharing any information such as trade routes, fortifications and garrison sizes, with third parties. Servants were not allowed to write about the Company's operations in the east, nor were they allowed to join a rival trade company, for fear that thereby important information would fall in the hands of

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<sup>131</sup> De Chambelle's contract had expired, and due to his inability to learn Dutch (and nonexistent career advancement), he had decided to return to France. Jean Guidon de Chambelle, *Voyage des Grandes Indes Orientales* 166-167.

<sup>132</sup> '*Le gouverneur de Tayouan et le general de Batavia me voulurent retenir mais voyant avoir tout perdu ce que j'avois amassé en un si grand temps, je voulu retourner en Europe [...]*.' de La Tesserie, 'Mémoires', fol. 155.

<sup>133</sup> Founded in 1652, the Cape colony would later become home to a large community of bereft Huguenot refugees. By the time of de La Tesserie's visit, only a fort with four bastions was situated in a further empty country. De La Tesserie, 'Mémoires', fol. 155.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibidem*, 157.

competitors.<sup>135</sup> However, such rules were honored largely in the breach, and it was often through men knowledgeable in the activities of the Company that information passed to others, as we will see in the penultimate chapter.

## 5.2 De La Tesserie in France

Having return to France, it is unlikely that de La Tesserie faced destitution due to his financial losses in Asia. Before leaving for the East, probably with the likelihood of death in mind, he had already bequeathed his elder brother a sum of eight thousand *livres*, to be reimbursed upon his return. Furthermore, he was also still in possession of the lands inherited from his mother's father.<sup>136</sup> These belongings would have put him in the position of some affluence. Furthermore, de La Tesserie might have looked forward to acquiring a prestigious position in the local governance, much as other members of his family had earlier possessed.<sup>137</sup>

However, the situation for Huguenot nobles was less than rosy in the France of the middle 17<sup>th</sup> century. As Louis XIV gained more control over the apparatus of state, discrimination of Huguenots had intensified. Preserving a Huguenot identity and at the same time maintaining a successful career within the French state thus was increasingly difficult, as restrictions were put on which professions could be carried out by Huguenots, and their access to the central state apparatus and its lucrative occupations became more restrictive also.<sup>138</sup>

Because of the peculiar relation which the Huguenots had with the Edict of Nantes, and the link between its legitimacy and the power of the Crown, a crisis of loyalty arose. As Redlich has shown in his work on mercenary captains in the Thirty Years war, many Catholics served with the Protestant side, and vice versa. Although a number did so out of pragmatic opportunism, many others served their lord, even if he was of the wrong religion, because they still viewed him as their legal ruler. Loyalty to the apparatus, embodied in the overlord's office of state, and the place of the mercenary within it, often superseded the demands of confession or family. The

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<sup>135</sup> Lequin, *Het Personeel van de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*, 164. See also C.J. Zandvliet, *Mapping for Money. Maps, plans and topographic paintings and their role in Dutch overseas expansion during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries* (Amsterdam 1998) 130 regarding mapmaking of eastern territories specifically.

<sup>136</sup> Beauchet-Filleau and de Chergé, *Dictionnaire historique et généalogique des familles du Poitou* vol 2, 98.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibidem*, 97.

<sup>138</sup> Benedict, *The Faith and Fortunes of France's Huguenots*, 297-298.

decision to cross the confessional divide therefore was to a large extent a loyalty dilemma, and it was one many men had large difficulties making.<sup>139</sup>

Such a crisis of loyalty might also have influenced de La Tesserie's actions. In his own report he stated that Protestantism was the belief he used to follow when working for the VOC, and we have seen that his family was of old Huguenot stock.<sup>140</sup> Somewhere between his return from Asia and 1666 he converted to Catholicism. Most likely is that this event happened before 1661, for reasons we shall discuss shortly. During the 17<sup>th</sup> century, such conversions were not uncommon. Especially the northern Huguenot congregations, due to their small size and aristocratic makeup, proved more prone to social pressures, suffering large-scale reduction.<sup>141</sup> Interestingly, many of Louis XIV's earlier state servants were converted Huguenots, especially where the army was concerned. The social stigma of being a Protestant seemed to have been easily expugnable by converting.

It is quite possible that de La Tesserie's time in the VOC was what swayed him to renounce his Huguenot background. As we have seen in chapter two, the VOC, through its policies of discrimination, often came to throw together its servants into groups drawn along ethnical lines. As such men gathered, both for their own security and for the mutual support, these ties might have been reinforced to the point that a sort of group identity was formed, strongly based on their ethnical background. It was (and is) not uncommon for expatriate communities to band together and reinforce their intergroup ties by stressing their commonalities of language and background.

Such a move can be clearly seen in travel accounts of Frenchmen in the East in general. The description of the actions of other Europeans in the East rivaled those of Oriental peoples in breadth: French travelers clearly saw the European groups as clearly distinct from each other. This was especially the case with the Dutch and Portuguese, to whom the French often attributed great cruelty, but of whom they were at the same time envious of the power they had accrued. At the same time, these travelers were quick to write down the stories of their French compatriots, be they in the service of one of the companies or independently employed. It is clear that many French envisioned their compatriots as belonging to the same group, distinct from

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<sup>139</sup> F. Redlich, *The German Military Enterprise and his Work Force. A Study in European Economic and Social History* (Wiesbaden 1964) 192.

<sup>140</sup> 'huguenos ainsi que j'estois en ce temps la'. de La Tesserie, 'Mémoires', fol. 139.

<sup>141</sup> Benedict, *The Faith and Fortunes of France's Huguenots*, 72.

other Europeans.<sup>142</sup> When de La Tesserie returned to France in 1655, he might therefore have gravitated more towards his French identity than to his Huguenot one. As part of being a good Frenchman had increasingly become equated with being a Catholic loyal to the Crown, conversion might thus have been not only pragmatic, but logical as well.<sup>143</sup>

### 5.3 Leaving France for a second time

Owing to his particular skill-set, de La Tesserie probably had little difficulty looking for opportunities abroad. Such an occasion presented itself when the French Crown ordered a new governor, named Du Bois d'Avaugour, to its colony of Nouvelle-France, with the intention of setting Crown affairs there in order.<sup>144</sup> As with most early modern governors, d'Avaugour would have wanted to ship out to his new post with a following including men acquainted with the tasks at hand. Before leaving, d'Avaugour must therefore have considered finding just such men to fill the necessary positions. It is here that de La Tesserie could be of service.

The manner in which de La Tesserie met d'Avaugour remains unknown, but some points of speculation could prove insightful. Both men came from Brittany, and as a member of a cadet-branch of the old dukes of Brittany, d'Avaugour most certainly resided in the vicinity of Nantes. One-time capital of the duchy and most important seat of the ducal house, the city was the paramount administrative center of the French province. D'Avaugour might easily have met de La Tesserie there during one of his stays. Furthermore, both men had fought in the Thirty Years War, although while de La Tesserie fought as mercenary for the Dutch, d'Avaugour, who was probably twenty years his senior, had had a distinguished career in the French cavalry, and later as liaison to the Swedish in Germany. D'Avaugour also held

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<sup>142</sup> Harrigan, *Veiled Encounters*, 184-185, van der Cruysse, *Le noble désir de courir le monde*, 368-377, S. Linon-Chipon, *Gallia orientalis. Voyages aux Indes Orientales, 1529-1722* (Paris 2003).

<sup>143</sup> M.P. Holt, 'Burgundians into Frenchmen: Catholic Identity in Sixteenth-Century Burgundy', in: M. Wolfe ed., *Changing Identities in early modern France* (Durham 2006) 345. That such conversions were also often pragmatic can be inferred from the history of the Lacgers of Southern France. This family often saw its younger sons in the family convert to Catholicism, which however did not preclude these men from assisting Protestant family members when it was in their power. R.A. Mentzer Jr, *Blood and Belief. Family Survival and Confessional Identity among the Provincial Huguenot Nobility* (West Lafayette 1994) 190-191.

<sup>144</sup> Modern Quebec.

several positions in the French government, before being nominated as new governor of Nouvelle-France on the recommendations of the queen of France.<sup>145</sup>

Another possible link between de La Tesserie and Nouvelle-France were his family connections in La Rochelle. The Huguenot merchants of the city had long been important in the colonization efforts of the American continent, and many of its early explorers and settlers had been funded by Huguenots, or had been Huguenots themselves. Even though by 1627 only Catholics were allowed to travel and settle in the colonies, this did not stop the merchant class of La Rochelle and elsewhere to continue trading with partners there. It is thus well possible that de La Tesserie was informed of the job vacancy by a relative, or conversely that d'Avaugour was notified of just such a man fulfilling his requirements when informing in La Rochelle.

The question might be raised as to why de La Tesserie would choose to ship out to another far-away place, when having returned from a perilous one just some years prior. The most important reason was no doubt that de La Tesserie still was a young man by 1661. Only thirty-two, he would still have half his life before him. The knowledge that he might otherwise only remain the second son of a member of the lower nobility, and a religious minority in a country which was becoming increasingly repressive to boot, might have outweighed any fears of the dangerous and unknown.

Furthermore, by conversion to Catholicism de La Tesserie opened some doors, but closed others. By 1656 de La Tesserie had granted his elder brother Gabriel the rights to his part of the family patrimony, thereby losing his rights to the noble title conferred by these estates.<sup>146</sup> Furthermore, while de La Tesserie turned Catholic, his family seems to have remained staunchly Huguenot.<sup>147</sup> His brother and his wife fled France during the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, and two of

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<sup>145</sup> Little is known about the background of Du Bois d'Avaugour, and how he obtained his position. Those snippets of information present have been compiled in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, an important resource which will be used for other important Canadian figures further in this paper. W. J. Eccles, 'Dubois Davaugour, Pierre' in: *Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. 1* (Toronto 2003).

<sup>146</sup> Fournier, *Les Bretons en Amérique française*, 412.

<sup>147</sup> The relative acquiescence of the government of Canada to allow Protestants to settle, regardless of the laws set down, might indicate that de La Tesserie only converted after his arrival at Quebec. However, I would personally date his conversion prior to him leaving France, as the crown would not have been wont to send a Huguenot as part of the administration, notwithstanding of its actual policy towards farmers or merchants. On the continued presence of Protestants in Canada even after 1627, see L. Choquette, *Frenchmen into Peasants* (Cambridge 1997) 130-136. On Huguenot merchants in Canada, see J. F. Bosher, 'Huguenot Merchants and the Protestant International in the Seventeenth Century', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 52: 1 (1995) 83-84.

his nieces were apprehended when trying to board a ship to join their parents in exile.<sup>148</sup> Although this did not necessarily mean that de La Tesserie's ties with his family had been broken, his conversion and loss of patrimonial rights could weaken them sufficiently for him to contemplate leaving again.<sup>149</sup>

This episode in de La Tesserie's life seemed to both belie and affirm his cosmopolitanism. Although apparently integrated into the Dutch colonial system, de La Tesserie chose to forego whatever advancement he had made there after one particular disaster. Instead, he returned to his native country of France, and joined a wholly French institution. This seemed to indicate dissatisfaction with his position in the Dutch Company, and a possible yearning to return home. However, it must be remembered that de La Tesserie had returned to a France in which his own people, the Huguenots, were being increasingly repressed. Instead of leaving for more tolerant destinations, as many of his co-religionists did, de La Tesserie chose to convert to Catholicism and take on the guise of a French bureaucrat. Furthermore, he again chose to leave for a frontier region, in which large numbers of Europeans had to contend with large groups of indigenes. To an extent it thus seems that de La Tesserie was not only comfortable in changing his public appearance for his own convenience, but also was very much drawn to the regions in which European culture was in contact with others. Even if his interest in those of other cultures might be no more than a pragmatic method of inserting himself into said society, it was undeniable present in his actions, as we will see further down the line.

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<sup>148</sup> Beauchet-Filleau and de Chergé, *Dictionnaire historique et généalogique des familles du Poitou* vol 2, 98.

