# 6 Finding a Business Partner and a Merchant Clerk to Open up a Merchant House

On the 12th of November 1743, at a time when Nicolaus Gottlieb Luetkens' preparations for his second business trip to France were already in full swing, the merchant received a letter from his old friend and former legal guardian Seewaldt from Nantes.[1] In this letter, Seewaldt reported that he himself had received a letter from his brother in Strasbourg. His brother had passed on to him a letter of application from a young Strasbourg merchant, a certain Kunz, who, as he was told, was looking for new employment as a merchant clerk or business partner in one of Europe's leading merchant houses of the time after having served four years in the renowned merchant house Blitzhaupt in Strasbourg. The Nantes merchant Seewaldt himself, however, had no need for a new employee. However, he knew about Luetkens' upcoming trip and also knew very well that for a young merchant like Luetkens such business travels would not only serve the purpose of getting to know foreign cities but also of looking out for a suitable place to settle down and to establish a merchant house and of finding suitable personnel or even a business partner, as it was common practice during that time. This gave him an idea. Without further ado, he forwarded the letter from his brother with the application from Kunz to Luetkens, with the idea that Kunz might be of use to Luetkens. Maybe Luetkens would be interested in hiring or even associating with Kunz. For this purpose, Seewaldt copied the letter from his brother with Kunz's application into his own letter, putting it in quotation marks, and furthermore added some remarks of his own on the quality of his brother's words and the formalities accompanying the proposal. The letter from Seewaldt, which reached Luetkens in November 1743, therefore read as follows:

> "Highly esteemed and very dear friend,
> [...] the day before yesterday I received a long overdue letter from my brother in Strasbourg [...]. To cut things short, in his letter my brother enclosed a letter of application ["Handschrift"] by a young man with the following words: "Hereby enclosed is a letter of application by a brave young ["wackeren braven jungen"] man of 22 years named

1 On the Seewaldt family, see Terrier, Claude, ed. *Mélanges d'histoire économique et sociale en Hommage auf professeur Antony Babel*, vol. 2. Geneva: Droz, 1963, 42.

> Kunz, whose parents are solvent enough to give any necessary guarantees, he was employed during the last 4 years, speaks and writes well in both German and French, but he is no wizard in well-stylised letter writing ["kein Hexenmeister in allzuwohl stilisirten Brieffschreiben"]. However, through practice, he will soon be deployable ["zu gebrauchen sein"], his further way of life is decent ["honet"] and I can't fault it [...]." At this point further formalities were added before Seewaldt once more added a personal note to this copied-in letter, asking "whether E.E. already is equipped with a suitable subject ["tichtigen Subjectum"] or if he would be willing to consent to this offer, I would be [...] glad to hear." He also emphasized that Luetkens could trust in the report and words of his brother.[2]

It would take Luetkens only one week, one post day, the contemporary mail delivery days, to answer this letter. His decision was therefore obviously made quickly. Already 10 days later, Seewaldt received Luetkens' response to his proposal. In a letter from the 9th of November 1743 Luetkens thanked Seewaldt for his letter, but he nevertheless declined the offer. He wrote that "he had already found a suitable subjectum ["gutes Subjectum"] in Holland", which put a quick end to the discussion.[3]

Another, maybe the actual reason why he was so quick in declining the offer, however, is not given. Seewaldt himself most probably will also have attributed it to Luetkens being very busy at the time. Yet my privileged situation of being able to study these letters also in view of the other correspondences that Luetkens conducted during that time enables me to gain a somewhat clearer picture of the surrounding circumstances that might have contributed to Luetkens' decision-making process. I can give a probable further reason why the merchant declined the offer by the Seewaldt brothers. As things stood during that time, in fact, Luetkens had not yet been able to find a *suitable subjectum* in Holland. However, he was right in the middle of negotiations with his favoured candidate, residing in Holland at that time, and with this man's family, negotiating the conditions for a partnership and a joint establishment for founding a merchant house in France. This candidate was Simon Moritz Bethmann, son of a very renowned Frankfurt merchant family that still exists today, who was, however, already employed permanently during that time as a merchant clerk in the house of the English Rotterdam merchant John Furly, son of the renowned English Quaker merchant and religious writer Benjamin Furly, who was, as a sidenote, a friend of the philosopher John Locke.[4]

Luetkens' main occupation and challenge during that time was therefore to find a way to entice Simon Moritz Bethmann away from his current employer. The probable reason why Luetkens was so quick in declining Seewaldt's proposal was therefore

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2 Letter from Seewaldt, W.B. to Luetkens, Nicolaus Gottlieb, October 29, 1743, TNA, HCA 30/236.

3 Letter from Seewaldt, W.B. to Luetkens, Nicolaus Gottlieb, November 15, 1743, TNA, HCA 30/236.

4 Regarding the Bethmann family see the detailed study by Henninger, *Bethmann*.
See (with a critical eye) Bethmann, Johann Philipp von, ed. *Bankiers sind auch Menschen. 225 Jahre Bankhaus Gebrüder Bethmann*. Frankfurt a.M.: Societäts-Verlag, 1973.
Regarding Furly, see Bailyn, "The Challenge," 16-17.
See also Greaves, Richard L. "Furly, Benjamin 1636-1714." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edition, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/10248, accessed February 2, 2018.

that he had other things to do. A further reason for declining to even consider Kunz as a potential candidate for becoming his employee can be found in a revealing letter to his desired candidate Simon Moritz Bethmann at the very same time, on the 19th of November. In this letter, Luetkens wrote to Bethmann, and at the same praised the Frankfurt merchant's skills, that his "sole aim was to find someone who had learned something and who was skilled and able to manage his correspondence" ["einzig zu thun umb jemand der was gelernet und die Correspondentie führen kan"].[5] Hence, if we compare this sentence with the information given in the letter of the application of Kunz, it becomes immediately clear why Luetkens did not put any effort into the negotiations with Kunz: the fact that the Strasbourg merchant had rather bad writing skills and was an inexperienced letter writer, "no wizard" in letter writing, represented a clear exclusion criterion. Maybe Kunz's letter was even the reason why Luetkens emphasised this important skill so concretely in his letter to Bethmann.

In this chapter, the letter conversation and tough negotiations with regard to the attempted enticement of Simon Moritz Bethmann away from Furly will be at the centre of my explanations. This episode will furthermore be supplemented by a second letter episode, which was the direct consequence of the Bethmann negotiations, and which is thus so important for this chapter because only this second episode finally represented the long sought-after breakthrough in terms of finding an appropriate employee, a merchant clerk and later his agent and factor, for his business in France. Furthermore, the merchant also found his later business partner in their joint partner company during that time, a socius for his merchant house, a *Compagnie-Handlung* in German, which was one of the most crucial last steps and breakthroughs of his establishment phase.[6] This second episode will furthermore show how severe setbacks sometimes still ultimately led to a positive outcome and could be turned into a success because setbacks forced the historical actors to strive for new solutions and make adjustments to their original plans, and these solutions sometimes were even better than the original plan. The crucial and interesting thing about the Bethmann negotiations was that they eventually failed, much to Luetkens' disappointment. However, as a result of this, Luetkens was forced to adjust his plans and find another solution, which in the end led to the fortunate outcome that he did not only find a merchant clerk, but that the same person would later also become his agent in France, continuing his French business. Furthermore, Luetkens also found the much-wanted business partner for his merchant house in a second merchant living in Hamburg. Therefore, as the saying goes: When one door closes, another one opens.

The Seewaldt intermezzo will not be analysed any further in this chapter. Just as Luetkens himself did, we will put it aside, since everything that needed to be said in this matter has been said. Notwithstanding this, this short episode represented a good entrance point into this chapter and I chose it deliberately as the peg on which to hang

5 See for instance letter from Luetkens, Nicolaus Gottlieb to Bethmann, Simon Moritz, November 19, 1743, TNA, HCA 30/232, Letter Book II, unnumbered.

6 For a contemporary definition of a merchant partnership and for contemporary information on joint partner companies, see "Compagnie=Handlung." *Oekonomische Encyklopädie*, edited by Johann Georg Krünitz. 242 volumes. Berlin, 1773-1858, vol. 8, 276-279.

the explanations of this chapter because this letter exchange encapsulates in a nutshell what the main topic of this chapter is and what I want to show in the following explanations.

The letter exchange between Seewaldt and Luetkens made me aware of the simple fact that letter writing was used by these merchants to seriously negotiate and come to agreements with each other with regard to the most crucial qualities and abilities that a young man had to show in business in order to prove himself worthy and suitable as a merchant. This fact in particular applies to the situation in which a merchant was confronted with the question of whom he should choose as his business partner for his merchant house or his employee. As the Seewaldt episode made clear, in this situation there was obviously a clear catalogue of criteria which a young man had to adhere to in order to show his capabilities. Therefore, there must have also been a general contemporary idea of which skills and personal dispositions or even character traits were important for representing a respected wholesale merchant. However, as the episode also clearly demonstrated, these skills and personal dispositions were in the first place always negotiable and placed at the correspondents' disposal, and they were apparently weighed up differently.

What tipped the scales and counted most was what the particular merchants regarded as important and as conducive for their specific business, that is, what they regarded as indispensable skills and character traits important for actual mercantile practice. It is therefore not sufficient only to take a look at merchant handbooks, manuals and contemporary catalogues of virtues to learn about the main competences that a merchant had to have. I will, however, still heavily consult these books in this chapter as the most important intertextual references. Yet, we also have to take into consideration actual mercantile practice and literally have to compare it with the rulebook. Furthermore, as we have learned, additional external factors played their part in the negotiations and had a decisive share in the outcome of the negotiations. The most fundamental skill, ability and competence, however, that became apparent in the episode and showed itself as indispensable for the professional advancement of a merchant was good skills in letter writing practice, a skill and competence that Kunz unfortunately lacked. Without this skill, the way to becoming a successful merchant lead him down a rather stony path. The latter insight served as the inspiration for this chapter and in many ways it was also formative for this entire book. Seewaldt's letter was one of the first letters that I read from the Luetkens archive and it revealed to me already during a very early stage of my work what was later to become the main statement of my book, which is that letters were the pivotal tool and the linchpin for success for commercial people of the 18th century. In this chapter, we will now be provided with another clear piece of evidence for this fact, relating to the important role that letter-writing and correspondence practice and its powers of persuasion played in the search for a suitable business partner and for merchant employees.

In this chapter we will take a look at what skills, "qualities and competences" a young man had to have to be considered a suitable "Subjectum", as the contemporaries called it, relating to both a merchant employee and particularly to a merchant socius who represented a good catch for establishing a private partnership firm as the basis

for a merchant house.[7] We will furthermore take a look at the further conditions and requirements that had to be met in order to put this plan into practice. The overall thematic topic of this chapter therefore consists of the plans and measures necessary to establish a merchant house with a partner in the form of a joint partner company with its own employees at home and abroad, as a crucial step for an establishment phase of a wholesale merchant during the 18th century. I will analyse this on the basis of the two letter episodes. Before coming to that, however, we will once again start by weaving a thick web of information around this phenomenon and its practices, providing a thick contextualisation and therefore an intelligible framework on the basis of which we are able to understand all the events taking place in the letter episode. This will enable us to answer the crucial thematic question at the centre of this chapter, which is why and how a young merchant man bound other persons to his own business, at the same time tying his own success to them and why he would strive to establish a joint merchant company at all.

## 6.1 Characteristics of a Private Firm

Whereas in the previous centuries, particularly during the 15th and 16th century, the family firm was the predominant business model for merchant firms, during the 18th century this predominance gradually shifted towards the private firm as the most common and widespread form of business organisation.[8] The most common business model of the 18th century was however the merchant partnership and the joint partner company, the "Compagnie-Handlung" as it was called in 18th-century Germany, "société" in France, between two or more individual merchants joining together to establish a merchant house and private firm.[9] This development corresponded with,

7 "Im gemeinen Leben pflegt man einen Menschen in Ansehung seiner Fähigkeit und Tüchtigkeit zu etwas, häufig ein Subject zu nennen." "Subject [...] *Subjectum*." *Oekonomische Encyklopädie*, edited by Johann Georg Krünitz. 242 volumes. Berlin, 1773-1858, vol. 177, 649-652, here 652. See also "Subject." *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob und Wilhelm Grimm*, 813 ("sodann von Personen, die in einem Abhängigkeitsverhältnis stehen wie Diener"). For "subject" in letters, see Marperger, *Der allzeitfertige Handels-Correspondent*, 724.

8 This development "reflected the growing demand for capital and manpower". Häberlein, "Trading Companies," 1. See as basic reading Rose, Mary B. *Firms, Networks, and Business Values. British and American Cotton Industries since 1750*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, especially 60. See Casson, Mark C. "An Economic Approach to Regional Business Networks." In *Industrial Clusters and Regional Networks in England 1750-1970*, edited by John F. Wilson and Andrew Popp, 19-43. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003. See Grassby, *Business Community*, 82-83, 401-404; Grassby, Richard. *Kinship and Capitalism*; Mathias, "Risk, Credit and Kinship." See Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, 104-109. Regarding partnerships of London merchants, Hancock concludes that "kinship appears to have been less important in this case than shared commercial interests and the idea of spreading risk to multiple shoulders." Häberlein, "Trading Companies."

