

FIG. 10

No. 80 Tran Phu Street, Hoi An, converted from dwelling house to Ceramic Trade Museum. The old iron doors feature the acronym VOC in copper. This logo differs from those featured on cannons, and on ceramics ordered by the VOC. The VOC formally closed its doors in Hoi An in 1654.



international trade was conducted out of Hoi An, with Thanh Ha serving the commercial needs of the capital and its court. The lists of exports from the two regions afford insightful comments on their differences. Seventeenth-century Ke Cho was exporting local silk yarn and silk cloth, Chinese silk cloth, sugar, lacquerware, wooden giltware, ceramics, tinctorial yam for dyes, aniseed, and musk. Except for the component of silk, a re-export, and musk from Yunnan that was only sometimes available, exports<sup>8</sup> out of Ke Cho were local products, and handicrafts dominated the list. Aniseed went to Batavia to flavor Dutch arrack. Lacquer was sold daily in great tubs in Ke Cho market, but not exported. Yet despite the superlatives showered on seventeenth-century Ke Cho by Baron, one Guangdong merchant remarked to the high-ranking northern official Le Quy Don (1726–1784) that, in Pho Hien, the only thing available was tinctorial yam, and in Thanh Ha, only pepper, but Hoi An offered all kinds of merchandise. Another enthused that goods were so abundant in Hoi An that not even a hundred large ships could carry them all.<sup>90</sup>

The VOC experienced many frustrating years in Cochinchina before effectively forfeiting their Hoi An office in 1638 to concentrate on the Pho Hien office, which had opened its doors in 1637 (fig. 10). This constant jostling and the habit among the Europeans of bad-mouthing each other for commercial gain complicated what was often a strained relationship with the courts in both Cochinchina and Tongking. Such rivalry and dissent prevailed among the European elements of this trade for the ensuing 150 years.<sup>91</sup>

The EIC would attempt to emulate the success of the VOC in Tongking, opening a factory in Pho Hien in 1672, then transferring to Ke Cho in 1679. In 1695, the British returned to Cochinchina to negotiate the establishment of a factory. Yet for a number of years before this, the EIC had been developing new policy direction. This task fell to Thomas Bowyear, previously employed at the English factories in Formosa and in Tongking, but the favorable report he sent to his superiors in Madras was, however, ignored, and in 1697, in line with the new policy direction, the Tongking factory closed.<sup>92</sup>

When the EIC first established their Tongking office, it was under the factory in Bantam, in Java, and the plan was for three ships to pick up from there local goods as well as imports from Persia, Surat, Malabar, Bengal, and Coromandel. One ship would then proceed to Tongking and two to Taiwan to put down assorted goods and pick up silks, hides, Taiwan sugar, and Chinese commodities to exchange for Japan's copper and silver. This would, in turn, be reinvested in Tongking and Taiwan, and in this manner, trade would flow and yield return goods suitable for England.<sup>93</sup> Although not realized, the plan demonstrates the global dimensions at work.

The VOC exported thousands of ceramic bowls and tea bowls from Tongking to insular markets between 1663 and 1681, again in response to interruptions in the flow of trade from China. These utilitarian wares were carried by VOC, Chinese, Thai, and British traders.<sup>94</sup> In this same period, VOC records mention Japanese ceramics imported into Tongking, but as early as 1634, the Nguyen were ordering luxurious dishes and bowls through Japanese merchants.<sup>95</sup> In 1673, wooden models for making ceramic jars for the "Princes of Tongking" were lost at sea on the *Cuylenburgh*, while another entry in 1679 notes that porcelain ordered for the "King" two years previously was now being sent.<sup>96</sup> By the end of the seventeenth century, Trinh lords were ordering ceramics from Jingdezhen, and by the early eighteenth century, Nguyen lords were also doing so.<sup>97</sup> Seventeenth-