<sup>149</sup> Or maybe not. The example of the Lacgers again clearly shows that family bonds often outweighed religious considerations. R.A. Mentzer Jr, *Blood and Belief* (West Lafayette 1994) 190-191.





## Chapter 6: Lieutenant of d'Avaugour and early service in Nouvelle-France

Although the manner in which de La Tesserie met d'Avaugour, and the date of his conversion, will remain the subject of speculation, the sources are clear that he left France as part of the retinue of the newly appointed governor.<sup>150</sup> His skills learnt while serving the VOC would have prepared him perfectly for the job at hand in Nouvelle-France. As lieutenant of d'Avaugour, de La Tesserie would have played an important part in the governor's extensive plans for revitalizing the fledgling colony. This chapter will discuss the problems faced by the French colony, the changes D'Avaugour hoped to introduce, and de La Tesserie's role therein.

### 6.1 The colony of Nouvelle-France

The colony of Nouvelle-France had its origins in the early voyages of discovery by Jacques Cartier, who first reached what would become Quebec City in 1534. In a later voyage he also sailed up the St. Laurent River, which would become the central highway of the future colony. During these voyages Cartier met and traded with the native Indians, finding a ready source of beaver skins, which were highly valued commodities in Europe at the time. A first attempt to found a colony in 1542 failed, however, and renewed warfare with the Habsburg Empire and the later religious strife stopped any further attempts at settlement by the Crown.<sup>151</sup>

Nonetheless, French merchants continued travelling to the mouth of the St. Lawrence River, drawn by the profits to be made in the pelt-trade. An annual market developed at the village of Tadoussac where Indians from the northern lands gathered to sell their wares to the French in return for iron tools and other amenities from Europe. By the late 16<sup>th</sup> century this trade had become so lucrative that the French Crown, having secured peace at home, considered a renewed attempt at founding a colony and secure the northern pelt-trade. In 1603 a royal monopoly on the trade was granted to a consortium of French merchants, who were obliged to found a settlement which could serve as an entrepôt for the fur-trade, and staff it with a number of

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<sup>150</sup> A contemporary, Marie de L'Incarnation, called him the lieutenant of d'Avaugour in 1663, when discussing a relief effort undertaken by him to aid colonists near Tadoussac after an earthquake. M.A. Downie, B. Robertson and E.J. Errington eds., *Early Voices: Portraits of Canada by Women Writers 1639-1914* (Dundurn 2010) 82.

<sup>151</sup> G. Havard, and C. Vidal, *Histoire de l'Amérique Française* (Paris 2003) 22-29.

settlers. A first colony was built on the Atlantic seaboard of Acadia, but it was soon shifted to the mouth of the St. Lawrence River, where modern-day Quebec now lies.<sup>152</sup>

To secure the supply of furs, the French colonists aligned themselves with the Hurons who inhabited the valley of the St. Lawrence. This alliance was cemented by the arrival of several Catholic missionaries in 1614, who soon made converts among the Huron tribe, and extended French contacts and diplomatic power ever further west. Through the decades, the power of the clergy grew to such an extent that they became major players in colonial politics. The high point of clerical power was during the tenure of the bishop de Laval (1658-1688), who had one unwelcome governor removed, and secured the appointment of another.<sup>153</sup>

Regardless of the influence of the clergy, the colony struggled through the first years of its existence. By 1627 the cardinal de Richelieu reformed the fur trade monopoly, which had proven ineffective. A new company was formed, the *Compagnie de la Nouvelle France*, with the express order of settling the surrounding lands so as to make the colony self-sufficient, and convert the local Indians, turning them into proper Frenchmen. The CNF was also to oversee the fur-trade, and ensure that the Crown could enjoy the profits of its colony.<sup>154</sup>

In the subsequent years the French colonists were able to press inland along the St. Lawrence River, founding the towns of Trois-Rivières and Montreal. However, Nouvelle-France continued to be dogged by problems. The CNF was unable to bring in the required numbers of settlers, nor was it able to control the local fur-trade. Increasingly, to defray the costs made in maintaining the colony, the CNF subcontracted its monopoly to consortiums of local merchants in return for a yearly tith of a thousand beaver pelts. Ironically, the consortiums themselves proved ineffective. Independent traders travelled inland to buy the pelts more cheaply at the source. By the 1650's these men had coalesced into a distinct group known as the *coureurs de bois*. Going to the sources of pelt-production proved much more effective than relying on the Indian tribes to bring the pelts to the market.<sup>155</sup>

The French traders also had competition from the Dutch colony of New Netherland, which traded with the Iroquois from their post at Albany on the Hudson River. This trade had become of such importance to the latter that in 1642 they invaded the lands of the Huron tribes in search for more pelts. By 1649 the Iroquois

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<sup>152</sup> W.J. Eccles, *The Canadian Frontier, 1634-1760* (New York, 1969) 22.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibidem*, 26.

<sup>154</sup> E.E. Rich, *The Fur Trade and the Northwest to 1857* (London 1968) 15.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibidem*, 18.

had destroyed the Hurons, cutting off the French from their immediate trade network and taking control of the pelt trade routes to both Albany and Quebec. Their primary goal achieved, the Iroquois made peace with the French in 1653. However, actual control continued to elude the Iroquois, as other tribes stepped into the vacuum left by the Hurons. By 1658, the Iroquois again commenced raiding the French settlements. The colonial towns came under what amounted to a siege by Indian war parties, making cultivation of the surrounding fields nearly impossible and causing the small French colony to be unable to secure large enough quantities of pelts for export to France.<sup>156</sup>

## 6.2 D'Avaugour and the stabilization of the colony

It was the problems of external aggression and low profit from the fur trade which d'Avaugour thus needed to resolve. By the end of August 1661 the new governor and his retinue, including de La Tesserie, had arrived at Quebec (see map 4). There, an inspection was carried out of the fortifications, settlements and potential possibilities for the expansion of trade.<sup>157</sup> The findings have been saved in the form of two memoranda sent to Colbert, the French minister of finances. In both memoranda the governor mentioned the great fertility of the St. Lawrence valley, but also stated that it could never be sufficiently cultivated as long as the threat of Iroquois incursions remained present. D'Avaugour believed that attacking the Iroquois directly was impossible, due to the long distances involved in campaigning. Only if the Dutch near Fort Orange (the main fortification at Albany) could be convinced to give the French safe passage would such a solution be feasible, but he thought this unlikely.<sup>158</sup>

The solution proposed by the new governor was to fortify the three main settlements thoroughly, as well as build fortifications on the chokepoints leading into the valley. Giving precise descriptions of what type of fortifications to build and where they were to be built, d'Avaugour also called for an expansion of the present forces in the colony to garrison these new positions.<sup>159</sup> It is credible to think that de La Tesserie, with his background both in fortifications and in the governance of such

<sup>156</sup> Eccles, *The Canadian Frontier*, 37-57.

<sup>157</sup> R.G. Thwaites, *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents 1610 to 1791*, vol. 46, p 240-242.

<sup>158</sup> Du Bois d'Avaugour, 'Memoir on the Colony of Quebec, Placentia, Gaspé and Cape Breton' (4 August 1663), as translated in E.B. O'Callaghan, ed., *Documents relative to the colonial history of the State of New-York* (Albany 1855), 15-17.

<sup>159</sup> Du Bois d'Avaugour, 'Memoir regarding the fortifications required in Canada against the Iroquois', as translated in O'Callaghan, *Documents relative to the colonial history of the State of New-York*, 20-21.

vital points of trade, would have had a hand in the formation of these plans. Even if de La Tesserie was not involved in the drawing up of the plans, he was clearly a firm supporter. In his first letter to du Fresnes de La Tesserie emphatically stated that the only thing which could be done to counter Indian incursions was to fortify the borders and threaten the native heartlands.<sup>160</sup>

D'Avaugour would also adjust the economic underpinning of the colony. The CNF had proven unable to carry the costs of maintaining the colony, let alone paying for the proposed building of the new fortifications or the expansion of the garrison. This had left it deep in debt. To alleviate the concerns of the CNF's creditors, in 1662 the governor promised them ten percent of the sale of animal skins in the coming year. In a further move, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of March 1663 the CNF was ordered to hand over its taxation rights to a group of local merchants. In return for the right to tax all skins being exported, as well as the sole right to trade with the Indians of Tadoussac, the new consortium of influential Quebecois were obliged to pay the colonial government a tith of fifty thousand *livres*, deemed sufficient to meet the costs of the colony.<sup>161</sup> One of these men was de La Tesserie, and it is clear from this appointment that he had risen to the top of colonial society.

### **6.3 The comparison of de La Tesserie's role in the colonies of Formosa and Nouvelle-France**

At this point it is interesting to note the similarities between de La Tesserie's occupation in the Dutch colony of Formosa, and the French colony of Nouvelle-France, which would have stood him in good stead in gaining the position as lieutenant of d'Avaugour. Much like the Dutch colony on Formosa, the French in Canada had been drawn to the area for the great riches its nascent pelt-trade could bring. Similar to the Dutch, the French also had difficulty controlling the trade which, although nominally a monopoly, actually increasingly came into the hands of independent traders and native tribes. Interestingly, in a direct reference to their

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<sup>160</sup> '[...] tout ce que l'on a peu faire contre les Iroquois a esté d'avancer des forts vers eux [...]', De La Tesserie, '1666, 24 Septembre', fol. 51.

<sup>161</sup> M. Trudel, *Histoire de La Nouvelle-France. La Seigneurie des Cent-Associés, 1627-1663*, 3:1 (Montréal 1979), 289. This was not a novel move, as the *Cent-Associés* had also intermittently bequeathed their monopoly on consortiums of local traders in return for a certain amount of skins. Many of the members of this consortium were to play prominent roles in the colony in the years to come.

contemporary French counterparts, Andrade calls the early Chinese hunters on Formosa the equivalent to the *coureurs de bois*.<sup>162</sup>

As the costs of maintaining the monopoly skyrocketed for the respective companies, both also turned to other methods for making a profit. The Dutch were quick to grant out hunting licenses instead, obliging the Chinese independent hunters to buy them at annual fairs, while securing their own share of skins for the export to Japan through levying a certain share as taxes from the native tribes. The French mirrored these actions, especially in the case of the abolishment of the CNF, and the grant of its monopoly to de La Tesserie and his compatriots in return for a tax. To de La Tesserie, such subletting of the monopoly to independent traders would have been very similar indeed to the practices he had encountered in the East.

Another similarity would have been the use of fortifications to choke off the routes of trade from the interior fields to the markets abroad while protecting the areas vital to the company's interests. Much like the Formosan tribes, the Native Americans did not have the knowhow to take such fortifications by military means, making such positions nearly impervious to outside aggression. We have seen that the Dutch had shielded off the lucrative Formosan hunting grounds with fortifications such as the author's previous post Wanckan, and it is clear from the above memorandums that d'Avaugour was planning something similar.

The manner of warfare of the Indians would have looked similar to those of the Formosan headhunters. Pierre Boucher, a contemporary of de La Tesserie who also lived in Canada, described how the Indians fought with clubs, bows and arrows, preferring to ambush their adversaries. If the Indians saw that the enemy was too powerful, they retreated immediately. Although they were vigorous in attack, the Indians did not have a resistance against extended exertion, and fled when they met significant resistance. This trait, as we have seen, was also mentioned by de La Tesserie when he described the unwillingness of the Formosan allies to attack the Chinese, until the Dutch soldiers had broken their ranks.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> T. Andrade, 'The Rise and Fall of Dutch Taiwan, 1624–1662: Cooperative Colonization and the Statist Model of European Expansion', *Journal of World History*, 17: 4 (2006), 436. However, after the Dutch had secured control over the hunting fields of Formosa, the comparison would have become less apt. While they were therefore capable of imposing their control over all the fields, this would not have been the case for the French in Canada. Although numbering several thousands in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, their numbers were dwarfed by the size of the continent and its native inhabitants in ways the Dutch never were, and control over the hunting fields would therefore have remained elusive.