9 See Häberlein, "Trading Companies." See in detail also Braudel, Fernand. *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century*, vol 2. *The Wheels of Commerce*. Berkely/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992, 433-455. See Denzel, Markus A., and Ulrich Pfister. "Handelsgesellschaft." *Enzyklopädie der Neuzeit* 5 (2007): 97-101. See Kellenbenz, Hermann. "Art. Handelsgesellschaft." *Handwörterbuch zur deutschen Rechtsgeschichte* 1 (1971): 1936-1942. For France and the French business model of the

or rather formed an integral part of, the shift from early forms of capitalism, which had taken root since late medieval times and in the beginning of the Early Modern Period, towards the emergence of a global economic system over the course of the Early Modern Period, which moved increasingly and inexorably towards taking the shape of a free market economy which was furthermore boosted through the growing importance of financial market capitalism.[10]

During the 18th century, at the latest, we can talk about a "world economy in-the-making", as Mary Lindemann put it, or at least we are dealing with the "Atlantic stage of European economic development", in the words of François Crouzet.[11] This meant that by that time many parts of the known world were in certain ways connected to worldwide flows of commodities, transactions and capital, and had become integrated into worldwide logistic chains. The fact that this 'achievement' was, however, only conceivable and was achieved only on the basis of colonialism and colonial exploitation, at the same time points to the highly problematic side of any modernistic narrative and perspective with regard to this development and it also points to the highly ambivalent nature of the epoch of the Early Modern Period in general. Although during the period certain foundations were definitely laid for today's global economic system, this happened on the basis of human exploitation, slavery, bloodshed and the suffering of millions of people, which rules out glorifying this development as an unqualified achievement for mankind.[12] Instead, we have to perceive this development ultimately as a structural transformation taking place during the 18th century and emerging from certain contemporary circumstances that entailed, without a doubt, consequences for later times, which should, however, never be misinterpreted as representing in any ways a "sample book for modernity" ["Musterbuch der Moderne"].[13] For analytical purposes,

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"société", see Kessler, Amalia D. *A Revolution in Commerce: The Parisian Merchant Court and the Rise of Commercial Society in Eighteenth-Century France.* New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2007, 141-187. For the family firm as a business model, see Adams, Julia. *The Family State: Ruling Families and Merchant Capitalism in Early Modern Europe*. Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 2005. See Prior, Ann, and Maurice Kirby. "The Society of Friends and the Family Firm." *Business History* 35 (1993): 66-85. For France see Bamford, Paul Walden. *Privilege and Profit. A Business Family in Eighteenth-Century France*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988.

10 See Häberlein, "Trading Companies," 1. See Grassby, *Business Community*, 401. See also Morgan, Kenneth. "Sugar Refining in Bristol." In *From Family Firms to Corporate Capitalism. Essays in Business and Industrial History in Honour of Peter Mathias*, edited by Kristine Bruland and Patrick K. O'Brien, 138-169. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998. Reinert/Fredona. "Merchants and the Origins of Capitalism." See also Jacob/Secretan. "Introduction," 1-16.

11 Lindemann, "Doing Business in 18th century Hamburg," 163. Crouzet, "Economic Change," 192. See also Subrahmanyam, *Merchant Networks*, xiii.

12 See Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*, 35-73, here 59. See Beckert, Sven, and Seth Rockman. "Introduction. Slavery's Capitalism." In *Slavery's Capitalism. A New History of American Economic Development*, edited by Sven Beckert and Seth Rockman, 1-28. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016. See Freist, "Expansion, space and people," 268-276. Contrary to Reinert/Fredona. "Merchants and the Origins of Capitalism." See also the 1619 project by the *New York Times Magazine*, https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/ 14/magazine/1619-america-slavery.html, accessed November 23, 2019.

13 The term "Musterbuch der Moderne" was first coined by Schulze, Winfried. "Von den großen Anfängen des neuen Welttheaters. Entwicklung, neuere Ansätze und Aufgaben der Frühneuzeitfor-

the economic global developments of the time should primarily be explained in their own right, which leads us back to the issue of the changes in mercantile business organisation during that time. In the end, the merchants of the time did not primarily aim at creating a capitalistic order for world economy with their actions.[14] But speaking of the day-to-day business of these merchants, their central mission and direct objective was to find appropriate means for coping with the challenges of their times and with the economic situation that they were living in and were involved in, but which they simultaneously also shaped and created through their actions.[15]

For the merchants of the time, therefore, the *world economy in-the-making* concretely and primarily meant two things: on the one hand, it meant access and an increased availability of a wide range of goods from all over the world. It meant wide trading opportunities, contact opportunities and the possibility of logistic participation in many parts of the world. It meant high increases in both supply and demand because of course through the increased availability of goods worldwide also the demand for these products increased in the home markets, which led to high profit margins.[16] In sum, the events and changes in circumstances of the world market led to the prospect of economic prosperity for the merchants of the time. On the other hand, and as the negative side to it, at the same time the merchants were also confronted with great challenges due to the world situation. These were a greater complexity of the market and a growing anonymisation of the market, and of course they also suffered from trade barriers or wars. All of these factors led to increased uncertainties, lower predictability and therefore higher risks for the merchants.[17]

In order to react and deal appropriately with both these circumstances and therefore to cope with the conditions of the time, the merchants subsequently necessarily needed to restructure their business practices and their ways of doing business in certain ways to adapt to the new challenges. These adjustment processes included for instance the

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schung." *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 44 (1993): 3-18, here 9; and again in Schulze, Winfried. "Einladung in die Frühe Neuzeit." In *Frühe Neuzeit,* edited by Anette Völker-Rasor, 9-11. Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2000, here 10. The concept of the "Musterbuch der Moderne" implies that our modern world, or more generally "Modernity", has its origins in the developments of the Early Modern Period.

14 The exception to this is perhaps political writers such as Adam Smith, who, however, primarily tried to find answers to contemporary questions and challenges.

15 As David Hancock argued with regard to the morality of the merchants under investigation in his book, we "cannot justify their participation in the slave trade; and it would be repulsive to admire someone who acted as they did in our century – an age that is more self-conscious about race and social and economic freedom. We can, however, recognize that these merchants' failure to comprehend the immorality of slavery stems from the same habits of minds that led to their achievements elsewhere." Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, 17. The merchant Luetkens was not involved in the slave trade although by trading in French sugar (coming from the colonies) he nevertheless supported the underlying colonial system with his actions. See already Stein, Robert Louis. *The French Sugar Business in the Eighteenth Century.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988.

16 See Kriedtke, Peter. "Vom Großhändler zum Detaillisten. Der Handel mit "Kolonialwaren" im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert." *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 35, no. 1 (1994): 11-36, here 19-20. See Weber, *Deutsche Kaufleute*, 14, 21. See Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*, 74-150.

17 See Ditz, "Formative Ventures," 61. See Weber, *Deutsche Kaufleute*, 304. See Schulte-Beerbühl, *German Merchants*, 107-108.

rise of commission trade, which grew into a major field of commercial activity in the 18th century, because it enabled the merchants to deal with the increased range of goods available, about which we have already heard in the chapter on commission trade. These processes also included the expansion and safeguarding of the mercantile communication infrastructure, which meant, accompanied by expansions in the postal services, an increase or even a peak in the immense and pressing demand for merchants to keep regular correspondences.[18] Last but not least and in a way also the major precondition for the two other adjustments, it necessarily entailed a restructuring of the operational organisational structure of mercantile business or rather an enhancement of certain already existing practices and structures in the operational business of the merchants for the purpose of adapting to the world situation. This should in the end leverage the success of the private firm to becoming one of the most predominant business models of the time, which is the topic of this chapter. This restructuring or adaption process in the organisational structure of mercantile business in the end related to three segments of mercantile operating procedures, which will all be further discussed in this chapter because they were also negotiated in the Luetkens letters, providing the starting point for the thick contextualisation in this chapter.

1) As part or rather as the precondition of the triumph of commission trade, the role and the importance of the commission agent or the factor as a central operating hub and coordinating point of long-distance trade was further enhanced and appreciated in value. No longer were the commission agents or factors only branch offices or outlets of the parent company, but they rather acted as subsidiary companies of the parent companies or clients, with their own powers of disposition coming with their own areas of responsibility, such as for instance being responsible for the re-export of goods from their location to the homeland. During the 18th century at the latest, therefore, the net of commission agents and factors worldwide became the actual nerve centre of international trade because these networks allowed the merchants to cope and to deal with the spaciousness and vastness of the global trading floor.[19]

The agent and factor system kept the global economy running and also manageable. Whereas in previous centuries the respective factors or agents had most often originated from the merchant's own family or kin, in the 18th century what counted most for the qualification was knowledge, personal skills and reputation. This included knowledge about local trading peculiarities but first and foremost about how the respective ports were integrated into the global logistic chains and commodity flows, what range of goods were available on site and how to gain access to them. The family background or family affiliation became less important and receded into the background,

18 Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*, 170. Regarding the developments in the postal services, see Behringer, *Zeichen des Merkur*. See also Behringer, Wolfgang. "Communications Revolutions: A Historiographical Concept." *German History* 24, no. 3 (2006): 333-374. See O'Neill, *The Opened Letter*, 19-46. See Whyman, *Pen and the People*, 46-74.

19 On the role and importance of commission trade and commission agents and the difference between commission agents and merchant factors, see Häberlein, "Trading Companies." See also Davies, "Commission System," 89-107. See Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*, 153-176. See Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, 81. See Henninger, *Bethmann*, 102-134.

while the major selection criteria for choosing a factor or commission agent or even a business partner were now formed by individual qualification and professional capability, which again led to the fact that business partners or employees were now also recruited from a wider circle of acquaintances.[20] That is, for the purpose of finding suitable commission agents, business partners, associates or employees for their business, merchant houses now frequently also drew on merchants from other families, or chose merchants who earned their reputation merely by independent activities, or they even drew on foreign merchant houses already well-established and renowned in the respective cities. The system of recruitment thus became more open and flexible than it had been in previous centuries. However, as a side effect, which can be seen as either a negative or positive development depending on one's perspective. Thus, it can either be seen as detrimental to stability in comparison to the previous centuries or as an advantageous development with regard to expansion of the contemporary employment market and with regard to creating the basis for a freer market. The fundamental basic constant and prerequisite of Early Modern trade, namely mutual trust between trading partners, was now, however, placed on a new foundation. The basic trust that supposedly prevailed among family members and that had represented the foundation for the family firm, would now, in the case of primarily inter-professional cooperation, evolve and yield to a form a trust that was not predetermined or presupposed, but that first needed to be established, earned and then also maintained.[21] The latter, in turn, led to a more individually based evaluation system for employment that paved the way into a capitalistic economic system.[22] Speaking for the merchants of the time, however, the most crucial consequence of this development was that such a form of a personal evaluation system made it indispensable to communicate and to mutually assure each other about personal qualities, and especially to agree on mutual expectations, responsibilities and obligations. This process often took place in letters, about which the analytical part of this chapter will bear a significant testimony.[23] As Francesca Trivellato put it, quoting a contemporary source, the factor as an important figure in the international trade of the time was in fact actually "created by Merchant letters".[24]

2) A second important pillar of business organisation of the 18th century that had a decisive share in the *world economy in-the-making* related to the segment of the commercial staff employed in merchant houses, not least because some of the employees later

20 See Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, 104-109. See Häberlein, "Trading Companies." From a contemporary perspective see "Commissionär" and "Commissions=Handlung." *Oekonomische Encyklopädie*, vol. 8, 251 and 253.

21 See Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, 106-107. See Grassby, *Business Community*, 401-404. See Häberlein, "Trading Companies."

22 See Rose, *Firms, Networks, and Business Values*. See Casson, "An Economic Approach."

23 "[B]usiness correspondence offers the best evidence of how trust in mercantile affairs was the result of a dynamic process of interaction as well as shared discursive practices." Trivellato, "A Republic of Merchants," 145.

24 Malynes, Gerard. *Consuetudo, vel, Lex Mercatoria, or, The Ancient Law-Merchant.* London: Adam Islip, 1622, 111. See Trivellato, "Merchants' letters," 80. See also Muldrew, *Economy of Obligation*.

were promoted to merchant factors if they had proved themselves capable of responsibility. Merchant clerks had the task of overseeing or keeping the merchant books, of copying outgoing letters, or in some cases they were even assigned to writing letters in the name of the merchant houses, or they were for instance also involved in customer support. Last but not least, they were responsible for keeping order in the merchant house.[25] Thus, they were important for the merchant house because their work contributed to the formalisation of trading processes and execution in the merchant house, which enabled the merchants to ensure a certain controllability and verifiability. This increased predictability for their businesses during an age in which such predictabilities were threatened with getting lost. In this respect again, the business organisation of the 18th century built upon business structures that were already existent during the previous centuries. Already in the centuries before, merchants clerks played an important role in the operational procedures of merchant houses. However, due to the growing challenges of the globalisation of trade, leading to a steadily growing demand for formalisation, even in this business segment the merchants were bound to reconsider their selection process for merchant clerks and widening their search radius for suitable *subjects*. The latter was, as we have already learned from the Seewaldt episode, a typical contemporary term used for merchant staff or business partners. Once again personal qualification, which fostered a good reputation, became the major selection criterion for being appointed the merchant clerk in a merchant house. Once again, the merchants of the time were on the lookout in all directions when searching for suitable employees.[26]

3) The most important restructuring and transformation in business organisation during the 18th century, however, were the changes happening with regard to the basic nature of the structure of the merchant houses in general. This transformation was surely also the catalyst for the two other developments and the root cause for the breakthrough of the private firm as one of the prime business models of the time. During the 18th century it became custom that even the main business partners in joint merchant houses were no longer primarily, solely and exclusively, recruited from the own family circle or kin as it was typical in the centuries before. Instead, the recruitment practice opened up and strongly supported associations and companionships between single independent merchants.[27] Due to this custom, the private firm rose immensely in popularity and became the most preferred business model of the age. As in the case of the other two developments, the merchant partnership was also a practice that had already been known in the centuries before, but now it became the most popular business form because it promised and provided the most compelling answers to the challenges of the

25 See Ruppert, "Bürgerlicher Wandel," 66. See in detail Deges, "Zusammenfassende Übersicht," XV-LXV. See "Factor." *Oekonomische Encyklopädie*, vol. 12, 21-22. See Häberlein, "Trading Companies."