<sup>163</sup> P. Boucher, *Histoire véritable et naturelle des mœurs et productions du pays de la Nouvelle-France, vulgairement dite le Canada* (Paris 1664) 122.

A final similarity would have been the role of the clergy in mediating between the colony and the native inhabitants. Both on Formosa and in Canada religious men had formed the forefront of colonial expansion. Much as was the case with the native villages of the Siraya in Formosa, the French had aligned themselves with the Hurons primarily through the efforts of the preachers. When their new allies, and incidentally their most important source of pelts, came under attack, the French were obliged to join in the war with the Iroquois, with detrimental effect to the young colony.<sup>164</sup>

The clergy were also instrumental in the interactions between the colonial governments, both in Formosa and Nouvelle-France, and the surrounding tribes. Because they were often the ones who spoke the local language best, it was the clergy who formed the main layer between the government and the Indians. As the Europeans tried to extend their laws to the surrounding tribes, it was up to the local missionaries to translate and incorporate those into native culture. However, the clergy also tried to protect the natives from the depredations of the colonial power. In a comparison of the interactions between the Dutch and their native subjects on Formosa and New Netherlands, Hauptmann and Knapp saw major similarities in the efforts of the missionaries in both colonies to defend the indigenous tribes from the colonial government. These actions proved ineffective however, largely because of the small numbers and political weakness of the missionaries in these areas.<sup>165</sup> In the case of Nouvelle-France, where the clergy was much more powerful, these efforts would instead lead to a rift between the secular and religious administrations, which in the end would force de La Tesserie to seriously rethink his future in North America.

It is clear that the skills which de La Tesserie had learnt during the first phases of his cosmopolitan career were a great help in his endeavors in Nouvelle-France. Even if they were not the direct cause of him landing the position of lieutenant to d'Avaugour in the first place, de La Tesserie's experience proved highly suitable to the conditions he encountered in Nouvelle-France, and were probably the main reason for his quick rise to the top of the colonial bureaucracy.

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<sup>164</sup> G.T. Hunt, *The Wars of the Iroquois. A Study in Intertribal Trade Relations* (Madison 1960) 72-73.

<sup>165</sup> L.M. Hauptman and R.G. Knapp, 'Dutch-Aboriginal Interaction in New Netherland and Formosa: An Historical Geography of Empire', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 121:2 (1977) 181-182.

## Chapter 7: Deteriorating circumstances

By 1663, the power struggle between the secular administration and the clergy, which had simmered on for decades in the colony, finally came to a head. A dispute between the bishop of Quebec and governor d'Avaugour over the liquor trade led to the latter's recall, auguring in a period during which the governance of the colony was in flux. This chapter will discuss these troubles, and the effects they had on de La Tesserie's continued willingness to remain in Nouvelle France.

### 7.1 The recall of d'Avaugour

The administration of d'Avaugour had had a vigorous start, actively taking stock of the state of the colony and drawing up a comprehensive plan for the solution of its problems. Several measures towards this plan have already been discussed in the prior chapter, but they formed only part of the reforms carried out. The attempts of the governor to change the government of the province proved a more complicated proposition.

Since 1647 the colony had possessed a Sovereign Council, which held a wide remit over the disbursement of public funds, the regulation of the police, the right to grant or refuse to governmental posts, to borrow money, and to appoint the captains of the local militias. Furthermore, it was the highest judicial court in the region, with only the king's court as the final court of appeal. The Council consisted of the governor, the superior of the Jesuits and two councilors chosen by the governor. Furthermore, a colonial representative (or syndic) of each of the three cities was chosen to support the councilors in their work. A year later these men became permanent members of the council.<sup>166</sup>

In principle the power of the governor was balanced through his association with the clergy and colonial representatives, but his powers were ill-defined. Successive governors used the opportunity this offered to assemble powers in their own office, to the increasing ire of the remainder of the Council. By the time of d'Avaugour, the Council was unwilling to grant him their approval for the attempted reforms, both because they had interests in the old system, and because they feared a further increase of his power.

Due to this obstinacy the governor was forced to side-step the appointed Council altogether, by promulgating his decrees unilaterally. D'Avaugour's military

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<sup>166</sup> Du Bois Cahall, R., *The Sovereign Council of New France* (New York 1915) 14-15.

disposition and personality no doubt also had a role in his increasing propensity to autocratic rule, as many contemporaries noted his military mindset, inability to compromise and lack of social graces. The court of Louis XIV quickly became inundated in reports of his supposed high-handed and despotic rule, as well as numerous calls for his removal.<sup>167</sup>

The spark which set events in motions was a dispute with the local clergy over the liquor trade. The clergy feared that the easy access to liquor would encourage drunkenness, blasphemous behavior and high death rates with the indigenous population, and set back the work of conversion being done. Headed by the headstrong apostolic vicar Francois de Laval the clergy had excommunicated all those who traded in the trade in 1660, and pushed for the promulgation of laws which would forbid the sale of liquor to the Indians on the pain of death.<sup>168</sup>

In first instance the new governor agreed with de Laval, making the decree into law and executing several offenders. However, when a woman was similarly accused, the Jesuits disallowed her execution. D'Avaugour did not want to carry out arbitrary judgment and instead reacted by opening the brandy-trade to all. De Laval subsequently extended the excommunication to all those who were in any way involved in the liquor trade. He also decided to travel to France in 1662 to convince the king of the governor's high-handedness in judicial matters. De Laval was able to secure d'Avaugour's removal, the second governor he treated thusly. He also obtained the right, together with a newly appointed governor, Augustin de Saffray de Mézy, to choose the members for a new Sovereign Council, which would become the highest political body in the colony. At this point it was clear that the clergy had become the most powerful party in the colony.<sup>169</sup>

## 7.2 The high point

The role of de La Tesserie in the political troubles was a minor one, but it can be assumed he was a firm supporter of d'Avaugour. For his services, d'Avaugour

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<sup>167</sup> A. Vachon, 'L'eau-de-vie dans la société indienne', *Report of the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Historical Association / Rapports annuels de la Société historique du Canada*, 39:1 (1960) 25.

<sup>168</sup> Trudel, *Histoire de La Nouvelle-France*, 322.

<sup>169</sup> Du Bois Cahall, *The Sovereign Council of New France*, 19-20. This shift was not lost on the crown. When de Laval and de Mézy arrived in Quebec, they were accompanied by an intendant who had received secret orders to enquire into the position of de Laval and the Jesuits, among others. See 'Instruction to *sieur* Gaudais, proceeding to Canada on behalf of the King, relative to certain points upon which his Majesty desires he will take secret information', as translated in O'Callaghan, *Documents relative to the colonial history of the State of New-York*, 12-13.



granted de La Tesserie a sub-fief on the Ile d'Orléans, together with the *sieur* de Máze (see map 5). De Mazé had been the secretary of d'Avaugour, and was later named the commander of the garrison of Quebec. Both men had arrived in the colony on the same ship, and seemed to have been fast friends, as in 1665 de Máze would bequeath his part of the fief to de La Tesserie before leaving for France.<sup>170</sup> This sub-fief became known as la Grossardière, a name derived from the old estates which the Cailhauts had held in France, and firmly cemented de La Tesserie as an important landholder in his own right in the new colony.

The confidence of d'Avaugour in his lieutenant became further apparent when the latter caught a rumor of his impending dismissal. D'Avaugour left for France before the arrival of his replacement on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of July 1663, transferring his authority to de La Tesserie in the interim.<sup>171</sup> With both Laval and d'Avaugour now in or on their way to France, de La Tesserie had now gained the most powerful position in colony of New France. His powers as interim-governor were nonetheless circumscribed by the transient nature of his position. Because de La Tesserie could be certain of the imminent arrival of d'Avaugour's replacement, and because the Council itself was largely populated by men loyal to Laval, there would have been little room for independent action.

He was however able to push through several pieces of legislation before Laval and de Mézy came to relieve him from his duty. The Council passed a law which demanded from French merchants selling goods in the colony a tax of sixty-five percent. This was largely done by the Council to ensure a secure source of income for the colony. In January 1664 the merchants involved placed a complaint with the Council that they had not been informed of these new laws, and would therefore be unable to sell their goods for enough profit. The Council upheld the decision made by de La Tesserie, although it did allow the merchants involved to sell their current goods at a higher rate.<sup>172</sup>

In all, de La Tesserie's imprint on the politics of Quebec during his tenure as interim governor do not seem to have left much of a mark, but it is significant that he attempted to gain secure sources of finance for the governance of the province in much the same way as the VOC did in its eastern belongings.

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<sup>170</sup> P.G. Roy ed., *Inventaire des Insinuations du Conseil Souverain de Nouvelle France* (Québec 1923) 12.

<sup>171</sup> Trudel, *Histoire de La Nouvelle-France*, 357.

<sup>172</sup> P.J.O. Chauveau ed., *Jugements et Délibérations de Conseil Souverain de la Nouvelle-France* (Québec 1885) 94-95.

### 7.3 Marriage

Another important event in this period was de La Tesserie's betrothal and marriage to Éléonore de Grandmaison on the 10<sup>th</sup> of October 1663.<sup>173</sup> De Grandmaison, born in 1619 in Nivernais, had been a fixture of Canadian society for the last twenty-two years, having arrived in the colony in 1641. Widowed for the first time in France, she had travelled to Nouvelle-France with her second husband, François de Chavigny de Berchereau. De Chavigny had been a supporter of governor de Montmagny, who appointed him to the position of interim-governor when he left for France in 1648 (an apparent precursor to the relationship between d'Avaugour and de La Tesserie fifteen years later). He was also appointed to the first iteration of the Sovereign Council that same year. The couple had been granted lands near Quebec, and a seigneurie near Trois-Rivières. To these were added in 1649 a seigneurie on the Ile d'Orleans, which abutted the lands later granted to de La Tesserie.

De Chavigny died in 1651, leaving de Grandmaison with six children and a large amount of property. In 1652 she remarried to Jacques Gourdeau de Beaulieu, a clerk and notary to the court, and part of the consortium which had been granted the fur-monopoly by d'Avaugour. With De Beaulieu she begot three more children. Her third husband was however murdered in May 1663, also leaving his belongings to his wife.<sup>174</sup>

De Grandmaison proved to be a savvy manager of her inherited estates. She became the administrator of the lands of her husbands in name of her children, even marrying de La Tesserie, her fourth husband, with division of property, a highly uncommon move at the time. As her children came of age, de Grandmaison took care to give them a large dowry (in the case of his stepdaughters), or lands consisting of different combinations of the estates under her care. She thereby ensured that her children were able to marry in the top tiers of Canadian society.<sup>175</sup>

For de La Tesserie this marriage was highly advantageous. De Grandmaison possessed extensive lands in the colony and was an important player in its internal politics, even disregarding the connections which her erstwhile husbands would have

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<sup>173</sup> P.G. Roy, *Inventaire des Insinuations du Conseil Souverain de La Nouvelle-France* (Quebec 1921) 3-4.

<sup>174</sup> J.J. Lefebvre, "Grandmaison, Eléonore de", in: *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 1 (Toronto 1966).

<sup>175</sup> C. Gourdeau, 'Établir ses enfants au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle: Éléonore de Grandmaison (1619-1692) et sa descendance', in: A.J.B. Johnston ed., *Essays in French Colonial History* (East Lansing 1997) 151-152.

had.<sup>176</sup> Other connections could also be created through the marriage of his stepchildren to colonial partners. It is clear that de La Tesserie supported such advantageous marriages, as he gave two of his stepdaughters a dowry of one thousand livres, a considerable sum at the time.<sup>177</sup> Even though de Grandmaison was past her childbearing age, she would thus have been able to give her new husband invaluable help in navigating the politics and economics of his new home.

#### 7.4 The governorship of de Mézy

For all intents and purposes, de La Tesserie's honeymoon in the bosom of colonial power did not last long. On the 17<sup>th</sup> of September 1663 de Mézy and de Laval disembarked at Quebec. Upon arrival, a series of reforms were pushed through. Firstly, the CNF was abolished, and the monopoly reverted to the crown. Shortly afterwards the *Compagnie de l'Occident* was created to replace it, with the intent of competing with the Dutch and English in the America's.<sup>178</sup> For de La Tesserie the new company meant the loss of the lucrative concessions in the pelt-trade made to him and his compatriots by d'Avaugour, as the actions of d'Avaugour was ruled unconstitutional by de Mézy on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October 1663.<sup>179</sup>

Even worse in this regard was the restructuring of the Sovereign Council. De Laval and de Mézy dismissed all the Councilors of its previous incarnation, including de La Tesserie. The new Council now consisted of the governor, the bishop, and five councilors to be chosen by both the governor and the bishop. The reorganization curtailed the power of the governor, as a majority was necessary for voting, and his vote was only worth one of seven. It also weakened the power of the local colonists, as the syndics were banned from the Council altogether. Because the new governor did not have knowledge of those who might be eligible, this in practice meant that de Laval had control over the nominations. The bishop duly made use of this power by staffing the Council with his own supporters.<sup>180</sup> De La Tesserie, although without

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<sup>176</sup> On one instance she was responsible for the resettlement in 1651 of Huron refugees on her lands on Ile d'Orleans, and in 1674 she took several prominent Quebecois to court regarding her share in a trading society in Ottawa lands. Lefebvre, "Grandmaison", in: *Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. 1*.

<sup>177</sup> The husbands of his different stepdaughters included several merchants, land-holding nobles and military figures. For more information, see the list in Gourdeau, 'Établir ses enfants au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle', 147-148.

<sup>178</sup> It would however prove as weak as its predecessor.

<sup>179</sup> Chauveau, *Jugements et Délibérations*, 9-10.

<sup>180</sup> Du Bois Cahall, *The Sovereign Council*, 23.

doubt an experienced administrator, was passed over, probably due to his strong connection with the party of d'Avaugour.

These appointments looked as if they would permanently bar access to the highest rungs of the political ladder for de La Tesserie, but renewed conflict between the secular and religious officials again offered opportunity. De Mézy had initially been chosen by de Laval because of his piousness. The new governor had been born in the Norman Huguenot nobility, but converted to Catholicism during his tenure as mayor of Caen. He quickly became known for the zeal with which he pursued his faith.<sup>181</sup> It is interesting to see here another case of a former Huguenot being able to obtain good positions within the French government: as long as their conversion seemed to be genuine, men like de La Tesserie and de Mézy could be easily accepted into the ranks of the French government.

In any event, de Laval's hope that de Mézy would respect the religious primacy of the clergy in the province proved a miscalculation. De Mézy quickly undertook to weaken the power of the Council in turn. In a series of moves both de Laval and de Mézy jostled for power in the colony. In the 19<sup>th</sup> of September 1664 de Mézy eventually dismissed four of the five Councilors because of their lack of obstinacy and support for de Laval. Although two of these Councilors were quickly reinstated, the two remaining seats were filled by new men. One of those was the *sieur* de Mazé, whom we met earlier, and another was de La Tesserie himself.<sup>182</sup>

It seems that at this point de Mézy had aligned himself with the old following of d'Avaugour. By appointing both men to the position of Councilor de Mézy hoped to counter the power of de Laval in the Sovereign Council. The measure was a clear success, as de Laval and his followers were henceforth restricted to denouncing the governor from the pulpits. An uneasy truce followed between the supporters of de Laval and de Mézy, punctuated by hostile sermons and plaques by both parties. The deadlock was only broken when the latter died suddenly on March 1665. However, by then the Crown had already decided on reforming the colonial government once again.<sup>183</sup>

## 7.5 The arrival of governor-general de Tracy and intendant Talon

While political unrest continued to simmer in New France, the French government under leadership of Colbert was drawing up new plans for its colonial holdings. As

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<sup>181</sup> W. J. Eccles, 'Saffray de Mézy, Augustin de', in: *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 1 (2003).

<sup>182</sup> Du Bois Cahall, *The Sovereign Council*, 30-32.

<sup>183</sup> W.J. Eccles, *Canada under Louis XIV, 1663-1701* (London 1964) 18-19.

mentioned earlier, the CO was formed in 1664 with control over all crown lands in the west. It was modeled on the Dutch and English West India Companies, including funding by shareholders and the appointment of a governor-general to act as viceroy and oversee all activities in the Americas. The man chosen for this position was the *sieur* de Tracy, who had set sail for the Caribbean in February 1664, before making his way to Nouvelle-France, arriving on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June, 1665.<sup>184</sup>

To carry out his orders de Tracy was given accompanied by a regiment of soldiers with whom he was to cow the Indians into submission, fortify the colony, and settle those soldiers who were willing on new lands to the south of Montreal, creating a shield for the lands along the St. Lawrence river. With him was also an intendant, named Jean Talon, who had orders to reinvigorate the economy and make the colony again a profitable part of the French crown.<sup>185</sup>

Before setting out for the Iroquois heartlands, de Tracy reorganized the Sovereign Council, as it would prove a final time. De Laval was deprived the right to appoint new Councilmembers, now the purview of the intendant, who had been newly added to the Council to oversee its proceeding in name of the King. This measure permanently weakened the hold of the bishop on the Council, and that of the clergy on the colony in general. However, the Council as composed by de Mézy was also turned back to its prior state, which meant that de Máze and de Le Tesserie were dismissed.<sup>186</sup>

The first expedition mounted by Daniel de Rémy de Courcelle, who was officially the governor of New France and de facto commander of its armed forces, proved a failure. De Courcelle took six hundred men (possibly including de La Tesserie) south to subjugate the Iroquois, but neglected bringing local guides. This caused many detours, slowing down the march significantly. When the troops were surprised by a sudden snowstorm, they were forced to make for Fort Orange. According to de La Tesserie the soldiers were surprised there by several hundred Iroquois, after which a skirmish ensued. Although the fighting was inconclusive, the French were forced to retreat back to Nouvelle France, marking an end to the first expedition against the Iroquois. During the retreat over forty men were lost to cold or

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<sup>184</sup> *Ibidem*, 20.

<sup>185</sup> 'Commission to *sieur* de Prouville de Tracy, to be Lieutenant-general in America (19 November 1663) and 'Instructions to M. Talon, March 27, 1663', as translated in E.B. O'Callaghan, ed., *Documents relative to the colonial history of the State of New-York* (Albany 1855) 17-19 and 24-29. These plans were largely according to those set out by d'Avaugour.

<sup>186</sup> Du Bois Cahall, *The Sovereign Council*, 37.

disease.<sup>187</sup> Suffice to say that by the time of writing his memoirs, the security of the colony inhabited by de La Tesserie still seemed far from secure.

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<sup>187</sup> De La Tesserie, '1666, 24 Septembre', fol. 51-52. Other sources give a slightly different account of the campaign. According to these, the French only fought some small bands of Iroquois. They took in supplies of the helpful Dutch in Schenectady, but de Courcelle was unwilling to winter there, instead opting to return to New France.

## Chapter 8: A new beginning

As mentioned in the introduction, the memoirs de La Tesserie wrote were an attempt to have du Fresnes gain him a position with a company which would have seemed very familiar with him due to his prior occupation; the *Compagnie des Indes Orientales*. It is to the founding of this company and de La Tesserie's reasons for joining it that we will turn next.

### 8.1 The founding of the CFIO

Before we can go into the reasons of the choice made by de La Tesserie, we first have to describe the background of the French East India Company he was hoping to join. Much like the restructuring of Nouvelle-France and the creation of the CO, the founding of the CFIO was the brainchild of the French minister of finances, Jean-Baptiste Colbert. Colbert had become uncomfortably aware of the great riches which the VOC brought to the Netherlands, and the relative weakness of France in this respect. By creating a French adversary to the VOC, he hoped to claim a part of the lucrative Indian Ocean trade for the Crown of France.<sup>188</sup>

Although the CFIO was to be a competitor of the VOC, it was closely modeled on the successful Dutch company. Knowledge of the workings of the Company was widespread in France itself, and calls had gone on since the early 17<sup>th</sup> century to create a French version and reap the wealth of the East. However, it was not until the 1660's that such calls could be changed from a theoretic model into practice. Louis XIV's thirst for *gloire* and Colbert's belief in the necessity of securing those trades vital to France's economic health ensured that political pressure could be brought to bear to secure the cooperation of the nobles and the merchants, i.e. those with money and those with the trading acumen.<sup>189</sup>

In 1664, several precursor companies were merged to form the basis of the new company. Central control was vested with an *Assemblée générale* consisting of twenty-one directors, with its headquarters in Paris. Twelve of these directors were

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<sup>188</sup> G.J. Ames, *Colbert, Mercantilism and the French Quest for Asian Trade* (DeKalb 1996) 16-17.

<sup>189</sup> G. Holtz, 'The Model of the VOC in Early Seventeenth-Century France (Hugo Grotius and Pierre Bergeron)', in: S. Huigen, J.L. de Jong and E. Kolfins eds., *The Dutch Trading Companies as Knowledge Networks* (Leiden 2010), 332-333. See also *Discours d'un fidèle sujet du Roy, touchant l'établissement d'une compagnie française pour le commerce des indes orientales* (Paris 1665). Attributed to François Charpentier, the *Discours* was meant to sway others to the view that an organization similar to the VOC would secure for France enormous riches against little investment.

from Paris, and one each from the major coastal trading cities. The finances of this new Compagnie would also be mirrored on those of the VOC. Colbert called for nobles and merchants to buy shares in the market, in the expectation of financial return later. In this drive for finances, the crown led the way. The CFIO quickly secured over 6,500,000 *livres* to fund its first expedition. Half this sum was paid by the crown, with the other half being funded by private investors.<sup>190</sup> However, these shareholders paid only grudgingly and after the initial investment few were willing to continue investing in the venture. Nearly by default, this meant that the Crown became the major stockholder of the Compagnie, and would dominate the appointment of officials and its decision-making process henceforth. This is also the reason why de La Tesserie thought that an appeal to the minister of foreign affairs would have any chance of success.

By 1665 Colbert had set up the groundwork for his new company. Next a comprehensive plan of action needed to be formed, and information on the East needed to be gathered. It is in this vain that Du Fresnes had written to de La Tesserie for an account of his own experiences in the east. Another informant was Francois Caron whom we have met earlier. Caron had been expelled from the service of the VOC in 1651 on the basis of allegations of corruption and favoritism. When Colbert was planning the founding of the Compagnie, he could thus have Caron brought to France to advise on how best to secure the trade in the East. Caron recommended to build a headquarters on Bangka Island, off the east coast of Sumatra. Much like Dutch Batavia, this new settlement would form the center of a network of factories spanning the Indian and Chinese ocean. He also drew up letters and lists of gifts to be sent to local rulers.<sup>191</sup>

To govern the CFIO abroad a cadre of experienced colonial officials and navigators was needed. Colbert had been so convinced with the presentation of Caron that he appointed him to the post of director, with full power to carry out his plans. To further bolster the ranks of officers, twenty-three specialists in navigation and Asian commerce were hired, as well as thirty ship pilots. As France itself had only a small supply of such men, other sources were called upon. Most of the cadre was

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<sup>190</sup> Ames, *Colbert, Mercantilism and the French Quest for Asian Trade*, 19-26.

<sup>191</sup> C.R. Boxer, 'Introduction', in: F. Caron and J. Schouten, *A True Description of the Mighty Kingdoms of Japan and Siam* (Amsterdam 1971), cvi-cvii. Interestingly, in the case of the Japanese Caron specified that the envoy should be of Huguenot extraction, so as not to aggravate the religiously prickly Japanese.



hired from abroad, and many had one link or another with the VOC, showing the prominence of the debt owned by the new corporation to the old.<sup>192</sup>

By joining a rival company such ex-servants of the VOC gained for themselves the permanent wrath of their old employer. It was not uncommon for lower servants to join other companies, in disregard of the stipulations in their contract. However, in the case of Caron it became akin to high treason, as he had in depth knowledge of the East through his prior positions. It was the luck of Caron that the Dutch at the time were in conflict with the English, and could therefore scarce afford a conflict with the French.<sup>193</sup> De La Tesserie, due to his lowly position with the VOC, would probably not have had the same amount of trouble, but it would nonetheless have constituted a breach of faithfulness to offer his services to the CFIO.