26 See Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, 11, 124-125. See Davis, *English Shipping Industry*, 81.

27 See Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, 106-107. See Denzel/Pfister. "Handelsgesellschaft," 97-101. See Kellenbenz, "Handelsgesellschaft," 1936-1942. See in particular also "Compagnie=Handlung." *Oekonomische Encyklopädie*, vol. 8, 276-279. See as an introduction to the foundations of business organisation of earlier centuries e.g. Greif, *Path to the Modern Economy*.

time.[28] Naturally, the private firm still also allowed the possibility that merchants from the same family opened up a firm together. The reasons for the transformations in business organisation are to be found in the challenges and changes in the contemporary trading circumstances, forcing the merchants to react accordingly and find certain ways for coping with the new global situation. The advantages and benefits of establishing joint companies between independent merchants as a promising attempt to deal adequately with the new challenges, is aptly summarised in an encyclopaedia entry from the time, from the famous *Kruenitz encyclopaedia*. Its content also reveals to us that the contemporaries themselves were already aware of this structural change in business organisation and implementation. The entry in the *Kruenitz encyclopaedia* reads as follows:

> "A joint partner company, trading company, trade association, [...] ["Compagnie=Handlung , Gesellschafts=Handlung, Association, Zusammengesellung"] is a private firm of several, mostly two or three, rarely more, affiliated merchants, who share their cash funds as well as their goods, debts or receivables, in equal or unequal terms, in order to conduct their business more successfully with joint forces, joint diligence and joint capital ["mit vereinigten Kräften, Fleiß und Capital"] at home and abroad, and to enhance their mutual benefits. Joint partner companies [private partnership firms] are of great benefit for each individual but also for the common good. Great enterprises require great capital, lots of effort and a good overview, which are conditions that a single person can rarely meet alone. Through founding a company of 2 or 3 persons, however, who share their knowledge and their capital so that the mutual benefit is fostered, everyone profits; and these persons are then enabled to conduct businesses with joint forces that a single person alone would not be able to conduct. Another advantage is that two persons, who each look at a certain matter from their own perspective, would then take a decision together that is much more deliberate than if a single person alone had taken it. In particular, joint partner companies have the advantage that different kinds of persons also can profit from these companies in different kinds of ways. Dexterity and wealth only rarely come together in one single person ["Geschicklichkeit und Reichthum finden sich selten bey einander"]. Therefore, when two persons join together in a company, one of them having skills, the other one having wealth, they will mutually benefit from each other. The money of the latter will be complemented by the sharp mind and the advice ["Verstand und die Rathschläge"] of the former [...] as if both qualities had come together in a single person. Notwithstanding all these advantages of a private firm, there also arise difficulties and problems. As long as a merchant trades alone and only in his own name, one does not have to justify or give an account to anybody other than oneself and freedom is vital for life. Such freedom is not always excluded from joint partner companies, which is why it is crucial that the partners in a joint company have corresponding humours ["Uebereinstimmung der Gemüther"]."[29]

28 See ibid.

29 "Compagnie=Handlung." *Oekonomische Encyklopädie*, edited by Johann Georg Krünitz. 242 volumes. Berlin, 1773-1858, vol. 8, 276-279.

The reason therefore why a joint partner company, a private partnership firm, was regarded a beneficial business model of economic value in view of the *Kruenitz encyclopaedia* was that such a business form helped and encouraged the merchants of the time to join forces with regard to *manpower, knowledge*, *competence* and *capital*, which then enabled them to react appropriately to the growing challenges in business and trade. In current historical research we find that this assessment is still deemed valid up until today to describe the contemporary trading situation and organisational structure. In fact, the research opinion today directly mirrors the assessment given in the *Kruenitz encyclopaedia*. In addition to the assessment, however, research today furthermore allows us to further delineate and substantiate the concrete business measures and procedures that went along with these basic characteristics of a joint partner company and private firm. It helps us to further specify the benefits of this business model for the concrete business practices of 18th-century wholesale merchants.

With regard to sharing *manpower*, the major benefit of a joint partner company was that this business form provided single merchants with the opportunity to expand their international clientele and customer base through the merger, exceeding their individual catchment area, but also exceeding the catchment area of their mercantile family networks. This formed the basis for being able to participate in international networks even if one was not born into a long-standing and well-established merchant family. Basically, through this business model individual merchants were able to establish their own businesses and to stand on their own feet merely on the basis of their own skills and efforts and without needing the right family background, just by help of bonding with other skilled individual merchants. Family networks of course still played an important role in the networking and especially during the establishing process of these merchants, as we have already heard in the chapter on the shipping industry, but it was no longer a prerequisite for doing business.[30]

A prime example in this regard was the merchant Nicolaus Gottlieb Luetkens, whose father was a priest and who was therefore born into a clerical family but still managed to establish himself as a wholesale merchant in the world of trade of the 18th century. He achieved this on the basis of his own abilities, his enterprises and his own networking, by which he earned a good reputation on his own. This, in turn, paved the way into finding and establishing a partnership with another merchant, through which he gained access to an even wider network representing a solid ground for a career as a wholesale merchant. Notwithstanding this, as we have already learned, both of Luetkens' uncles, who were merchants, also had a decisive share in promoting his career. So family still played an important role in a merchant's career. However, the reason that Luetkens represented a good catch for other merchants for establishing a joint partner company together during his establishment phase was not primarily due to the fact that he originated from the Luetkens family, but it was based on his own reputation as an individual, who had made a name for himself through his successful business enterprises and through demonstrating great skills and competences. Consequently, his unique selling point was his individual professional qualifications and his

30 See Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, 106-107. See Rose, *Firms, Networks, and Business Values*; see Casson, "An Economic Approach."

network. This marks the decisive difference between the character of the family firm and of the private firm in terms of business organisation and structure. In the end, within the private business sector, the role of his uncles was not only to testify to a long family tradition in trade, which would essentially serve as a reassurance of Luetkens' qualification for trade. Rather, in a way they themselves only represented individual merchants from their own firms in the field of trade doing their businesses and pursuing their own interest, in the course of which they were also supporting the enterprises of their nephew. At the same time they also drew on Nicolaus Gottlieb's skills and networks for conducting their own enterprises. The latter, in turn, directly leads us to the second point with regard to the benefits of the private firm, the benefits of joining forces with regard to knowledge and competences.

In terms of *sharing knowledge and of joining competences*, the major advantage of the business model of the private firm as a joint partner company was that it offered the opportunity of a very versatile business portfolio for the firm, by which the merchants were able to react to the growing range of goods and products available during the 18th century.[31] Thus, when two or more merchants joined together in a firm, they not only brought together their networks, but of course they also combined their competences in different strands of business in which they were skilled. Thus, the merchants were able to improve and expand the reach of their respective businesses through their association and affiliation by covering and combining different trading sectors in their firm at the same time. This sharing of competences also included and held ready the opportunity to complement each other in terms of different fields of expertise and work experience, as was also emphasised in the *Kruenitz encyclopaedia*.

While one partner brought in his wealth, the other partner brought in important skills, zeal and diligence, and by that the business partners further enhanced their productivity. In practice for instance that could mean that one partner was responsible for the financial backing and assets and for overseeing the bookkeeping of the firm, while the other partner was responsible for the customer contact.[32] This opportunity provided the merchants with the necessary flexibility that was needed to appropriately align their business to the growing challenges of international trade during the age. This growing importance of a division of labour within the merchant firm also included and increased the importance of the employees in the merchant firm and the factors of the merchant firm, who would themselves also be responsible for taking on and covering certain work areas crucial for the smooth functioning of the business. This shows the

31 See the chapter on commission trade. Regarding the benefits of a broad product portfolio as a commission agent, see Weber, *Deutsche Kaufleute*, 249. See also Doerflinger, "Commercial Specialization."

32 As a good comparative and a typical example of the time, such a form of business organisation can be found as prevailing for the firm of *Bethmann & Imbert* and *Schröder & Schyler*. See Weber, *Deutsche Kaufleute*, 190-191. See Henninger, *Bethmann*, 112-128. See also, with regard to the "Bright-Meyler partnerships", Morgan, *Bright-Meyler papers*, "Introduction," 38-43. See also as a good comparative example Butel, "La maison Schröder et Schyler."

great intersection and dependency between the changes taking place in the merchant firm itself and the changes in employment practice of factors and merchant staff.[33]

The third and last benefit of joint partner companies for the merchants of the time, as was emphasised in the *Kruenitz encyclopaedia*, namely joining forces with regard to capital, ultimately relates to the previous point. In terms of concrete measures and procedures, sharing capital meant that the single merchants entering into a partnership did not only share contacts and networks, competences and their labour force, but each of the merchants also brought in a certain capital stock to the shared capital stock of the newly established merchant house. The amount of the respective provision differed and conformed with the possibilities that each merchant had. That meant that different merchants simply brought in different amounts of capital. This practice was accepted by the merchants of the time because it came with the benefit and condition that the merchant with the lower contribution of capital at the same time committed himself to compensating for this misbalance through other skills, effort and competences. As the *Kruenitz encyclopaedia* pointed out, these could include for instance showing a lot of diligence e.g. with regard to taking over the laborious work of travelling and visiting other merchant houses. The socius with lesser capital often also accepted an unequal treatment in terms of the income, if not agreed otherwise. For young merchants, this practice represented a great opportunity to build up a career as a merchant because it enabled them to enter into partnerships even though their financial resources were still limited. But through the merger, the overall capital stock that they drew on would rise to such an amount that they could then engage in manifold larger businesses.[34] But also speaking of the wholesale merchants of the time in general, the sharing of capital, or, in more colloquial terms, the pooling of money was a widespread, conducive practice because it provided them with the opportunity of quickly accumulating capital necessary for their trade without the need for family savings or reserves. At the same, by means of this practice, they automatically split risks with regard to potential financial losses because if such losses occurred they were distributed between several people. The benefit of distributing the risks was in the end, however, a factor that was not limited to the aspect of capital but that equally applied for other measures and procedures as well.[35] The merchant partnership was thus an appropriate tool for reacting and coping with the growing challenges and complexity of the *world economy in-the-making* because it ultimately accommodated the one pivotal factor that remained constant during the whole transformation process. This constant factor was that in the end all merchants of the time had to cope with the same challenges, faced the same fate, and ultimately had the same goal: to remain capable of acting and trading during challenging times. Joining forces was therefore in a way not only a necessary step, but it was a logical step in view of the merchants' situation. This fact represented in my opinion the overall

33 See also "Compagnon, Handelscompagnon, Handelsgesellschafter, L. Socius, Fr. Associeé." *Oekonomische Encyklopädie*, vol. 8, 280; "Commissions=Handlung." *Oekonomische Encyklopädie*, vol. 8, 253.

34 See Weber, *Deutsche Kaufleute*, 181-182. See Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, 106-107, 125, 241 ("Creating an Inital Stake"). See Häberlein, "Trading Companies."

35 See Grassby, *Business Community*, 82, 401-404. See Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, 106. See Haggerty, *Merely for Money*, 34-65. See Mathias, "Risk, Credit and Kinship."

main reason why the private firm and the joint partner company grew immensely in significance and popularity during the 18th century.

In sum, there was a reason why the private firm and the merchant partnership became the major business model of the 18th century, why the factor system with individual commission agents became the nerve centre of wholesale trade, and why the rules and customs of recruitment practices for merchant personal, factors, agents and business partners became more liberal and oriented towards personal qualifications outweighing family reputation: this reason was that all these processes offered the merchants of the time appropriate means, the necessary operational flexibility, manageable risk management, and a certain predictability for their trading activities that they needed to stay capable of acting in the hazardous field of trade in the 18th century. This in the end led to a more individualistic and therefore, if you will, a capitalistic alignment of trade operations, but more important was, in terms of the contemporary significance of these developments, that these processes created the general basis for maintaining and ensuring the continuation of trade activities during an age that was in a state of upheaval.

The reason why all of this matters for this chapter is that the merchant Luetkens made use of all three options to promote his establishment phase. At the end of 1745, when returning to Hamburg, he had an employee, a merchant clerk, who became his agent and factor in France, and he entered into a joint partner company with another merchant in Hamburg. Later he would also have further clerks in his Hamburg merchant house. The path leading him to this achievement, however, was not as easy and straightforward as we might initially expect because, although the merchants of the time definitely shared similar interests and were most often interested in cooperating, these interests still had to be matched and coordinated and the economic viability and feasibility of the respective cooperation and the joined enterprises had to be assessed before a partnership was established. The merchants therefore first had to find common ground. For this purpose, they had to enter into negotiations with each other, for which purpose they wrote letters. These letters and the negotiations that took place on the basis of these letters stand at the core of this chapter.

## 6.2 Corresponding Humours

The main object of negotiation within the letter correspondences in the Luetkens archive regarding the founding of a merchant house between the merchants participating in the letter episode was represented by an aspect that also played a crucial role in the assessments in the *Kruenitz encyclopaedia*. In their letter correspondences dealing with potential partnerships or suitable employees, the merchants primarily wrote and communicated about and also assessed each other's personal and business qualities, evaluated their personalities and professional competences and they negotiated about the question whether or not the partners showed the necessary compatibility of skills and personality which was indispensable for the management of a business house. It becomes apparent that the merchants were therefore not only aware of the transformations taking place in business culture, but that they were also aware of the changes that

these transformation processes entailed for the qualification criteria, the demands and profiles, and the qualities and skills that a merchant had to possess. Looking at the entry in the *Kruenitz encyclopaedia* this becomes clear through the strong emphasis on the importance of certain character traits such as diligence. In particular, however, the importance of the *personal compatibility* of the future business partners becomes clear in the very last paragraph.

Here the *Kruenitz encyclopaedia* emphasises the crucial importance of "corresponding humours", or *resembling humours* (in German called "humores, "humeurs" or "Gemüther", and in French "humeur") as a prerequisite and basis for the functioning of a merchant partnership.[36] In the contemporary sense of the word, this *humeur* of a person represented not merely a person's mental state but rather their personality, particular character traits and not least their temper and temperament.[37] The latter was in the 18th century still associated with the contemporary *Humoral Theory* or *Humorism* dividing a person's temperament into different categories: phlegmatic, choleric, sanguine and melancholic. This idea was based on the *Theory of the Four Humours* – blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile – which dates back to and had prevailed since Antiquity. It was highly influential during the Middle Ages and during the first half of the Early Modern Period, but it actually also remained a shaping influence on medical practice and theory until well into the 19th century.[38] In the 18th century, however, the original meaning of the word *humores,* originally denominating and referring to the bodily fluids had already undergone a transformation and diversification and receded more and more into the background, with the term shifting towards being used in a more general sense in common parlance.[39] That is, the term *humours, humores* or *humeurs* had turned into a more commonplace word and chiffre and was now used as an overall category relating to a person's personality and particularly his or her virtues.

36 See also Buchnea, Emily. "Strategies for longevity: the success and failings of merchant partnerships in the Liverpool-New York trading community, 1763-1833." *Economic History Society Working Papers*, Issue 12026 (2013): no page numbers.

37 "Die Gleichheit der Gemüther. Personen von einerley Wesen und Natur, welche einander nicht natürlich unterworfen sind, befinden sich in einer äußern Gleichheit." "Gleichheit." *Oekonomische Encyklopädie*, edited by Johann Georg Krünitz. 242 volumes. Berlin, 1773-1858, vol. 19, 49.

38 For a concise overview regarding *Humoral Theory* and its concepts during the 18th century (and generally a brilliant book), see Raapke, Annika. *»Dieses verfluchte Land«. Europäische Körper in Brieferzählungen aus der Karibik, 1744-1826*. Bielefeld: transcript, 2019, 72-73. See also Stolberg, Michael. *Homo Patiens. Krankheits- und Körpererfahrung in der Frühen Neuzeit*. Cologne/Weimar/Vienna: Böhlau, 2003, 117. See Nutton, Vivian. "Humoralism." In *Companion Encyclopedia of the History of Medicine*, edited by William F. Bynum, Roy Porter, vol. 1, 281-291. London: Routledge, 1993. Regarding medical theory, see also, for instance, Huppmann, Gernot. "Anatomie eines Bestseller. Johann Unzers Wochenschrift „Der Arzt" (1759–1764) – ein nachgereichter Rezensionsessay." *Würzburger medizinhistorische Mitteilungen 23* (2004): 539-555.

39 On humours, "humeurs", "humores" or "Gemüther" during the 18th century, see Van Dülmen, Richard. *Kultur und Alltag in der Frühen Neuzeit. Erster Band. Das Haus und seine Menschen 16.-18. Jahrhundert*. Munich: C.H. Beck, 2005, 163.

Yet still we can also find references to, for instance, *melancholic moods* in the Luetkens correspondence, often expressing mutual esteem.[40]

In the letters under investigation in the episode, however, the term *humours* was primarily used as an overall category referring to a merchant's professional qualification.[41] In this regard, conforming to and fulfilling a certain catalogue of virtues as a merchant, for instance being diligent, had already been a crucial selection criterion for merchants and merchant partnerships in the previous centuries.[42] However, now that family lineage was no longer regarded as the only kind of assurance of such virtues and was no longer the most crucial asset a merchant had to yield, the importance of a good character, of personal integrity in particular, and the demand for constantly demonstrating and proving this good character in person and in business gained immensely in significance. In the 18th century, therefore, a good 'humeur', referring most generally to having a good personality, literally became one of the most important, if not the major precondition for a successful merchant partnership, but also for a functioning company structure in general, including the staff.[43] As merchant writer Defoe put it in 1726, it was indispensable for a good merchant house that the business partners in a partnership acted "like two oxen yoked together".[44] Similar statements can be found in several other merchant and letter-writing manuals.[45] Consequently, the condition of *corresponding humours*, sometimes in German also referred to as "gleiche Art", was now acknowledged and served as a kind of new foundation for merchant collaboration.[46]

It is therefore not surprising but rather typical for the age that the topos of *corresponding humours* also resurfaces again and again in the letters of Luetkens and his correspondents. As will become apparent from my analysis, people had a very clear idea about what characterised these corresponding humours and what was necessary to fulfil the condition of resembling, complementary or matching personalities in a joint merchant partnership. Consequently, in the letters the topos of *corresponding*

40 "Schreibe mir doch offt, denn sonsten werde melancolisch." Letter from Bethmann, Johann Jakob to Luetkens, Nicolaus Gottlieb, July 21, 1744, TNA, HCA 30/234. „bin ich gantz melancolisch & kan fast nicht leben auch ist niemand in der Welt der dich mehr kan lieben wie ich." Letter from Bethmann, Johann Jakob to Luetkens, Nicolaus Gottlieb, September 10, 1744, TNA, HCA 30/234. The word "melancolisch", however, never appears in the Luetkens letters with regard to the professional qualifications of a merchant.

41 See letters quoted in the episode. The same fact applies to the usage of the word in contemporary merchant and letter-writing manuals. See Savary, *Der vollkommene Kauff- und Handelsmann* [*Le Parfait Négociant*], 282. See Bohse, *Der allzeitfertige Briefsteller*, 135, 428 ["Gemüther einig", "Gemüther verbunden"]. See Rohr, Julius Bernhard von. *Unterricht von der Kunst der Menschen Gemüther zu erforschen* [...] Leipzig: Johann Christian Martini, 1732, 37.

42 See Ruppert, "Der Bürger als Kaufmann: Erziehung und Lebensformen." See Münch, Paul. *Ordnung, Fleiß und Sparsamkeit. Texte und Dokumente zur Entstehung der bürgerlichen Tugenden*. Munich: DTV, 1984. See Hörmann, *Memorial und Recorda* (1588); Meder, *Büchlein von der Kauffmannsschaft* (1511).

43 See Marperger, *Der allzeitfertige Handels-Correspondent*, 444. See Savary, *Der vollkommene Kauff- und Handelsmann [Le Parfait Négociant]*, 405.

44 Defoe, *Complete English Tradesman*, 262.

45 Ibid., 282. See Bohse,*Der allzeitfertige Briefsteller*, 135, 428. See Rohr, *Kunst der Menschen Gemüther*, 37.

46 Savary, *Der vollkommene Kauff- und Handelsmann [Le Parfait Négociant]*, 282.

*humours* or personalities never featured in isolation, but it always came up in relation to certain other expectations or enquiries into the qualifications of the respective partners, certain abilities or character traits that the respective merchants deemed necessary and crucial for their cooperation and their mutual consent. Expressed in contemporary terms, referring to another typical topos and letter formula, it always occurred with regard to the "concept" of oneself that a merchant presented to another merchant in letters praising his skills and personality or the "good concept", "gutes Concept" in German, that a merchant had about another merchant.[47]

It appears always interconnected with specific interests pursued by the respective letter writers, following the principle and including the question to what end and in what respect the *corresponding humours* would be concretely conducive for the business of the envisaged partnership. The category of "corresponding humours" is therefore most often not a self-explaining fixed category but it was in fact a root category, cipher and discourse marker, under which umbrella manifold competences and character traits were gathered. It furthermore directly links to the category of the subject, in the contemporary sense of the word, describing the social and professional status of a person, or an employment relationship of a person with another person.[48] Analysing both categories in this chapter will therefore directly reveal to us the concrete elements and personal skills that the merchants of the time deemed necessary, appropriate, and suitable for a partnership or employment and therefore suitable for the trade business in the 18th century, and we will thus gain a clear picture of what characterised a suitable merchant *subject* of the 18th century.[49]

The fact that we will encounter and analyse this mercantile requirement profile and the basic features of a mercantile subject of the 18th century on the basis of letter correspondences and as part of negotiation processes points us to the last crucial aspect and observation with regard to this mercantile *subjectivation*, which was that in actual practice, all these features and requirements were still objects of negotiation and therefore variables. That means, that each quality and merit of the persons involved first had to undergo an assessment procedure and even a voting process performed on the basis of letters among the circle of correspondents over a certain period of time before they were accepted as valid and significant. During the course of the letter negotiation, it also emerges that different qualities were weighted differently and that further external factors also had an influence on the respective negotiation processes. Once again it

47 "Ich muß zu meinen beßonderen Vergnügen wahrnehmen was für ein gutes Concept E.E. in dero Hierßein von meiner geringen Perßon sich formiret." Letter from Bethmann, Simon Moritz to Luetkens, Nicolaus Gottlieb, November 25, 1743, TNA, HCA 30/234. Regarding the good concept ["gutes Concept"] as typical letter formulae, see Hunold, *Die Allerneueste Art Höflich und Galant zu Schreiben*, 138. See in this regard the letters written by Simon Moritz Bethmann in the first episode of this chapter.

48 See "Subject [...] *Subjectum*." *Oekonomische Encyklopädie*, vol. 177, 652. See "Subject." *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob und Wilhelm Grimm*. vol. 20, 813. For a definition of subject and subjectivation in today's practice theory, see Alkemeyer/Freist/Budde. "Einleitung" (in *Selbst-Bildungen*), 9-32.

49 Interestingly in this regard, the merchant and letter-writing manuals of the time in fact also linked their definition of "subject" with the reference to good humours. See Bohse, *Sendschreiben*, 307 ["capables Subject"]. See Marperger, *Der allzeitfertige Handels-Correspondent*, 444.

becomes clear that the features that accounted for a merchant's capability were not predetermined or fixed categories but that each of these features was actually individually negotiated, assessed and evaluated against the backdrop of the specific situation prevailing for the persons involved. The merchants carefully considered if it was the right time for each of the partners to enter into a partnership, in view of their career plans and their current social status. They considered if it was the right time to establish a merchant house at a particular location, in view of the economic situation prevailing at this spot. And they considered how and when their respective individual qualities could be best matched and utilized to promote their own businesses and careers. The negotiation process was therefore often situation-dependent, which leads us to the fact that analysing these negotiations and situations provides us with an even clearer picture of what was required from a young wholesale merchant building up his career in wholesale trade. The latter fact was for a very simple reason: in the end, all the qualities that passed the test of such a negotiation process and were accepted among the correspondents as appropriate and accurate qualifications of a merchant can be demonstrated to be indispensable pillars of the merchant subject of the 18th century.

As regards the external factors having an influence on the establishing of a joint partner company between merchants, these factors mainly relate to the formal provisions that such a private partnership firm had to meet. In order to start a joint business, the merchants not only had to find common ground on a personal level, they also had to comply with certain structural conditions as a prerequisite for their business. These included for instance that the foundation of a firm did not happen in a legal vacuum, but that the merchants had to meet certain legal requirements with regard to the envisaged location and country of their planned merchant house, but also relating to the question with whom they planned to join forces. In the chapters on commission trade and the shipping industry we have already heard about the particular requirements that, for instance, mixed national merchant houses had to fulfil in order to be lawfully protected.[50] At the same time such mixed merchant houses enjoyed legal privileges that promoted their trading activities.[51] Similar legal requirements also had to be met when two merchant of the same origin or home country joined together in foreign lands, for instance, when merchants from Hamburg planned to establish themselves abroad. In England for instance the prerequisite and requirement for settling down and establishing a merchant house as a foreign merchant was naturalization, which meant becoming a citizen of England. Only "naturalization originally awarded the newcomer the full rights of a 'natural-born subject' and therefore complete and direct access to British trade."[52] France, however, allowed foreign merchants to establish their business without

50 See in detail also chapter 5. See also Weber, *Deutsche Kaufleute*, 190. See Weber, "The Atlantic Coast of German Trade."

51 See the respective chapters in this book. See Weber, *Deutsche Kaufleute*, 159-165; see Wurm, *Neutralität*, 11- 21; see also Stanziani, *Rules of Exchange*, 38-58; see Huhn, *Handelsverträge*, 34.