## 8.2 New choices

The impact of the recent power struggle and external threat of the Iroquois must have been profound for de La Tesserie himself. As part of the group of supporters first of d'Avaugour and later de Mézy, he had to contend with the actions of the circle around the vicar de Laval.<sup>194</sup> Because of this, his fortunes waxed and waned with those of the administration in general. Although de La Tesserie had become interim-governor after the departure of d'Avaugour, he lost the position with the arrival of de Mézy. Subsequently, when de Mézy's conflict with de Laval expanded, de La Tesserie was brought back in as supporter of the beleaguered governor. However, the death of de Mézy and the arrival of de Tracy ensured his dismissal from the Council for a second time. Because the victory of the clergy over the colonial administration now seemed secure (the new measures undertaken by de Tracy would not yet have shown), it might have seemed to de La Tesserie that his options in the administration had been permanently wrecked. To a man in his late thirties this might have seemed an unpromising prospect.

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<sup>192</sup> P. Haudrere, *Les Compagnies des Indes Orientales. Trois siècles de rencontre entre Orientaux et Occidentaux* (Paris 2006) 71-72.

<sup>193</sup> Boxer, 'Introduction', in: Caron and Schouten, *A True Description*, cv

<sup>194</sup> This is not to say that he was therefore also (secretly) against Catholicism. It is more probable that both the governors were simply his most likely supporters, and were the source of his own job-security. Opposition to de Laval would therefore have followed by default. It must above all be remembered that the conflict between the clergy and colonial administration was intermittent, consisting of flare-ups more than continued struggle. Colonial life went on much as before and afterwards.

Furthermore, other possibilities were barred by the continued warfare with the Iroquois. His own wife, together with her prior husband, had gathered renown (and probably headshaking at their folly) earlier by becoming the first French seigneurs to actually go and live on their estate.<sup>195</sup> This was not an example followed by many; few other colonists ventured far from the forts of the major towns in fear of being caught and killed by Iroquois war bands, and lands everywhere in the colony went untended.<sup>196</sup> The seigneurie granted to him by d'Avaugour and those belonging to his wife, would equally have remained scarcely cultivated.

The fur-trade also suffered. The Iroquois had exterminated the Huron allies of the French, and although new tribes were filling the void, the Iroquois still controlled the major waterways through which the goods could be brought to the colony. Because of this, the number of skins brought to the colony from the American hinterland had diminished rapidly as compared to a decade back.<sup>197</sup> With the withdrawal in May 1663 of the monopoly granted to him and his fellow merchants by d'Avaugour, de La Tesserie had also lost his share of the trade passing through Tadoussac, the only relatively untouched area still left to the French.

These troubles must have left him in a difficult financial position. When writing to du Fresnes, de La Tesserie sent along a gift of two beaver skins, which he himself admitted were in a bad state. Furthermore, in the case that du Fresnes would accept his appeal, de La Tesserie asked for a sum large enough to pay for the crossing to be included. Because his incomes were mostly constituted from agricultural products and what money there was went into buying necessities from France, de La Tesserie had little money to pay for his voyage to Europe. It was a sorry state for a French nobleman to be in, and he would no doubt have been sorely inclined to go look for his fortune elsewhere.<sup>198</sup>

By the time of writing, halfway into 1666, de La Tesserie was thus a still relatively young man, who had been thrown out of the political center of the colony, and also had a bleak future where his own personal and financial safety were concerned. Other reasons might also have been important in his search for a potential new occupation. His wife, aged forty-seven, was ten years his senior and would have already been passed her childbearing age: we know from the sources that she would

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<sup>195</sup> L.P. Turcotte, *Histoire de l'île d'Orléans* (Québec 1867) 58.

<sup>196</sup> Havard and Vidal, *Histoire de l'Amérique française*, 64.

<sup>197</sup> Rich, *The Fur Trade and the Northwest*, 19.

<sup>198</sup> De La Tesserie, '1666, 24 Septembre', fol. 52-53. The truth of de La Tesserie's financial woes might not be as dire as he painted them in his letter, but it is quite certain that the near-subsistence level life in Quebec was much harder than in France.

never give de La Tesserie a child. His connection with his adopted family might therefore have been weak (although we have seen he took care of his stepchildren regardless).

In his letter de La Tesserie also claimed that the climate of Nouvelle-France was not to his liking, and that he would rather reside in warmer environments.<sup>199</sup> He stated that he was more intimately acquainted with the countries and the peoples of the East than he was with those of his current home.<sup>200</sup> Such a statement might be simple embellishment, but many of the men who returned from long stays abroad would often look back with pleasure on their time in the east.<sup>201</sup> Simple wanderlust and a sense of adventure might also have formed the nature of his actions, a trait not uncommon with those who have travelled a lot.

### 8.3 The application of de La Tesserie

We cannot know from the sources how de La Tesserie actually heard about the founding of the CFIO. His first encounter might have been the request of du Fresnes for his travel account itself. He might also have heard of the new endeavor through family or friends at home. We know that he still maintained contact with contacts in La Rochelle, through whom he asked for du Fresnes' reply to be sent back to him.<sup>202</sup> More convincing is that he took knowledge of it directly. It can be gleaned from the sources that de La Tesserie was in France between February and June 1664.<sup>203</sup> It is possible that he had been summoned to Paris much like Caron had been to inform Colbert upon the workings of the VOC. More likely however is that he was in France for different reasons, and while there heard of the CFIO, consequently offering his services as informant.

Regardless of the manner in which de La Tesserie heard from the new venture, it is clear from the text that he considered himself a capable addition to the

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<sup>199</sup> This seemed to be a recurring theme in de La Tesserie's life, as he was sick (or feigned to be so) at several points in his life.

<sup>200</sup> De La Tesserie, '1666, 8 Novembre', fol. 57.

<sup>201</sup> Lequin, *Het personeel van de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*, 186.

<sup>202</sup> De La Tesserie, '1666, 24 Septembre', fol. 53.

<sup>203</sup> On February 1664 he was charged with repaying a sum of money to another colonist. The *Jugements* say that his wife stood in his place, because he himself was absent in France. A second entry on the case dates from June of the same year, when his wife again is mentioned as his legal replacement, the court ordering her to repay the accuser. Chaveau, *Jugements et Délibérations I*, 213, 241-242.

CFIO.<sup>204</sup> The travel account and letters, in essence an extended application letter, are replete with mentions of his own actions and capabilities. We have already encountered his acquired skills in languages and colonial administration, as well as that of fortifications and colonial warfare. In his first letter de La Tesserie also dwelled specifically upon his skills as navigator and his in depth knowledge of the economic and political situation in the Far East, something he states is in short supply with those already hired by the CFIO.<sup>205</sup> Stressing these points would have been especially important, as they were exactly the abilities the directors of the company were looking for.

Interesting is also the fact that de La Tesserie stressed his Catholic credentials several times in the text. Although he has no problem mentioning his Huguenot heritage in his account (and we have seen that a Huguenot past is not necessarily an obstacle for ambitious men), there are several instances in which he disparages the anti-Catholicism of the Dutch. He mentioned the aid given by the Dutch to the Japanese in the repression of its Catholic converts, in which large numbers were killed.<sup>206</sup> Another is of the Dutch refusal to baptize infants of its Catholic native allies on Formosa.<sup>207</sup>

More telling is an anecdote of the trial and expulsion of a Jesuit priest in Batavia. De La Tesserie mentioned that while in Batavia, the Dutch authorities had apprehend a Jesuit priest who had been trying to travel back to France on ships of the VOC after a mission in Vietnam.<sup>208</sup> The priest had tried to give spiritual guidance to the Catholics in Batavia, from which they were barred by the Dutch. The Jesuit was apprehended while giving mass, and he and his congregation were imprisoned. Most of the convicted were released on a fine, but the priest was banished to Bantam after the Catholic community paid his fine, and his belongings were burned. What was

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<sup>204</sup> *'Je suis en estat de leur randre d'aussi bons services que ceux qu'ils emploie [...]'*. De La Tesserie, '1666, 24 Septembre', fol. 51.

<sup>205</sup> *'[...] et qui n'ont pas les mesmes cognaissance que moy tant pour les places et routtes des pays sudits que pour les gouvernement des navires dont j'ay unno longue experiance.'* Ibidem, 51

<sup>206</sup> De La Tesserie, 'Mémoires', fol. 145.

<sup>207</sup> Ibidem, 142.

<sup>208</sup> This in itself was hardly uncommon. Although the Dutch were technically opposed to all who professed Catholicism, in practice they were imminently pragmatic. Many of the posts they had captured were inhabited by Catholic Portuguese, and we have seen that several of their own soldiers were also Catholic. The VOC also allowed Jesuits to travel on their ships. Only if the Jesuits tried to flaunt their beliefs openly, by wearing their religious habits or through preaching, did the VOC undertake steps to punish them. F. Hertroys, 'Coöperatie of Conflict? Relaties tussen VOC-dienaren en jezuieten in Azie, circa 1680 tot 1795', *De Achiende Eeuw*, 43:2 (2011) 144.

especially galling in the eyes of de La Tesserie was the fact that the Jesuit had been sent away from Vietnam because he had interceded in favor of the Dutch with its king, who had wanted to execute them for an affront done to him. Disgusted, de La Tesserie stated that such was the payment given by the Dutch to all those who helped them.<sup>209</sup>

Lastly, de La Tesserie mentioned the fact that the colonial administration under Talon would be loath to let him go, due to his good services. He also mentioned that if the CFIO was disinclined to hire him, he would instead undertake a mission for Talon to discover the northern parts of the continent. As mentioned above, de La Tesserie would rather have wanted to serve the Compagnie in the East, but he nonetheless set out an alternative option, probably to pressure du Fresnes into action.<sup>210</sup>

It is clear that de La Tesserie was painting a picture of himself which would appeal to the management of the CFIO. He set himself down as a career official, who held specific knowledge in an area little-known in France, as well as many skills necessary for the reaching, setting up and defending of colonial positions. By avowing his Catholic credentials and his services for the colonial administration of Canada, de La Tesserie made himself imminently acceptable to the bureaucratic machine behind Colbert and Louis XIV. The fact that he was capable of discerning what the French government would be most interested in obtaining, and how he would fit in the best in said picture, is a clear indication that de La Tesserie was very much aware of potential difficulties in background, and was quite willing to adapt or change some parts of his identity to suit his needs. As mentioned earlier, for someone who had travelled as extensively as him, such cosmopolitan skills would have been of the highest importance in successfully integrating in the various environments encountered.

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<sup>209</sup> *Voilà le récompense qu'il eust du service qu'il avoit rendu aux Holandois*. De La Tesserie, 'Mémoires', fol. 152.

<sup>210</sup> De La Tesserie, '1666, 8 Novembre', fol. 57.



## Chapter 9: Rejection and later life

Although de La Tesserie's credentials were solid, it was a different proposition entirely if the CFIO would hire him. Furthermore, forces outside of his control could change circumstances at home to such an extent that his personal need for the change might be invalidated, as we will see in this final chapter.

### 9.1 Failure of the CFIO.

The last letter of de La Tesserie was dated the 8<sup>th</sup> of November 1666. This meant that he would have been too late to join the main fleet, which had sailed from France on the 14<sup>th</sup> of March 1666. This fleet was supposed to head for India to fulfill Caron's design, and it included Caron himself and many other high dignitaries. After a stop at the French colony of Madagascar the fleet arrived at Surratt on the 13<sup>th</sup> of February 1668. Due to infighting between the directors and traders however, the French were unable to do more than secure trading rights from the Mughal Emperor, and land to build a factory near Surratt. The arrival of reinforcements allowed Caron to also secure a trading post at Masulipatnam, on the western coast of India, a year later, and another French trading post was opened at Pondicherry shortly afterwards. Caron's aim of creating a French Batavia in the Indonesian Archipelago however proved a failure, and the French were unable to expand their influence outside of the Indian subcontinent.<sup>211</sup>

Nor did the financial state of the French East India Company aid in the matter. As mentioned earlier, the Compagnie had difficulty raising the sums necessary for its designs from the French populace, driving it into the arms of Colbert and the King. This source also dried up however, as French military activity in Europe increased after 1667. Furthermore, what income the Compagnie obtained from shipments of goods from India did not balance the costs made. These shortcomings ensured that the Compagnie was unable to send out more than a couple of ships each year, which were sufficient only to maintain its holdings in India itself. The death of Caron in a shipwreck on the 5<sup>th</sup> of April 1673 proved the end of the modest period of expansion.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> A. Ray, *The Merchant and the State: The French in India, 1666-1739*, vol. 1 (New Delhi 2004) 42-47.

<sup>212</sup> This is not to say that Caron was the primary driving force behind the French East India Company. Dissension within the ranks, and animosity between Caron and Colbert had already convinced the latter to dispense with the former. However, Caron was the visionary, and his death ensured that the

It is clear that the shortage of success and the dearth of funds would have made the French East India Company disinclined to hire de La Tesserie. His knowledge rested upon a specific area of the globe in which the French had few interests, and the strength of the East India Company was not such that this situation could be rectified quickly. Furthermore, the small number of ships being dispatched to the east every year would only have required a few trained navigators, who could as easily be recruited from the French naval towns, or from neighboring countries. In the end, the positions which the French East India Company could offer de La Tesserie might simply not have been sufficiently appealing.

## 9.2 The pacification of the Iroquois tribes

The fact that the CFIO might not have needed the talents of de la Tesserie for their endeavors might not have been the only reason. As mentioned earlier, Nouvelle France had been a colony wracked by warfare with the Iroquois tribes. A first expedition had already set out under the command of de Courcelle at the beginning of January 1666, but proved an abject failure.

The French campaign had caused bad blood with the English, who had taken the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam shortly before. To this end, the French sent out an embassy to discuss with them how to deal with the Iroquois. This embassy was made up by two priests, and de La Tesserie had been added as interpreter as the town of Albany was still predominantly Dutch. However, the delegation was forced to abort its mission at Trois-Rivières in July 1666 because several Frenchmen, including a nephew of de Tracy, had been murdered by Iroquois. Because of this, the French decided to deal with the Iroquois once and for all.<sup>213</sup>

The timing of the mission had been auspiciously chosen. Both internal dissension within the Iroquois Confederacy and hostile pressure from without had convinced most of its members that peace should be made with the French. This would enable the Confederation to use their full military strength to confront other native American tribes who had been intruding on the Iroquois hunting fields. Only the Mohawk, who lived between the French and Dutch colonies, and therefore profited most of the continued warfare with the French, were opposed. By convincing

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*Compagnie* lacked a goal on which to expend its resources. Ames, *Colbert, Mercantilism and the French Quest for Asian Trade*, 163-164.

<sup>213</sup> Thwaites, *The Jesuit Relations*, vol. 50, 190.



the Mohawk to desist from raiding, the French would therefore be able to sign a peace with the Iroquois.<sup>214</sup>

To this end the French assembled a new force to march on the Mohawk villages. According to Charlevoix, who wrote some eighty years after the events, over one thousand men were assembled for the campaign. Although the march proved hard, the French reached the Mohawk villages in fighting condition. However, the Mohawk had been forewarned by scouts of the approach of the French, and had fled their villages. The French found only some elderly left behind, whom they imprisoned. De Tracy and de Courcelle were thus denied their confrontation with the Mohawk once more.<sup>215</sup> Although a confrontation did not take place, the expedition was not a complete failure. The French put the village to the torch, together with the winter provisions stored there. De La Tesserie was not present with this expedition because of an illness, although he also gave a short summary of its results in his second letter, which corroborates closely with the above account of Charlevoix.<sup>216</sup> The show of force proved enough to bring the Mohawk to the negotiation table, swiftly followed by the other Iroquois tribes. By early 1667 the Iroquois and the French were finally at peace.<sup>217</sup>

### 9.3 Talon and the reintroduction into the Sovereign Council

The arrival of de Tracy and Talon not only heralded a new period of peace within the colony, but also opened a new (and as it would prove final) round of reorganizations, which would stabilize the colony and firmly subjected it to the crown of France.

During the months in which he was shunted from the Sovereign Council, de La Tesserie seemed to have built up a relationship with the new intendant Jean Talon. In his final letter he indicated that Talon was contemplating on sending an expedition to reconnoiter the northern waters, and that he wanted de La Tesserie to head this mission.<sup>218</sup> Furthermore, in August 1666 Talon sent de La Tesserie to the Bay of St.

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<sup>214</sup> Hunt, *The Wars of the Iroquois*, 138-140.

<sup>215</sup> P.F.X. de Charlevoix, *Histoire et description générale de la Nouvelle France, avec le journal historique d'un voyage fait par ordre du roi dans l'Amérique septentrionale* (Paris 1744), 90-91. De La Tesserie also mentions the crossing of a river prior to the French capture of the towns, where the Mohawk tried to ambush the French. This effort however failed when the Mohawk lost heart and retreated, leaving the way open. De La Tesserie, '1666, 8 Novembre', fol. 57.

<sup>216</sup> De La Tesserie, '1666, 8 Novembre', fol. 56-57.

<sup>217</sup> Hunt, *The Wars of the Iroquois*, 135.

<sup>218</sup> De La Tesserie, '1666, 8 Novembre', fol. 57.

Paul to investigate mining possibilities there.<sup>219</sup> It seemed that Talon was inclined to make good use of the myriad skills which de La Tesserie had learnt in the course of his career, ranging from his political skills to his navigational background. Nor was this exchange one-way. When discussing the possibilities of remuneration for his traveling costs, de La Tesserie mentioned that Talon was willing to act as a go-between. De La Tesserie also mentioned that both Talon and de Tracy had been happy with his activities in Nouvelle-France, and word of this might also have reached France, facilitating his affirmation of nobility on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of July 1667.<sup>220</sup>

It is quite possible that de La Tesserie had become a supporter of Talon. Interestingly, this would have brought him into opposition with the clergy for the third time. Talon had royal orders to turn back the power of the clergy in the colony, de facto a *carte blanche* to rearrange the power structure itself. A large step had already been made by excluding the bishop from the process of choosing a new councilor for the Sovereign Council. Talon also weakened the regulations binding the trade of liquor to Indians, to the point that its sale was tolerated, if not outright allowed. When the Sovereign Council was reorganized for the last time at the beginning of December 1666, two councilors were dropped who had had a history of being supporters of the clergy.<sup>221</sup> The reasons for the subsequent appointment of de La Tesserie to one of the vacant seats in Sovereign Council on the 6<sup>th</sup> of December might thus have been an explicit move by Talon to weaken the hold of the clergy on the Council (if not in simple recognition of de La Tesserie's exertions made on behalf of the colony or of Talon himself).

#### 9.4 The French colonial bureaucrat

The peace with the Iroquois held, and from 1667 onwards the lands surrounding the towns became safe to travel and cultivate again. It is therefore not unreasonable to think that de La Tesserie's renewed importance in the colony, as well as the opportunity to finally start developing his lands in earnest, might have permanently cancelled any plans of moving elsewhere. As icing on the cake, de La Tesserie's lands on the Ile d'Orleans were raised to the status of a seigneurie with the name of la Groezardière.<sup>222</sup> In Canadian society, where the status of seigneur was the highest attainable to its inhabitants (if not always mirrored with corresponding wealth), this

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<sup>219</sup> Charlevoix, *Histoire et description générale de la Nouvelle France*, 98.

<sup>220</sup> De La Tesserie, '1666, 24 Septembre', fol. 53.

<sup>221</sup> Du Bois Cahall, *The Sovereign Council*, 38-39.

<sup>222</sup> Chauveau, 429-430.

raise would have put de La Tesserie at the pinnacle of the colonial hierarchy, and was a clear indication of the trust put in him by the government.<sup>223</sup>

The final appointment of de La Tesserie to the Council and his registration as a nobleman with his own seigneurie would have indicated his amalgamation with the identity of a French colonial administrator. Du Bois Cahall made the interesting point that ‘[l]ong service in the King’s business, some knowledge of jurisprudence, and orthodoxy in religious matters, were qualifications most necessary for appointment to the Council. Many of the Councilors had shown some ability in places of trust, in business of a judicial or administrative or commercial or military character’.<sup>224</sup> In the case of de La Tesserie, who most certainly had neither a long record of service and whose religious stance might have been suspect, appointments were thus clearly both the result of his capabilities, learnt in service of the VOC or the crown afterwards, and his attachment to and support of the policies and activities of the successive governments of d’Avaugour, de Mézy and Tracy and Talon.

Interesting in this case is de La Tesserie’s continued identification with the anti-clerical factions in the colony. Although to a large extent the result of the political wrangling which took place in the colony between 1661-1666, de La Tesserie’s alignment-choices might also indicate a less than orthodox view of the powers due to the clergy (potentially rooted in his Huguenot background). To the VOC and the French government of Louis XIV both, the clergy was envisioned as subjected to the demands of the secular government, even if both organizations propagated their respective religions through law and action. Even if de La Tesserie’s conversion had been an act of faith, his Huguenot upbringing might still have given him a certain measure of distrust where the clergy was concerned. It would however be remiss to state that this would have been the primary reason, and in any case there is no direct proof of it being so.

## 9.5 Death and legacy

Whatever his beliefs, de la Tesserie’s remaining years were entirely orthodox, compared to the preceding period. He was active in the regular dealings of the colony, such as the executions of wills and monitoring trade between Nouvelle-France and the founding country.<sup>225</sup> On the 8<sup>th</sup> of August 1667 his nomination to the post of procurer-general, the head of the public prosecution service, is indicated,

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<sup>223</sup> Havard and Vidal, *Histoire de l’Amérique Française*, 365.

<sup>224</sup> Du Bois Cahall, *The Sovereign Council*, 130.

<sup>225</sup> *Jugements et Délibérations*, vol 1, 400-401.

when he had orders to control the process of clothing, which had eclipsed those set by the government. Ultimately however, until his death on the 16<sup>th</sup> of June 1673 very little would happen in the colony.

De La Tesserie's family situation was now also firmly in place. It is clear from Talon's census of 1666 that all the children of de Grandmaison lived in the household of her fourth husband, until the time that they themselves were married.<sup>226</sup> It has already been noted that de La Tesserie was supportive of his stepchildren, providing several of the girls with substantial dowries and advantageous marriages. He might also have had a hand in the careers of his stepsons. The only son of the first family had first been given the patrimonial lands on the Ile d'Orleans, but quickly exchanged those for a new seigneurie formed out of part of the lands of his father near Trois-Rivières, subsequently named la Cheverotière. It must be remembered here that the senior branch of the Cailhauts in France had held a fief also called la Chevrotière. De La Tesserie must clearly have had a hand in the naming of the fiefs, and its name must have indicated the superior status in which these lands, then already a seigneurie, must have been held in regards to the lands on Ile d'Orleans, which did not confer the status of nobleman.

The other part of those lands was given to another daughter from de Grandmaison's second marriage, who together with her husband was granted the seigneurie of Deschambault. The remaining lands on Ile d'Orleans, called the Beaulieu fief after de Grandmaison's third husband, were subsequently handed to her second son (the first having shown little interest in a career as seigneur). With the death of de La Tesserie it might have been expected for his lands to pass into the hands of his nearest inheritor, his brother in France.<sup>227</sup> For unknown reasons this however never happened. Instead de Grandmaison inherited the fief, handing it over to her youngest son upon her death, who thus came to own both the fiefs on the Ile d'Orleans, styling himself Gourdeau de Beaulieu et de la Grossardière. Of de La Tesserie and his inheritance little was thus left, except for the names he had given to the Chevrotière and Grossardière fiefs.