52 Schulte Beerbühl, *German Merchants*, 15. On *Denization* as a "limited form of subjecthood that [...] restricted business activities" in England, see ibid. See in general Schulte Beerbühl, *German Merchants*, 15-24. See also Newman, *Anglo-Hamburg Trade*, here particularly 149-159, but also 7-11. Regarding the legal framework of the navigation acts, see Morgan, "British Empire"; Andrews, "Acts of Trade"; Pincus, "Rethinking Mercantilism."

naturalization, and the foreign merchants established there were even exempted from paying customs.[53] Formal provisions for establishing a private partnership company also prevailed in terms of contractual laws and regulations. One was, for instance, not allowed to enter into a partnership with another merchant while one was still in an already existing, ongoing employment relationship. The merchants had to be unattached and not employed elsewhere for the time being, which was a fact that becomes highly relevant in the first episode of this chapter.[54] Last but not least, a very important provision, which was essentially self-explanatory, was that the merchants entering into a partnership also had to prove they had sufficient financial capital for their joint undertaking, that is, that their promises during the negotiations did not lack substance. The same also applied for the promises that merchant clerks, agents and factors made during their negotiations and application process.[55]

With regard to all these important external factors having a concrete bearing on the plan to establish a joint merchant house, the families of the merchants often also got their say and eventually became involved in the negotiation processes. They were ascribed their own specific role during the negotiations. The closest trading partners of the respective merchants also played a role. Both groups, family members and close trading partners, became particularly important in relation to these formal provisions, as the episodes will show, because they acted as the important supervisory body for the planned merger. The family for instance often made sure and monitored that all negotiations and agreements were conducted in accordance with the contemporary rules and ensured that the future partners adhered to the regulations. Furthermore, both the family and the closest trading partners were often specifically asked by the respective merchants to comment on the planned merger and in the end to also give their formal approval for the opening of a new merchant house. By giving their approval and consent to a joint partnership of a family member or a close business partner, the respective groups of people also approved of introducing and institutionally embedding a new firm and often new merchant families into their own circle of acquaintances. The decisive difference between the family firm and the private firm with regard to the role of the family was that the actual matter being negotiated was a merger of two individual and most often formerly separated independent merchants and not an internal coordination of family matters. Therefore, relating to the founding of a private firm, the family primarily acted and negotiated in these negotiations in the role of consultants and arbitrators. The actual responsibility for the implementation and success of the merger and the success of the new merchant house still primarily lay in the hands of the individual merchants planning to join forces. This fact, had, once again, already become unequivocally clear to us from the entry in the *Kruenitz encyclopaedia*. Therein, it is

53 See Huhn, *Handelsverträge*, 34, 87-88; see Weber, *Deutsche Kaufleute*, 166. See *Kommerz- und Seetraktat*, Art. III, Art. IV, Art. V.

54 See in particular the *rules and conditions* of partnership firms ["Societäten", "Kommanditgesellschaften"] mentioned and listed in Savary, *Der vollkommene Kauff- und Handelsmann* [*Le Parfait Négociant*], 386, 392. See "Of tradesmen entering into partnerships" in Defoe, *Complete English Tradesman*, 258. A detailed partnership contract can be found in Marperger, *Der allzeitfertige Handels-Correspondent*, 412.

55 See ibid. See also "Compagnie=Handlung." *Oekonomische Encyklopädie*, vol. 8, 276-279.

stated as a feature and benefit of a joint company that the risks of doing business were being divided amongst parties. Yet, this entailed that a single merchant subsequently always had to account for his actions and justify his business to his business partner. There was thus both a boon and a bane in the business model of the private partnership firm in that the main liability and the responsibility for the success or failure of the firm pertained solely to the partners. This provided young individual merchants with good opportunities to build their career and business relatively independently from their family background.[56] It allowed them to find and choose their future partner on their own behalf and account, based on their own risk and initiative. At the same time, it shows the immense importance of finding a suitable and trustworthy partner because the career depended on this choice

As a last, important note, before entering into the episodes, I need to emphasise that all the described historical developments did not lead to family firms going extinct. In many cases, we can even observe that merchant houses also took the form of mixed business models. After all, the possibility of founding a private firm was not limited just to merchants coming from different families, but it was of course also possible to join forces and establish a private merchant firm as family members or kin. This was precisely what happened in the case of the Frankfurt Bethmann family, who will play an important role in the first letter episode presented in the following part of this chapter. The Bethmann Bank, which still exists today, was founded in 1748 as a private merchant firm ("Gebrüder Bethmann"), resulting from the takeover of the merchant house of Jakob Adami, the foster father of the Bethmann brothers, by the oldest Bethmann son Johann Philipp Bethmann already in 1746, who merged with his brother Simon Moritz Bethmann in 1748.[57] At the end of 1743, however, so three to four years before the Bethmann brothers took this decision, their plans still looked quite different and actually also included the Hamburg merchant Nicolaus Gottlieb Luetkens. In fact, had the merchant Luetkens been successful in his negotiations with the Bethmann brothers from late 1743 until early 1744, the founding history of this firm would now read completely differently.

The part with the letter episodes and their analyses in this chapter is somewhat longer than the episodes in the other chapters because I will tell two episodes in a row. The reason for this is twofold. First, both episodes are interconnected and relate to each other in a chronological way. Since Luetkens' initial plan for establishing and opening up a merchant house with Simon Moritz Bethmann failed, which is covered in the first episode, the merchant had to find a plan B, which is presented in the second episode analysed.

Together the two episodes demonstrate Luetkens' long path to finding a suitable solution to the question of what institutional foundation he should choose for his business, namely the merchant house he wanted to open, which was one of the most important achievements of his establishment phase. Therefore, in order to tell the whole

56 See Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, 106-107. See Grassby, *Business Community*, 82, 401-403. See Häberlein, "Trading Companies." See "Compagnie=Handlung." *Oekonomische Encyklopädie*, vol. 8, 276-279.

57 See Weber, *Deutsche Kaufleute*, 191. See Henninger, *Bethmann*, 90, 101.

story, we have to take a look at both episodes. Secondly, by analysing the two letter episodes I am also killing two birds with one stone because by including both episodes in one chapter I am able to demonstrate two important steps of a young merchants' establishment phase and the business strategies accompanying it, which are strongly interconnected. These important steps for becoming a respectable wholesale merchant with a firm footing were: 1) finding a business partner for your merchant house and 2) finding a suitable merchant clerk, employee, agent and factor, for your business. Both episodes are only understandable when analysed in conjunction with each other. I will also embed my explanations about the letter style and language register of the letters analysed in this chapter – namely, that of showing a *gallant language register of flattery*, in German "Aufwartung" – directly into my analysis because it helps to structure the episodes and to explain the dynamics of the negotiations taking place in the interrelated episodes.[58]

So, after the above thick contextualisation of the personal, structural and formal conditions of a merger between two merchants to establish a joint partner company and to open up a merchant house together, I will continue my thick description also in the analytical parts of this chapter. The insights into the three practical principles of persuasion applied in letter practice that these episodes will reveal to us, in conjunction or rather as the consequence of the textual and material practices constituting these principles, will also be demonstrated on the basis of and derived directly from the material events and the letter negotiations happening in the course of the episodes. These principles are the practical principle of meeting as equals and the practical principle of keeping a low profile in the first episode, which functioned as a contrasting pair within negotiation practice, whereby only the latter principle was crowned with success in the episode. The reasons for the latter fact will be given in my analysis. The practical principle of persuasion applied in the second episode is the principle of insider dealings, which primarily rested on the material letter practice of deliberately inserting single, separate sheets of letter pages, extra pages entailing important but negotiable letter content, into the original letter. The addressee could then either keep these letter pages and continue to use them for certain purposes or he could equally simply destroy them. The latter would mean that the recipient simply removed the extra page from the letter or even burned it, as was typical. Removing it, in turn, meant that the presented idea on this extra sheet of paper literally disappeared into thin air.

This practice shows strong resemblances to the practice of inserting unsealed letters into your letter packets, as presented in the chapter regarding Luetkens' shipping industry. The extra sheet of paper in the episode contained the offer to send a merchant clerk to France. Another crucial practice, which will reveal itself as a significant

58 Regarding the courtly language of gallantry and courtesy, apart from Rose, *Conduite und Text*, see also Cohen, Michèle. "'Manners' Make the Man: Politeness, Chivalry, and the Construction of Masculinity, 1750–1830." *Journal of British Studies* 44, no. 2 (2005): 312-329, here 319-328. Contemporary examples of gallant letters, of the "galante stylo", as comparative examples can be found in the letter-writing manuals by Neukirch, *Anweisung zu teutschen Briefen*, 209-268. Weise, *Curiöse Gedancken*, 292, 341. See also Rost, Leonhard. *Allerneueste Art Höffliche und manierliche Teutsche Briefe zu schrei*ben [...] Nürnberg: Johann Albrecht, 1736.

asset for merchants in the second episode, is a practice that in the proper sense of the word was contradictory to usual correspondence practice because it waived one of the main characteristics of correspondence practice, which was that letters were sent by mail. In the episode, however, the letter writers decided to hand over certain precious pieces of paper to a private messenger, Luetkens' future clerk, instead of sending these pieces of paper by post, which represented at the same time an important feature and cornerstone of their insider dealing. Since the respective documents still reached their addressee and due to the fact that this practice was not uncommon during that time – quite on the contrary over a long period of time before the 18th century, messengers or couriers were in fact the main means of transportation for letters in the Early Modern Period – this practice surely also needs to be regarded as an integral part of letter practice, or at least as an offshoot of it, during the 18th century even though the letters were not sent by post.[59]

All these practical principles governing letter-writing and correspondence practices decidedly shaped the course of the letter negotiations and written conversations in the presented episodes, and they held a decisive share in the fact that, in the end, Luetkens found a business partner and a merchant clerk, although in the beginning it all seemed as if this undertaking was anything but certain.

## 6.3 The First Episode: Headhunting

Towards the end of his first long business trip, which had led him to England, the Netherlands, Spain and France, and shortly before his return to Hamburg, during his journey from Bordeaux to Amsterdam in October 1743, Nicolaus Gottlieb Luetkens made a short stop in Rotterdam, where he visited Simon Moritz Bethmann. Bethmann was a son of a renowned Frankfurt merchant family, who was serving as a merchant clerk *ten huyze van John Furly*, an English merchant based in Rotterdam during that time.[60] Being a merchant clerk was a rather typical occupation for a mercantile man at 22 years of age. The meeting went very "pleasantly" ["erquickungsvoll"] – surely not least because of the fact that Simon Moritz's older brother, Johann Jakob Bethmann, renowned merchant, merchant banker and ship-owner in Bordeaux and a close friend of Nicolaus Gottlieb Luetkens for several years already, had arranged the meeting beforehand. In fact, the meeting went so well and harmoniously that Simon Moritz felt the need to send a letter to Nicolaus Gottlieb right after Luetkens' departure, in which he expressed his gratitude to him for his sojourn. In a letter sent to Amsterdam, he wrote that he "remained grateful for the good and pleasant company that his new loyal friend had kept with him" ["treugesinte[n] neue[n] Freund […] dankende für der geleistete liebreiche

59 Regarding postal services in earlier centuries, messenger and courier services, see Körber, Esther-Beate. "Der soziale Ort des Briefs im 16. Jahrhundert." In *Gespräche, Boten, Briefe. Körpergedächtnis und Schriftgedächtnis im Mittelalter*, edited by Horst Wenzel, 244-258. Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1997, here 244, 249. See Wenzel, Horst, ed. *Gespräche, Boten, Briefe. Körpergedächtnis und Schriftgedächtnis im Mittelalter*. Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1997.

60 Regarding the biographical background of both Furly and Simon Moritz Bethmann, see previous explanations in this chapter and in general Henninger, *Bethmann*.

und erquickungsvolle Gesellschaft".]. He furthermore assured him of his "enhanced esteem" ["vergrößerende […] Hochachtung"] and that he would keep their conversations and all the information that they had shared confidential, "in a deep sea of discretion" ["einem tiefen Meere der Verschwiegenheit"].[61]

Arriving in Amsterdam, Luetkens directly replied to this letter, returning the compliments and also expressing his gratitude to Simon Moritz. Returning to Hamburg in mid-November, a second letter from the Bethmann family already awaited him, this time written by his friend Johann Jakob Bethmann. This letter informed Luetkens that Simon Moritz, Johann Jakob's "brother in Rotterdam, […] had written a lot of good things about him [Luetkens] and [Johann Jakob adds that his youngest brother will be Luetkens'] […] faithful friend until death does you apart & that he [Simon Moritz] had thanked him a thousand times for procuring the contact and acquaintance".[62] Johann Jakob added to his report in his letter to Luetkens a short note, which would, however, be of consequence for all the involved parties. Johann Jakob wrote, in a tone already familiar to us from the chapter on commission trade, that the Englishman Furly is nothing but "a scaredy cat and a fool" ["ein Haaßenfuß & Narr"].[63] Not least because of this downright assessment, but surely also as a result of the long personal conversations the two merchants had in Rotterdam, Luetkens "came up with an idea" ["bin auf den Gedancken gekommen"]. This was a typical sentence in the Luetkens correspondence that often marked the beginning of a letter conversation and often also marked the beginning of a joint business venture.

Luetkens' idea, which would be set in motion only a week after, was to entice away or rather poach Simon Moritz from Furly. The goal and result of this enticement, or as we would call it today, of this headhunting, as it was planned, was to establish his own merchant house together with Simon Moritz Bethmann as a business partner in France. This means that Luetkens planned to establish a joint partner company, a "Sosietet" as the merchant himself called it in the typical contemporary wording. The planned location for this trade establishment was Nantes, one of the main hubs of colonial trade and the gateway to the Atlantic market.[64] On the 19th of November 1743 he therefore wrote to Simon Moritz Bethmann that he had already "almost half decided to go to Nantes to establish myself there" and furthermore ventured, "since in case that I put this plan into practice and establish myself ["all da zu etablieren"] in Nantes I would

61 Letter from Bethmann, Simon Moritz to Luetkens, Nicolaus Gottlieb, November, 25, 1743, TNA, HCA 30/234.

62 "Bruder in Rotterdam […] viel gutes von [ihm] geschrieben [habe] und [er versichert zudem, sein jüngerer Bruder sei] […] euer biß in den Todt getreuer Freund & saget mir 1000fachen Dank vor die ihm procuirte Bekantschafft". Bethmann, Johann Jakob to Luetkens, Nicolaus Gottlieb, November 9, 1743, TNA, HCA 30/234.