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<sup>226</sup> Talon, *Recensement*, 64.

<sup>227</sup> From the information attached to the signed document of nobility from 1667, de La Tesserie was still the inheritor to the la Groezardière lands of his brother near Nantes. The birth of a nephew to his brother would have pushed back his claim, but its presence clearly indicates that he was still in the line of family succession, making his brother his nearest heir. Beauchet-Filleau and de Chergé, *Dictionnaire historique et généalogique des familles du Poitou vol 2*, 98.

## Conclusion

Thus ended the career of Jacques Cailhaut de La Tesserie. For all his travels and travails, he did not leave much of an imprint upon our history. In fact, there is so little that the man has not even been given his own entry in the Dictionary of Canadian Biographies, despite his undeniable historical importance to the early development of the colony. Instead, de La Tesserie has been relegated to several footnotes and a paragraph in the much more extensive entry of his wife. Of his time with the VOC nothing whatsoever is known, except for what has been saved through his own writings. In this, he is obviously far from unique, and the singular fact of uncovering such a life story is historically relevant.

However, the life of de La Tesserie also holds a myriad of lessons to be learnt. The first was the sheer mobility he displayed through his travels. During his lifetime, de La Tesserie travelled and fought in Western Europe, visited and traded in many of the important regions in the Far East, and lived and worked on the Northern Atlantic seaboard. The breadth of his peregrinations was such that they would set many a modern traveler to shame. The fact also that his life has not left many records might indicate that such mobility was potentially much more widespread, even on the lower levels of establishments. In this framework de La Tesserie clearly operated as a conduit in the knowledge network described in the work of Huigen and de Jong. Through de La Tesserie experiences and work methods as applied by the VOC on Formosa would also have found their way to the New World. Through such human connections the different areas of the globe were tied together.

To personally cope with the large differences in cultures which de La Tesserie encountered on his voyages (which probably would have had a much bigger impact on his sense of identity than would be the case in our own information-rich and globalized age), he needed to display a high level of adaptability. It seems that de La Tesserie was well capable of such adaptation, for he apparently learnt the local languages and took notice of and participated in local customs. De La Tesserie also seemed to have easily integrated into the local power structures as he encountered them, and seemed able to correctly deduce what self-image was required where, and respond by changing accordingly.

However, such flexibility and adaptive capacities were not necessarily always present with all travelers in this time period, or necessarily with equal intensity in all cases. There have been several instances noted in this paper of those who seemed unable or unwilling to adapt to the circumstances, and who suffered discrimination and professional stasis as a result. This indicates that even if a certain

cosmopolitanism in interacting with others was a requisite to integrating, the fact that some people travelled long distances not necessarily indicated that such men were learning, or inclined to learn, anything from their new surroundings. It would seem that even if mobility and interaction increased, this did not necessarily mean a broadening of the cosmopolitan spirit.

In effect, such border-crossing experiences could have a negative impact as easily as a positive one. The structural discrimination on linguistic-cultural ground implemented by the VOC on its servants in the East (and the Company was by no means an exception in this respect) might have pushed its servants to identify themselves with just those categories through which they were being differentiated, instead of trying to adopt the trappings of the principal category. Groups foreign to the Dutch Calvinist identity of the VOC hierarchy were in effect put before the choice to either adopt said identity, or to affirm their differences instead. Those who chose the last option in reaction became liable to be shunted from sources of power and connection necessary to support their own position. Instead, such support might have been found within the groups of those with similar backgrounds, and similarly ostracized. As men were drawn to those of their own city, region or country, a belief in a shared identity might have been formed, even if it had not existed prior to their voyage abroad. In a sense, what these men might have brought back was an idea of what they shared, and what set them apart from those surrounding them.

For all his adaptational prowess, this even seemed to have happened to de La Tesserie. Although he had shown loyalty and skill in the service of the VOC, de La Tesserie was quick to return to France when faced with a temporary personal setback. There, instead of reaffirming his affiliation with the French Huguenot communities of which he was a member, de La Tesserie made the choice to convert to Catholicism, and ship out to a French colonial holding, in which Huguenots were not allowed. By doing so, he rejected his own background, and instead changed his identity (or at least the public representation thereof) to that considered a model Early Modern Frenchman: i.e., Catholic and loyal to the crown.

To conclude, it must however not be forgotten that such abstract thinking about loyalties, such as described above, were more often than not not at the forefront of the minds of those in whom they clashed. Instead, the case of de La Tesserie shows that his choices, including his conversion to Catholicism, were largely pragmatic in nature. His decisions were often driven by chance and skill, and the possibilities, which opened up to him were more often than not dependent upon his prior history elsewhere. It is highly indicative that, even though the colonies in which de La Tesserie worked seemed to have had different cultural exteriors, the inner workings

and problems of Formosa and Nouvelle-France were actually very similar. De La Tesserie might have specifically chosen to go to Nouvelle-France exactly because he had earned valuable experience while worked on Formosa. Similarly, he also believed that he would be of great service to the CFIO in Asia exactly because he knew the region intimately.

By and large, the story of de La Tesserie, as portrayed above seems to indicate that cosmopolitanism would have been to many neither an ideology of interaction, nor that it was the product of interest in differences between peoples. Instead, to many travelers being cosmopolitan would in the end have been a pragmatic choice, as it was necessary to integrate in their host societies if they hoped to flourish.





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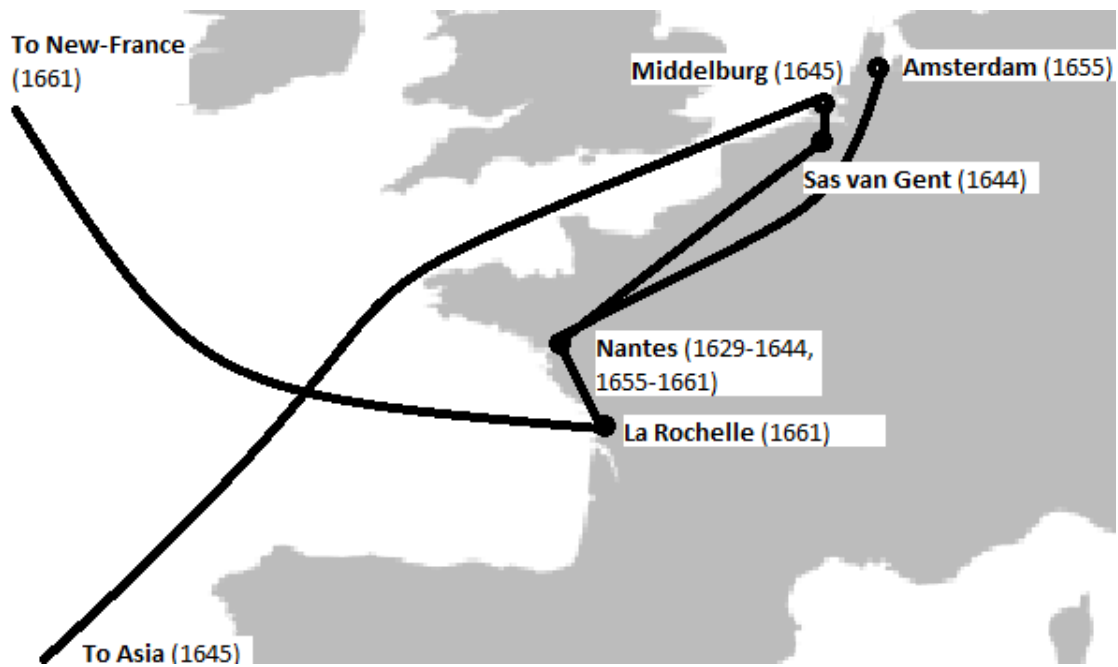
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## Appendix

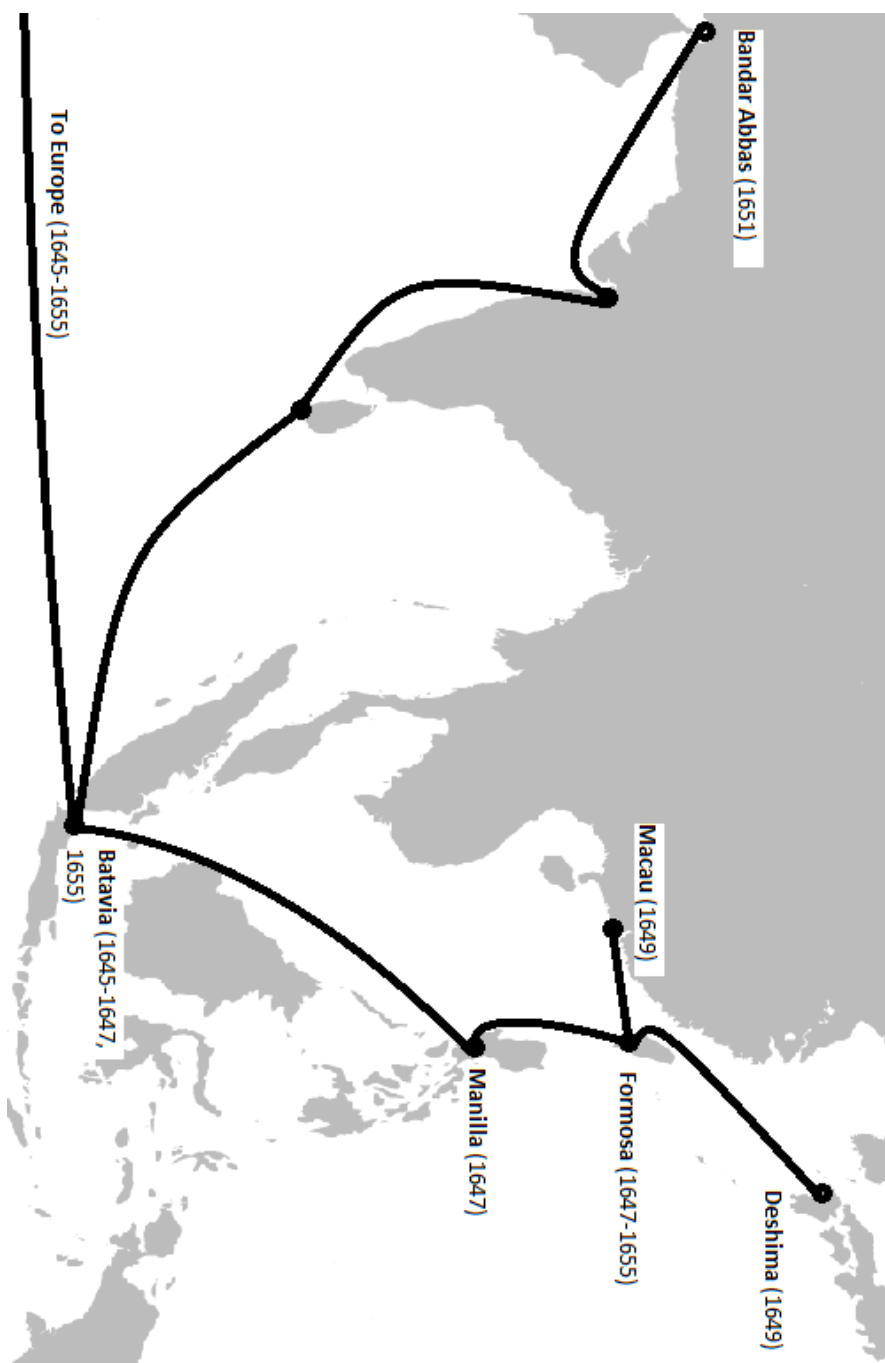
Map 1. Travels of de La Tesserie in Europe<sup>228</sup>



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<sup>228</sup> By the author.

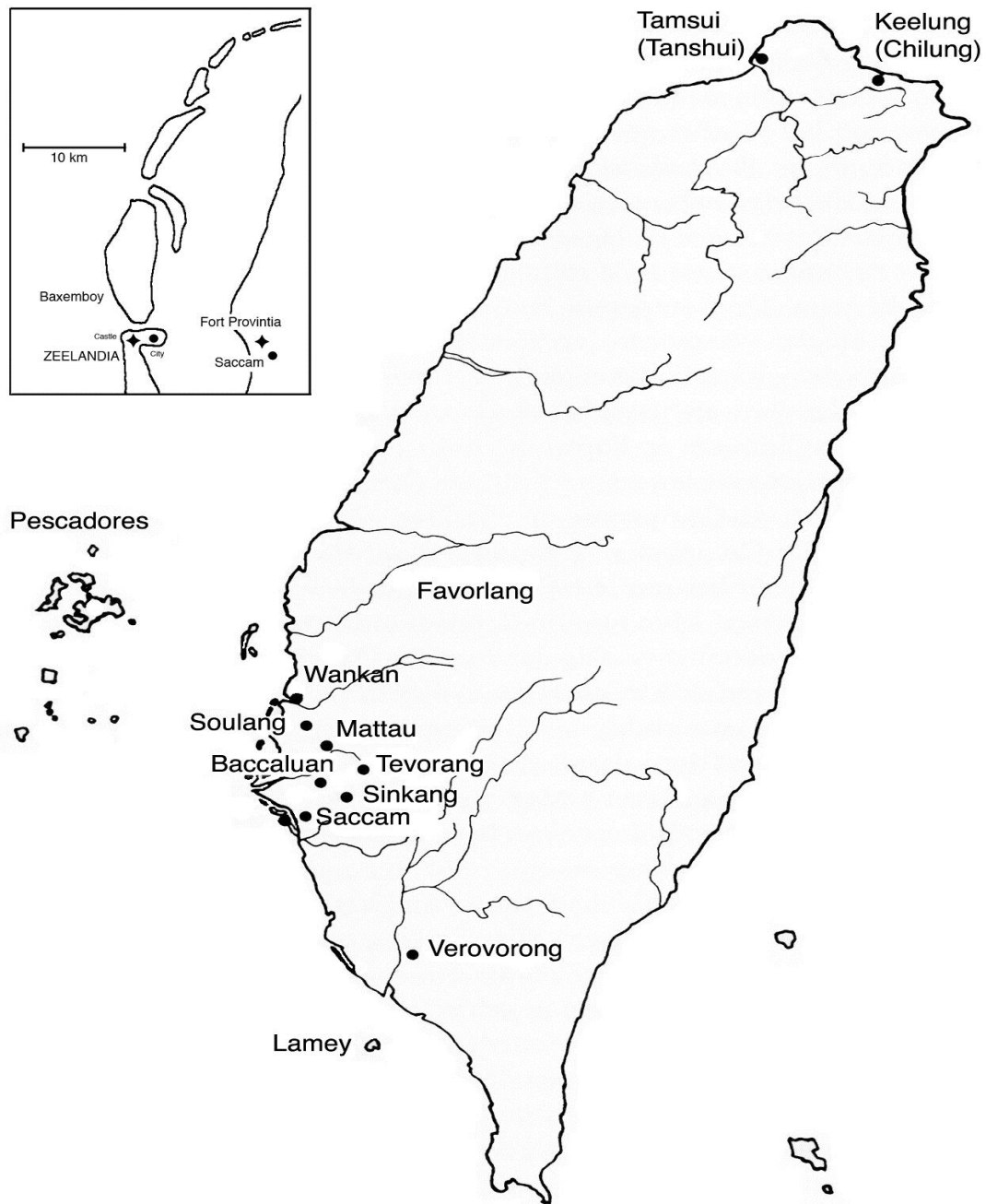
Map 2. Travels of de La Tesserie in Asia<sup>229</sup>



<sup>229</sup> By the author.

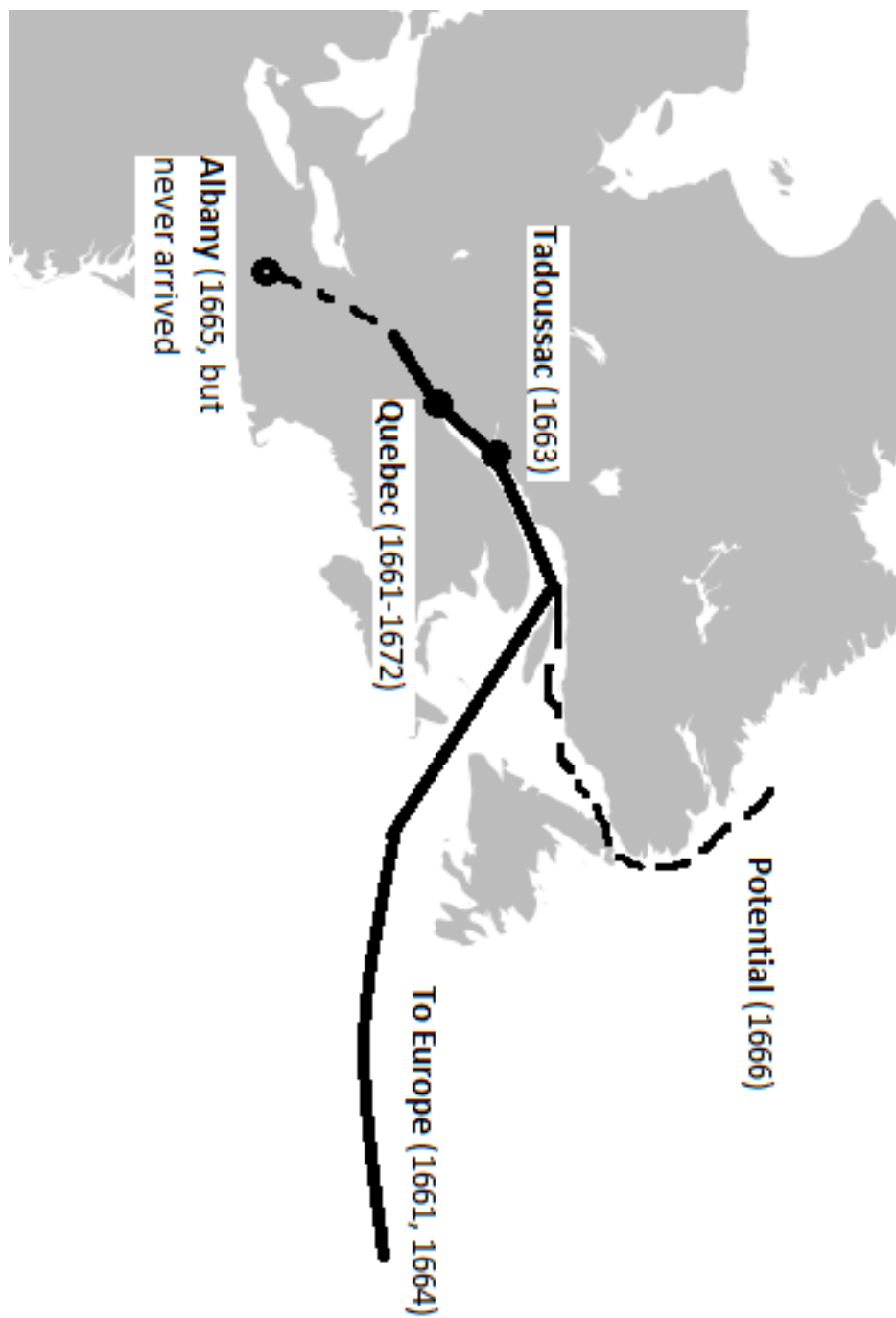


Map 3. Dutch Formosa<sup>230</sup>



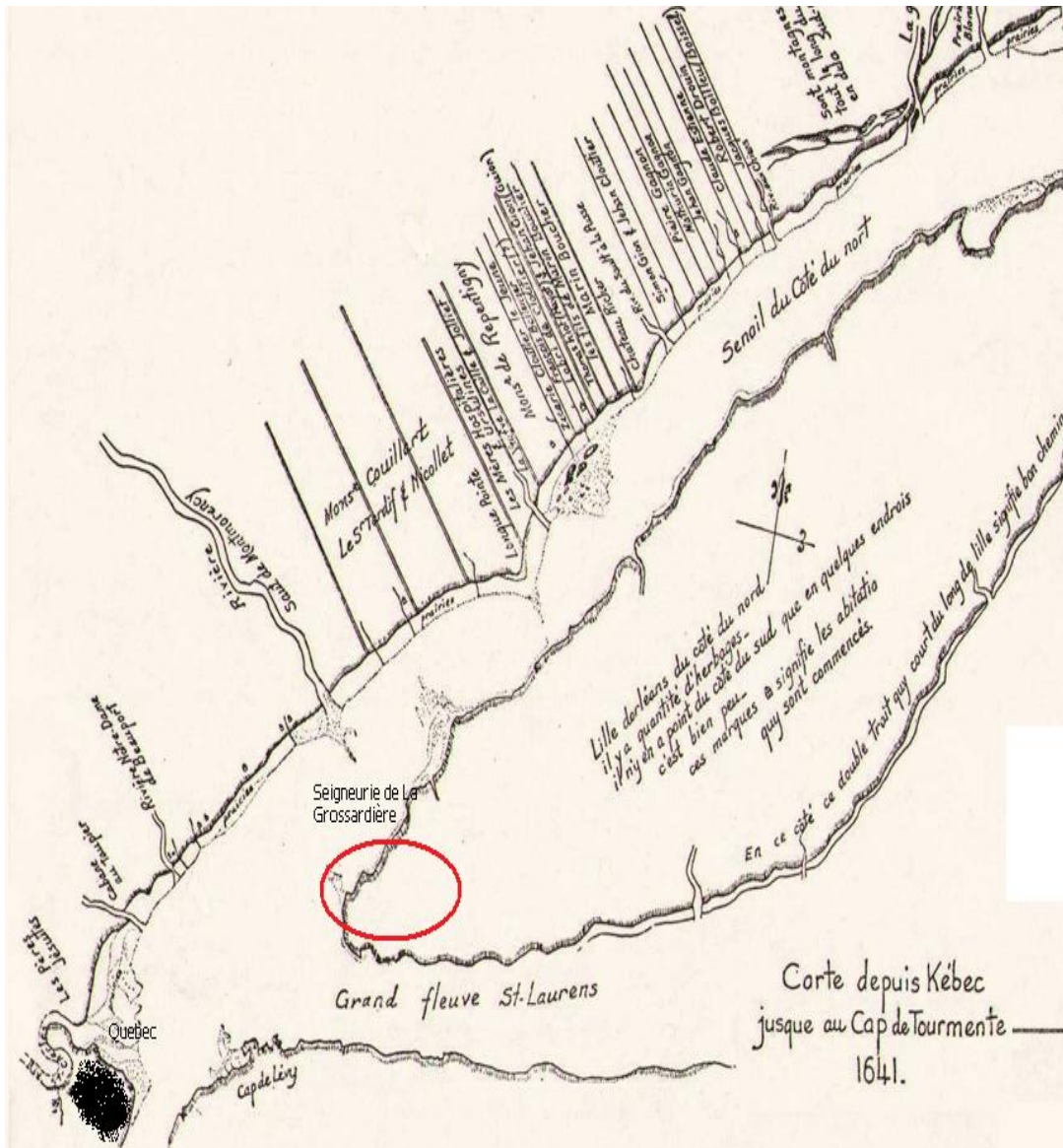
<sup>230</sup> [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map\\_Dutch\\_Formosa.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_Dutch_Formosa.jpg), retrieved: 18<sup>th</sup> August 2013.

Map 4. Travels of de La Tesserie in the Atlantic region<sup>231</sup>



<sup>231</sup> By the author.

Map 5. Quebec and the Ile d'Orléans<sup>232</sup>



<sup>232</sup> [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Beaupre\\_Jean\\_Bourdon\\_1641.PNG](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Beaupre_Jean_Bourdon_1641.PNG), retrieved: 18<sup>th</sup> August 2013.