63 Ibid.

64 Nantes was also the main entrepot of the French slave trade, see Weber, *Deutsche Kaufleute*, 156. Luetkens' own trade, however, rested on the trade in, inter alia, sugar and tobacco, see the chapter on commission trade. He was not involved directly in slave trade. But his trading partners, such as Bethmann, were active parts. Regarding Nantes see also Treutlein, *Schiffahrt*; see Höfer, *Deutsch-französische Handelsbeziehungen*.

like to have a business partner", to "propose [to Simon Moritz] whether E.E. would be interested ["ob Lust"] to associate with me, for circa seven years."[65]

Following this letter, a letter conversation ensued between Nicolaus Gottlieb, Simon Moritz, Johann Jakob, furthermore the oldest brother of the Bethmann family, Johann Philipp, and last but not least with Jakob Adami, the foster father of the Bethmann brothers. This conversation had as its object of negotiation the feasibility and practicability of this suggested enticement.[66] This letter negotiation lasted more than two months, during which not only the subtleties of Early Modern headhunting become apparent to us when reading the correspondents' letters, but also we are presented with the subtleties of the rules and events accompanying the plan to establish a joint partner company and to open a merchant house during the 18th century. Unfortunately, and by mentioning it I have already let the cat out of the bag, Luetkens' plan failed as a result of Johann Philipp's opposition to the plan. The oldest brother, who shared the same point of view as Jakob Adami, simply referred to the existing contractual rules and obligations that Simon Moritz had to meet in the house of Furly, namely that he still had to serve his full, arranged employment time, which put an end to the discussion.

This fact shows once more the importance of the family council during the negotiation process, in which the family acted as consultants, especially with regard to the procedural legality and rightfulness of any endeavour aiming at self-employment. As a decision-making authority, however, it is to be emphasised, in accordance with my aforementioned explanations, that the family did not generally oppose the plan of one of their family members to enter into and establish a private firm, which meant at the same time refraining from entering into the family-run business. The family's role in this negotiation process instead was only to advise, safeguard and observe that everything was carried out in a lawful manner. The fact that the undertaking of Simon Moritz's possible enticement from Furly, was, however, seriously and intensively discussed among the correspondents over several weeks before the final decision was made, without including Furly in the conversation at any time, reveals to us at the same time that this option had still been imaginable and had not been dismissed as a possibility by the parties and correspondents involved right from the beginning. Therefore, enticement was definitely still at least a conceivable opportunity. In the end, however, there probably were too many counterarguments against the considerable efforts that such an enticement would have entailed. Referring to the contractual obligations was therefore also an appropriate and welcome knockout argument used by Johann Philipp to put an end to the negotiation.

The main and true motives behind the rejection of Simon Moritz's enticement will, however, remain mostly in the dark, since we will never know what really went on in past people's minds. There are some hints as to assume that certain personal interests and obligations of other family members collided with the plan, to which I will return again at a later stage of this chapter, including the danger of defamation of the family's

65 Letter from Luetkens, Nicolaus Gottlieb to Bethmann, Simon Moritz, November 19, 1743, TNA, HCA 30/232, Letter Book II, unnumbered.

66 For an analysis of this letter episode using and demonstrating the potentials of the methodological tool and concept of "communities of practice", see Haasis, "Augenblick."

reputation resulting from the breach of a contract. However, these hints still do not provide us with absolute certainty about what was the decisive point that in the end caused the failure of the negotiations. Notwithstanding this, reading and analysing the letters exchanged amongst the correspondents in the form of the conference circuit, as a polyphonic letter conversation, during the two months of negotiation nevertheless provides us with valuable insights into the words, actions and justifications of these merchants of the 18th century. The letter conversation reveals to us the full panoply of ways of negotiation, ways of exerting influence on each other by means of letter writing and corresponding, by means of typical ways of reasoning and of self-representation, which included letter tactics, rhetorics and practices of manoeuvring in negotiation, ways of evaluation, strategic positioning and individual profiling in the course of the negotiation.

We will be presented with two practical principles of persuasion applied in letter practice of the 18th century. We will learn about the practical principle of trying to meet as equals in letters and about the principle of keeping a low profile in letters in order to keep all options open during the further course of a negotiations. The first principle will become obvious from Luetkens' letters, while the second principle represented the negotiation strategy used by Simon Moritz Bethmann. Both practical principles of persuasion presented will be revealing with regard to the merchants' self-perceptions, their strategies for winning each other's favour and their negotiation skills. Only the second practical principle of keeping a low profile was crowned with success or paid off in the end because it allowed Simon Moritz Bethmann to find an appropriate exit strategy from Luetkens' offer. Therefore, what we gain from the analysis of these letters is once again the materialised and direct evidence of the processes and functions, the resources and effects of letter practice. After the failure of the enticement, Luetkens was forced to look for other options and eventually found a suitable solution, which he once again put into practice by means of writing letters and on the basis of another practical principle of persuasion, the principle of arranging insider dealings. By looking at these letters we will learn about how the practical problems and matters behind the letter negotiations were solved and how concrete plans and actions regarding the establishment of a merchant house were put into practice on the basis of letters. Thus, also at the content level, the letters will be revealing because they will demonstrate how Luetkens found ways to set the course for his career, promoting his establishment phase through letter practice.

## Stages of an "affaire en question". The Practical Principle of Trying to Meet as Equals

It was with good reason that the negotiations regarding Simon Moritz Bethmann's enticement from Furly in Rotterdam happened behind closed doors, or to be more precise, within sealed letters. An enticement was a difficult undertaking. Existing contractual agreements had to be examined and potential opportunities or gaps in the agreements had to be found. The consequences of such a step and the advantages or disadvantages for the parties involved had to be carefully considered. During the whole negotiation phase, furthermore, all parties had to keep the negotiations, the information and their

letters confidential. Luetkens' wish and Simon Moritz's written approval that their letter conversation was kept in a *deep sea of discretion* therefore was not just empty talk or meaningless letter formulae but was meant literally.

Highly revealing and indicative is the fact that the English merchant Furly does not appear and was not included in the letter conversation of the correspondents at any point in this episode. Although we know that Jakob Adami maintained close contacts with Furly, we do not find any letters or copies of letters in the Luetkens correspondence from Furly himself. The latter was instead kept entirely in the dark about Luetkens' plans.[67] This fact also underlines the often tense situation in which young merchants found themselves during their establishment phase. They had to carefully consider whom to trust and whom to fill in on their plans because these decisions could have direct consequences for their career. Luetkens decided to first directly approach Simon Moritz himself and then to also win over Johann Jakob for his plans. The latter two then approached their oldest brother, who informed Adami. In a kind of conference circuit, the five merchants subsequently regulated the matter among themselves, and given the outcome they eventually arrived at, it proved beneficial that they had kept Furly out of the negotiation. Notwithstanding this, analysing this negotiation process provides us with crucial insights into mercantile self-perceptions, negotiation practices, mentalities and into the subtleties of finding a suitable business partner for a joint partner company.

The beginning of the negotiations was marked by the letter from Nicolaus Gottlieb Luetkens to Simon Moritz Bethmann on the 19th of November, sent from Hamburg. In this letter to Simon Moritz, Nicolaus Gottlieb explained, from his point of view and in great detail, the benefits of a joint establishment in Nantes and the reasons why he was interested in joining forces with the young Frankfurt merchant. He wrote that his "sole aim was to find someone who had learned something and who was skilled and able to manage his correspondence and since I am convinced that E.E. is capable of this task and furthermore I do not doubt ["nicht zweyfelle"] that our humours will correspond ["Humores miteinander übereinkommen"] with each other, I have cast an eye on E.E. Nantes is a place where business will still be profitable."[68] Luetkens did not doubt that they would within a short time build a lucrative business there because of the fact that "in foreign lands young merchants can earn their daily bread with little effort", that is, the prospect of making a living and doing profitable business was good.[69] In order to facilitate the decision, he furthermore offered to contribute the lion's share of the shared starting capital of their joint company. With this proposition and his envisioned approach for the joint partner company, Luetkens therefore apparently completely complied with the common practice of a business merger, about which we have learned from the entry in the *Kruenitz encyclopaedia* in the previous part of this chapter. The merchant proposed to join forces with Simon Moritz on the basis of suggesting complementing

67 See Henninger, *Bethmann*, 116.

68 Letter from Luetkens, Nicolaus Gottlieb to Bethmann, Simon Moritz, November 19, 1743, TNA, HCA 30/232, Letter Book II, unnumbered.

69 Ibid.

each other in different ways and with regard to different competences, but also with regard to sharing capital.

In view of the information provided in the encyclopaedia, Simon Moritz's part in the company would therefore be the part of the diligent worker, while Luetkens himself would take over the role of the major capital- and shareholder. For Simon Moritz this proposition was nonetheless apparently a very attractive offer because he would no longer merely be a merchant clerk but a wholesale merchant in a merchant house. The most intriguing aspect of this letter in this respect and especially with regard to means of persuasion in letters clearly is Luetkens' concrete reference to the benefits of an establishment abroad as they would present themselves particularly to young merchants. With this reference, Luetkens did not only refer to Simon Moritz's status but also referred to and included himself and his own status, by means of which he once more underlined the two men's commonality and the importance of corresponding humours. In order to establish a merchant house and a firm footing in Nantes, they needed to act in concert and pull together. So, although Luetkens would be the one who would bring in most of the capital, he still needed Simon Moritz to put his plans into practice. With this sentence, he therefore expressed his appreciation for Simon Moritz and at the same time he indicated that both men shared the same fate and faced similar challenges, which was that they needed to prove themselves worthy and had to demonstrate success during this phase of their career development and needed to manage to stand on their own feet. This latter fact once more hinted quite clearly to Simon Moritz that it was indispensable that their letter conversation should be kept confidential and that Simon Moritz should "not mention his name to anyone" outside their letter circle.[70]

This expression of appreciation and the offer in general was received with enthusiasm by Simon Moritz. Already one mail delivery day, one post-day, later, he replied that his "mind and senses were all churned up inside". He subsequently dedicated an entire letter page to expressing, in a typical, contemporary *gallant tone* of exuberant joy, his gratitude over the "candid declaration, the affection and trust" that Luetkens put in him, and he particularly thanked Luetkens for the "good concept" and opinion that Luetkens had "formed about such a simple person as him". He furthermore affirmed and admitted "with truth" that he was so stirred that he "cannot find words to describe […] my fortune, which drives me from wave to wave", even though he had already "read the letter several times".[71] Still, as part of the so called *confirmatio* of the letter – the main part of a letter, which was typically the section that served the purpose to make

70 Ibid.

71 "Wenn ich indeßen dero liebwerthe letztern Zeilen zu verschiedenen Mahlen überleßen, so muß ich warlich gestehen, daß mein Gemüth und Sinnen gäntzlich entrüstet und ich selbsten nicht alsobald mich darin faßen können, unterfindende, wie das Schicksal mich von einer Welle zu der andern treibet, und mit mir sehr artigzu Werke gehet. Ich muß zu meinen beßonderen Vergnügen wahrnehmen was für ein gutes Concept E.E. in dero Hierßein von meiner geringen Perßon sich formiret nun ich kann dann auch mit der Warheit betheuern, daß ich in meinem Gemüthe: auch etwas apertes [aufgewühlt] verspühret, welches ich mit Worten nicht außdrücken kann, welches sich dann nun in der That thut äußern, in Ansehung dero gegen mich so freymüthig gethanen Diclaration, von dero genommene Entschließung, um sich unter Gottes Seegen in Nantes niederzulaßen, und die Zuneigung & Vertrauens, welches E.E. auf mich geworfen haben, unter beyfügender

statements and to react to questions from the addressees – he confirmed and provided evidence for this good *concept* that had been attributed to him by Luetkens.[72] Without the aim of "reasoning" ["raisonieren"], meaning, from his perspective, without boasting about his qualifications, but rather merely by means of recalling reports and testimonies of others ["rapportieren"], he underlined that since the age of 14 he had "gained plenty of experience". Furthermore, he emphasizes with regard to his way of life that he conducted himself as a respectable man, as "it is appropriate for decent people". Last but not least, he directly reiterated and reacted to one of Luetkens' main statements stating that he is capable of "earning his bread with diligence and through the sweat of my brow". In direct response to Luetkens' letter he also emphasised that "in case, as God will allow it, they reach an agreement", he was certain that their "humours would resemble unanimously". However, if they did not reach an agreement, he promised that this would not mean that Luetkens had to expect in any way a "freezing or rejection of love" amongst the two of them. The most important sentence in his letter was, however, yet to follow. At the end of his reply he pointed out that he still had to ask his brothers for advice, for which he needed to write letters to them, "presenting the case to them" and asking them in a "ocean of decency" for their "opinion from the heart" on the matter and "if there is an easy way to get away from his patron without fuss ["facilement"]".[73]

I am quoting these two letters at length and provide the entire quote in the original in the footnote because they represent the foundation for the whole negotiation process and Simon Moritz' negotiation strategy. At the same time, they already entail major characteristics of negotiation that should in the end shape the whole episode. In this first letter exchange, the cautious approach that both letter writers chose for entering

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Proposta, ob ich resolviret wäre, mit E.E. unßer gemeinschaftliches Glück zu bauen". Letter from Bethmann, Simon Moritz to Luetkens, Nicolaus Gottlieb, November 25, 1743, TNA, HCA 30/234.

72 Regarding the typical letter structure (following the *ars dictaminis*) in letters of the Early Modern Period (1. Salutatio 2. Exordium 3. Narratio 4. Confirmatio 5. Refutatio 6. Petitio 7. Conclusio 8. Subscriptio 9. Inscriptio), which still prevailed during the 18th century, although already undergoing a transformation towards freer forms of letter structures (which became the standard during the second half of the 18th century), see Furger, *Briefsteller*, 149. See also Anton, Annette C. *Authentizität als Fiktion. Briefkultur im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert*. Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1995, 9-10.

73 "Angehende meine wenige Capacitat, will ich nicht vieles raisoniren, sondern rapportire mich lediglich auf das Zeugnüß wildfremder Menschen, [...] indeme ich mich lebenslang befließen, um etwas rechtes zu erlernen, und mich dardurch in Stand zusetzen, um heute oder morgen mein Stückgen Brod mit Mühe und im Schweiße meines Angeßichtes zu verdienen. [...] Auch ist mit Gott bey mir beschloßen, um mich lebenslang, so zu betragen gleich es einem der Ehre ergebenen Menschen anständig ist. Seit meinem 14ten Jahre habe ich bey frembden Menschen mit Comptoir Sachen umgegangen, daß ich hoffte, so viel thunliche Experienz erlanget zu haben,jedoch auch wohl wissende, daß es nicht allzeit auf die Jahre eines Jünglingsthut ankommen, sondern ob Ihn Gott mit guten Gaben geßegnet hat. Ich bin überzeugt, meine Brüder werden mir ihres Hertzens Meinung eröffnen und mein bestes prüfen, nicht minder, ob es möglich ist, von meinem Patrons facilement weg zu kommen [...] Istes bey denselben beschloßen, daß dieße Sache zum Stande komt, Fiat [Schicksal] denn bin ich verßichert, unßere Gemüther werden einmüthig gepaaret einhergehen. Ist es aber, daß es nicht sein solte, dann spreche ich nochmahls fiat unterwerfende mich gantz tranquill [unbesorgt] der weißen Führung, und wird es darum an meiner Seite keine Erkaltung oder Verwiederung der Liebe gegen E.E. erwecken." Letter from Bethmann, Simon Moritz to Luetkens, Nicolaus Gottlieb, November 25, 1743, TNA, HCA 30/234.

into the negotiations becomes unmistakably obvious. We notice a reciprocal balancing and a sounding out of potential opportunities. Luetkens obviously made every effort to meet as an equal with Simon Moritz Bethmann. For this purpose, he used a letter style and diction that was typical for *letters of flattery* exchanged among merchant correspondents, that is among equals. This becomes obvious not only from comparing this letter to other letters written by Luetkens to his other trading partners, but also from comparing this letter to example letters in contemporary letter-writing manuals.

In these manuals, such as for instance the famous manual by Hunold's *Allerneueste Art Höflich und Galant zu schreiben* from 1702, we can in fact find such mercantile letter examples in chapters specifically dedicated to this form of letter writing.[74] In these chapters, the mercantile letter "stylo" was described as being shaped by brevity, plainness, clarity and a certain directness, promoting mutual esteem and respect.[75] This is precisely what characterised Luetkens' letter. The Hamburg merchant limited his statements and concentrated his request to Simon Moritz on the essentials, he stuck to the facts and pointed out the advantages of the planned undertaking. His major line of argument is that both their *humours* would correspond, resemble each other, which would form a good basis for a joint partner company. Thus, Luetkens mobilised and pointed to the one major aspect that was also emphasised in the *Kruenitz encyclopaedia* as the basic prerequisite for establishing a joint merchant house. This reference, however, also had another concrete reason, which was that by means of pointing to it especially, Luetkens once more tried to meet Simon Moritz on common ground and on equal terms. The practical principle of persuasion behind this was the principle of trying to meet as equals, by refering to commonality and "corresponding humours" as the basis for a joint partner company.[76] This becomes particularly clear when we consult other merchant manuals of the time in addition to the *Kruenitz Encyclopaedia* because *corresponding humours* was not an argument that was used merely sporadically. Rather, it actually appears in almost every merchant manual and letter-writing manual of the period.

So, for instance in Paul Jacob Marperger's *Der getreue und geschickte Handelsdiener* ["The faithful and skilled merchant clerk", 1715], Daniel Defoe's *The Complete English Tradesman* (1726) or in the most famous mercantile manual of the time, Jacques Savary's *Le Parfait Négociant* ["Der vollkommene Kauff- und Handelsmann" in German, "The Perfect Tradesman" in English, first edition 1675], we can find exactly the same argument. It is stated there, for instance, that for finding a merchant partner it was crucial "to choose someone who is skilled, honourable and of equal humour ["humors"] because being of

74 Hunold, *Die Allerneueste Art Höflich und Galant zu Schreiben*, "Funffzehenden Abtheilung: Kauffmanns= Briefe", 561-590.

75 Regarding the style of business letters and their language register, see chapter 5 in detail. See Defoe, *Complete English Tradesman*, 22-25. Other manuals state the same characteristics for merchant letters, which should be "easy, simple, plain, and perspicuous." Mair, *Book-keeping methodiz'd*, 6-7. See also Marperger, *Der allzeitfertige Handels-Correspondent*, 230.

76 See also Trivellato, "A Republic of Merchants," 144, who also refers to the fact that "friendship (amitié) was the bond of business association" during the 18th century.

the same kind ["gleiche Art"] is a necessity amongst like-minded people."[77] A merchant should regard and treat his business partner "like a brother" ["wie ein Bruder"].[78] At the same time, these characteristics of persons also marked the difference between the status of an apprentice, a merchant clerk and a business partner. The crucial characteristics and personal skills that were regarded as important during these earlier stages of a career, such as for instance cleanliness or obedience, no longer appear in the profile of requirement for a business partner because by that stage they were regarded as being self-evident.[79] A person regarded as qualified and worthy of being considered a business partner for a merchant partnership ("Sosietet") had to show skills, experience, an honourable reputation and *corresponding humours* and these are precisely the character traits that Luetkens highlighted in his letter.[80] Based on these characteristics the two of them, whose common feature was that they were both "young merchants", would have no problems to manage the challenges of this stage of life together and "earn their daily bread with little effort", as Luetkens wrote. Put in a nutshell, Luetkens' persuasive strategy for winning over Simon Moritz for his plans in his letters was to approach him not as an inferior but as an equal. He approached him by means of the form and content of his letter not as a merchant clerk, which Simon Moritz was at that time, but already as future business partners, whom he treated with the due respect and courtesy, which surely did not fail to flatter the addressee. This represents at the same time the clearest expression of the practical principle of meeting as equals being effective in this episode. Unfortunately though, Luetkens' efforts in this regard should not pay off.

Simon Moritz's response letter did not take Luetkens up on this flattery and the flat hierarchy, but quite on the contrary. He replied with a letter of great humbleness, which presents us literally with exactly the opposite of the principle of persuasion that Luetkens had employed. Instead of being willing to meet as an equal with Luetkens, Simon Moritz tried everything in his power to keep a low profile, using all the contemporary resources and opportunities available to him to formulate a letter of gallant humbleness as a way to mark his own position in this negotiation process.

## The Practical Principle of Keeping a Low Profile

Writing such a letter of humbleness in an appropriate way was typical at the time and complied with the contemporary rules and etiquette of social conduct as we find them once again also in the letter-writing manuals of the time. The noticeably effusive way of expression and the flowery tone of the letter mirrored the typical and socially accepted contemporary ways of so called *gallant conversation* and *gallantry* or *gallant conduct*, "conduite" in French and German, which had been popular since the end of the 17th century

77 Savary, *Der vollkommene Kauff- und Handelsmann* [*Le Parfait Négociant*], 282. See Marperger, *Getreuer und geschickter Handelsdiener*, 427-428.

78 Marperger, *Der allzeitfertige Handels-Correspondent*, 238. See also Defoe, *Complete English Tradesman*, 262.

79 See Marperger, *Getreuer und Geschickter Handelsdiener*, "Caput XII. Was ein Kauffmanns=Diener/der seinen eigenen Handel/entweder vor sich selbst allein/oder in Compagnie mit einem andern anzufangen gedencket/dabey zu observiren habe", 427-429.

80 See also "Compagnie=Handlung." *Oekonomische Encyklopädie*, vol. 8, 276-279.

and was still popular in the 1740s.[81] Another contemporary source, Johann Christian Barth's *Die galante Ethica* from 1728, aptly summarised this contemporary *mode of behaviour*, referring to both a person's actions and words. As regards a person's actions, a gallant way of behaviour stipulated that a person would "recommend himself by means of compliant behaviour and conduct and decent gestures, which had become grand mode in the gallant world". With regard to a person's words, gallantry entailed and stipulated that a person should carefully observe his "own devoir", that is, carry out his social duties, by means of expressing "polite and mannerly compliments" to his fellow men and women, and "furthermore conduct himself skilfully in his way of talking".[82]

This gallant ideal and way of behaviour strongly shaped and governed the letter by Simon Moritz, allowing him or rather providing him with the means to send a gesture of humbleness to Luetkens, which his addressee clearly also unmistakably understood as such. The concrete reason for Simon Moritz choosing this letter style, however, far exceeded the sole fact of complying with a typical contemporary language style. He also used it skilfully to formulate his answer in a relatively non-committal and innocuous way, putting himself into a starting position for the negotiation process that allowed him to keep all his options open. Furthermore, concomitant to that, it also allowed him to pass on certain responsibilities and decision-making powers to other people, namely his brothers. The decision to use this way of answering Luetkens' letters and putting himself in an inferior position therefore did not stem only from the motivation to comply with contemporary rules of conduct and courtoisie, but it also provided him with a certain room for manoeuvre and made him capable of acting and of reacting. This way he was able to enter into a negotiation setting that would postpone the actual decision, but instead asked or even urged the addressee for patience.

Simon Moritz was obviously unsure and undecided if he wanted to take the risk and also if this undertaking was at all feasible. He first had to ask his brothers for help. Nevertheless, he tried to keep Luetkens interested. This is the reason why he ultimately exaggerated both the form and the style of his letter. That is, he naturally drew on the typical style and language register of gallant writing and a typical hierarchal structural principle for his response letter, but he literally carried it to the extreme. He pulled out all the stops of his chosen language register, the gallant register of flattery, and used all available means in order to stay non-committal and showcase that he was dependent on the help of his brothers, by which ploy he avoided taking responsibility himself.

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81 See Rose, *Conduite und Text*, in general, as an introduction 1-32 ("Einleitung: Galante Conduite und galante Texte"), 51-65 ("Die galante Welt"). See Steigerwald, Jörn. "Galanterie als kulturelle Identitätsbildung: Französisch-deutscher Kulturtransfer im Zeichen der Querelles." In *German Literature, History and the Nation*, edited by Christian Emden and David Midgley, 119-141. Oxford: Lang, 2004. See Anton, Annette C. *Authentizität als Fiktion. Briefkultur im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert*. Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1995, 27. See Vellusig, *Schriftliche Gespräche*, 77; Furger, *Briefsteller*, 26, 165, 181; see also Beetz, *Frühmoderne Höflichkeit*. Regarding Gallantry in Hamburg, see Fulda, *Galanterie und Frühaufklärung*. For gallant France, see in particular Viala, *La France galante*. For contemporary examples, see Lamy, Bernard. *L'Art de parler*. Paris: André Pralard, 1670. Regarding the shift from courtesy to civility in England, see Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility*, 1-42.

82 Barth, Johann Christian. *Die Galante Ethica Oder nach der neuesten Art eingerichtete Sitten-Lehre*. Dresden/Leipzig: Harpenter, 1728. Translation by the author.

As a matter of fact though, considering his actual status, career level and situation, he could just as well have answered Luetkens' letter in a more assertive way and just the way as Luetkens had offered it to him: that is, as an equal. The reason for this is that, as things stood, the two young merchants were in fact basically at exactly the same career level and more or less in the same situation, one serving as a merchant clerk, the other being a travelling commission agent. The only catch to the matter and the problem that needed to be solved was to find a way to terminate the contract with Furly. To point out this catch the exaggerated rhetoric was not necessarily needed, but it was definitely necessary to keep the backdoor open in order to be able to reject Luetkens' offer at any time in the future. In any case, Simon Moritz could at least have put more emphasis on the fact that he would do everything in his own power to try to make sure that the idea was put into practice, but he did not. Instead, he chose to use many expressions that pointed to the complexity and difficulties of his situation, which therefore presented it not as a situation that was easy to solve but as a catch-22. For instance, he used the typical, contemporary expression and letter formula that he could not find suitable words to describe his emotional state.[83] He also referred to the turbulent "waves of fate" in which he would find himself following the offer, pointing out that he was torn between concern and confidence in the matter. He therefore had no other choice than entrusting the whole matter to God and *God's will* which was a very common motif and topos of the period, but which once more stressed the fact that he himself was supposedly far more powerless than Luetkens expected him to be.

## 6.4 Breadwinning and Letter Citation

The strategy that Simon Moritz Bethmann therefore chose for his letter to Luetkens was in a way a reversal or weakening of the general tenor of Luetkens' own letter, which had been that the situation and the prospect for establishing a merchant house in Nantes would be a simple matter. But Simon Moritz considered it rather a challenge, which becomes especially clear and apparent in the way that he used and replied to the central biblical topos of breadwinning quoted in the letters, referring to the Bible passage from Genesis/1. Moses 3/19: "By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread". Whereas Luetkens referred to this topos and motif by means of praising the *little* effort ["leuchten Mühe sein Brodt haben kan"] necessary to establish themselves in Nantes, Simon Moritz instead emphasised and insinuated the necessary *diligence work* that needed to be done for this purpose, which he would, however, be capable of doing with the "sweat of his brow" ["mein Stückgen Brod mit Mühe und im Schweiße meines Angeßichtes zu verdienen"].[84] This underpins both his capability of being a suitable business partner, but

83 "Der Feder mangelt das Vermögen" was the most typical letter formulae in this regard, Hunold, *Die Allerneueste Art Höflich und Galant zu Schreiben*, 138. Regarding this dilemma of expression, "Ausdrucksdilemma" as it is called in German today, see Rose, *Conduite und Text*, 163-169, 181-190, 210-215.

84 Letter from Luetkens, Nicolaus Gottlieb to Bethmann, Simon Moritz, November 19, 1743, TNA, HCA 30/232, Letter Book II, unnumbered; Letter from Bethmann, Simon Moritz to Luetkens, Nicolaus Gottlieb, November 25, 1743, TNA, HCA 30/234.

it also shows his own assessment of the situation as being more complex and laborious than presented by Luetkens.

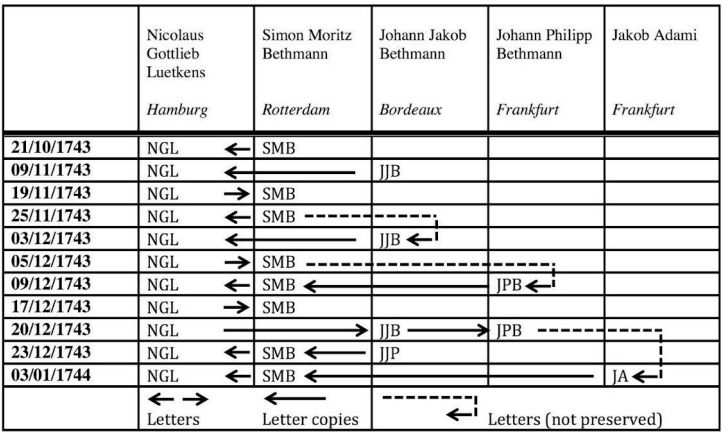
This whole line of argument is thus very clever because in this way Simon Moritz was able to send the message to Luetkens that things were not generally hopeless, but that reaching a positive outcome would be tougher and more difficult than Luetkens had expected and depicted it in his letter. In this way, Simon Moritz was in the end skilfully able to mark his own standpoint and starting position for the upcoming negotiation process and simultaneously shaped and determined the further course of negotiation in a way that he considered advisable and preferable. Namely, he provided the justification for expanding the correspondence circle and calling in his brothers. This justification did, in the further course of events following from this letter, not only present itself as being necessary in terms of asking them for their assistance and their assessment regarding the contractual solution with Furly, but also, on the more personal note, it was necessary to free him from his hesitancy and indecisiveness – and this was in the end the basic message, the double layered message that he conveyed to Luetkens by means of his letter.

The response letter by Luetkens turned out as expected. Even though Simon Moritz's letter must have fallen short of Luetkens' initial expectations, the latter agreed to call in the other Bethmann brothers. In his letter from the 5th of December, he consented that Simon Moritz should consult and "seek your brothers' advice".[85] At the same time, he already had taken precautions himself, since he himself must have been definitely aware of the specific circumstances and the bureaucratic hurdles but also the more personal hurdles that they had to overcome in order to put the plan into practice. Therefore, he had written a letter to Johann Jakob Bethmann, in which he directly asked him for his opinion on the matter. The response of the second oldest son of the Bethmann family, addressing Luetkens by his first name instead of the usual E.E., as a sign of their friendship, reached him only a short time later and gave him a glimmer of hope. Johann Jakob wrote that he had received Luetkens' message "with lots of pleasure […] ["viel Plaisir"] and should the matter turn out successfully ["reussirt die Sache"], I would be very delighted." He also approved of Nantes as a place for establishment and of the fact that Luetkens offered to bear the lion's share of the capital in the company. He furthermore confirmed and once more reaffirmed the qualities of his brother – in quite familiar words. "That you will find a righteous, prudent and neat man and associate" ["rechtschaffenen braven, verständigen & hübschen Jungen & Associe finden wirst"] was beyond question because Simon Moritz was known for not "having learned to laze around, but he loves to work and to earn his bread with honour". He himself would furthermore "contribute in whatever ways necessary" to contribute to the success of the "Societeet". In this regard, he even suggested and asked Luetkens for his opinion on also building a partnership and bond between their merchant house, Bethmann & Imbert, in Bordeaux, and the future company of his brother and Luetkens in Nantes. Thus, he even proposed to join together in a larger joint company "namely with you, my brother, Imbert and myself, in order to have a merchant house in Nantes and here" in

85 "bey seine Brüder Ratts erhollet". Letter from Luetkens, Nicolaus Gottlieb to Bethmann, Simon Moritz, December 5, 1743, TNA, HCA 30/232, Letter Book II, unnumbered.

Bordeaux".[86] In this regard, he emphasised that his own merchant house was already capable of earning their living, "earning their bread", and it enjoyed a great reputation.[87] This message must have been received with nothing but joy by Luetkens because it must have given him reason to believe that the whole undertaking and situation was in the end not hopeless. The whole letter exchange between the correspondents literally unfolds before our eyes as an impressive polyphonic written letter conversation, which I have reconstructed in the following figure and illustration.

*Figure 15: Reconstruction of all the letter exchanges regarding the attempted enticement of Simon Moritz Bethmann away from the Amsterdam merchant Furly based on the letters in TNA, HCA 30/234.*




In essence, reading the transcript of the conversation is akin to witnessing a conference call, to put it in modern terms, in which mutual recognition and cross-referencing obviously ranked as an important and valuable asset. Johann Jakob confirmed and highlighted exactly the same qualities for a merchant during establishment that had already been discussed before. In fact, just as in the case of Simon Moritz, he once more specifically picked up on these points with direct responses and even concrete citations of the preceding letters. Today, we would say that they literally fed each other lines. The most common thread in the letter exchanges appears to be based on the topos of breadwinning, which is not only presented as the prerequisite for cooperation, but which is also used by the letter writers to distinctively mark their own standpoint on the matter and their position within the negotiation process. In Johann Jakob's case, the motif symbolised his role as a benefactor and backer of the undertaking, which at the same time marks his own reputation. As a member of the Bethmann family who has already managed to make a name for himself, he for his part was already successfully *earning his bread* ["unßer Brodt haben"], from which perspective he also reaffirmed that

86 Letter from Bethmann, Johann Jakob to Luetkens, Nicolaus Gottlieb, December 3, 1743, TNA, HCA 30/234.

87 "wir, wie du weißt, bereits große Sachen thun, und unßer Brodt haben." Ibid.

also his brother was also going to be capable of perpetuating the family tradition and honour.

By means of this letter-writing practice of mutual letter citation, within the letter conversation, therefore a foundation for negotiation was created, which entailed or was based on a clear basic tenor regarding the characteristic features of a suitable subjectum in merchant business. However, coming back to the concrete course of negotiation, there was nevertheless a crucial snag to Johann Jakob's response letter that also had severe consequences for the following letter negotiations. This major snag was that although Johann Jakob backed the whole undertaking and even proposed an extension to the original plan, he nevertheless did not make any concrete proposal as to how the actual crux of the matter could be solved. The one thing that his letter lacked was a solution strategy to the real problem, which was how Simon Moritz could be released from his employment contract in the house of Furly. Therefore, Johann Jakob presented himself and understood his role as being a supporter and consultant of Luetkens' plan, but regarding the concrete course of negotiation he reduced himself to the role of a bystander. The actual and final decision in the matter therefore depended on the opinion of the oldest brother in the family, Johann Philipp Bethmann.

How far-reaching and significant the demonstrated restraint by Johann Jakob and his avoidance of a clear statement regarding the contract dissolution was, which also provides us with an explanation for both Simon Moritz's and Johann Jakob's negotiation tactics, becomes apparent when we read the response letter by this oldest brother of the Bethmann family in the next step. In this regard, the way in which this letter and its message in the end materially reached Luetkens is highly revealing. It reached Luetkens enclosed in the next letter from Simon Moritz as a "true and faithful copy" of the original French letter that Simon Moritz had received from his brother.[88] This letter by Johann Philipp ultimately represented nothing less than an impressive prime example and masterpiece of negotiation practice and the powers of persuasion applied in letter practice in the Early Modern Period. It included all ingredients, all properties that letters offered the writers of the period to exert certain influence and to shape negotiation processes by means of letters.

Therefore, in the next letter that reached Luetkens from the Bethmann family, the third brother Johann Philipp, as represented in the genuine copy of his original letter, entered the stage and voiced his opinion about the "affair in question". Simon Moritz himself justified his approach of simply copying in the letter from his brother into his own letter by emphasising that he thus wanted to eliminate misunderstandings. This was why he would "take the liberty to reproduce the letter by my brother taliter qualiter", in the original wording.[89] With this material gesture, however, he also carried to the extreme his submissive approach and way of communication and his self-positioning in a devoted role, showing his limited opportunities within the negotiation process. He basically materialised his non-committal self-presentation by way of letting his brother,

88 Letter from Bethmann, Simon Moritz to Luetkens, Nicolaus Gottlieb, December 9, 1743, TNA, HCA 30/234.

89 Ibid. The typical letter formulae of *taking the liberty* was used in all other chapters in this book at least once.

or more concretely, his brother's letter speak for him, and thus he completely shirked his responsibilities. Speaking for the course and logic of the entire letter conversation, however, one has to say, that his calculation, the strategy that he pursued right from the start of the negotiations, ultimately paid off. Having remained non-committal in his letters beforehand, he now could claim for himself that he had not made any false promises to Luetkens but merely found himself in the thankless position of being dependent on his brother's will and consent.

Johann Philipp's response letter to his brother, as it was copied in Simon Moritz letter to Nicolaus Gottlieb Luetkens, read as follows. The Frankfurt merchant wrote in a tone that he himself described as the "usual candour", which would be common and expected in gallant letter conversations during that time, but that rather came across as an abrasive tone conveying the message of a wagging finger. He emphasised that he "sees only few signs for him accepting the offer". He told his brother that he should make himself aware of "the plenty of new merchant houses that have established themselves in the ports of France in the last few years" and made him understand that the enterprises and all the "commissions are already sufficiently divided among them, the coups are already made" ["les meilleurs coups sont faits"]. Furthermore, as one of these German merchant houses in France, their brother Johann Jakob Bethmann, as he stressed, was already established there, which means there was definitely no need for two brothers of the Bethmann family to establish themselves in France. Last but not least, he emphasized that Simon Moritz was not yet experienced enough with the "local business" ["des afaires de la place"] in France, and, as the final stroke, the overall snag to the story, he pointed out that "apart from all these reasons you must be aware and know very well ["vous savés bien"] that you are engaged in the house of Furly for 4 to 5 years and as a rule ["la convention"] you need to spent at least 2 to 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ years there."[90]

## 6.5 A Fatal Blow in a Letter Conversation

Johann Philipp's response letter meant a fatal blow to Luetkens' idea and plan. It came as the figurative sledgehammer, which was a principle of persuasion in its own right, about which we have already learned in detail in the chapter on commission trade. The sledgehammer method put the power constellation in the family and within the letter conversation straight and left no doubt about the opinion of the oldest brother. His response also in a way provides a belated explanation for the hesitant approach of the two other brothers. They must have guessed that such a response was likely to happen. The crucial point, however, and the interesting thing about the negotiation process is that, beforehand, letters had been exchanged dealing with the advantages and disadvantages of such an undertaking. This means that the correspondents, Simon Moritz and Johann Jakob, had not categorically excluded the possibility of a possible enticement right from the beginning and that there was at least a hope that their oldest brother

90 Letter from Bethmann, Johann Philipp to Bethmann, Simon Moritz, December 8, 1743, copied in the letter from Bethmann, Simon Moritz to Luetkens, Nicolaus Gottlieb, December 9, 1743, TNA, HCA 30/234.

would reply positively and therefore differently than he did in the end. Consequently, the matter must have generally been seen as negotiable, otherwise there would have been no need to exchange letters at all.

The fact that the negotiations resulted in a rather foreseeable end does not outweigh the fact that at least negotiations were still conducted. Obviously, the correspondents must have had reason to believe that there was hope and good reasons for breaking with Furly. These reasons, however, were simply not regarded as sufficient by Johann Philipp. As evidence of this fact serves the fact that prior to his rebuffal Johann Philipp did not actually limit his considerations to merely the absolute hard facts, that is, the simple fact that it was neither possible nor advisable to break with contractual obligations, which basically would have been argument enough. Instead, even he accepted and reacted to the fact that there had been more aspects and conditions to consider before such a decision could be made. It was a pity for both Nicolaus Gottlieb Luetkens and Simon Moritz Bethmann, as well as Johann Jakob, though, that the aim of Johann Philipp's letter was to rebuke and weaken each and every argument that had been made beforehand. Still, he confirmed the same qualities and catalogue of criteria and crucial character traits for a merchant during establishment as the other participants in the conversation. Contrary to Nicolaus Gottlieb, Simon Moritz and Johann Jakob though, he implied that he was not completely sure that Simon Moritz already showed these qualifications. Once again in direct reference to the other letters, he emphasised Simon Moritz's lack of experience instead of confirming the "Experienz" of his youngest brother. The point of the supposed advantage of corresponding humours, which he surely accepted as a prerequisite and benefit for a joint partner company, was undermined in his letter as a reason for a merger between Simon Moritz and Nicolaus Gottlieb. Johann Philipp pointed out in his letter that the quality of corresponding humours was no unique selling point for the planned merchant house in Nantes since at that time France was oversupplied with German merchants and merchant houses. Pointing at the glut of German merchant houses established in French ports, Johann Philipp furthermore placed a large question mark over the supposed "little effort" necessary to build a successful merchant house in France that Nicolaus Gottlieb had emphasised in his first letter. No hard work and diligence could compensate for the fact that *les meilleurs coups sont faits* and all commissions were already divided among the existing merchant houses. The knockout argument at the end of the letter that once more denied the convenience of the merger, by denying that a termination of the contract with Furly was in any way easy, that is, it could not happen "facilement", was therefore only the icing on the cake of the complete rejection of Luetkens' idea.

The reason why Johann Philipp's letter is in fact such a prime example for demonstrating the actual powers and the role that letters played in shaping human relations in the 18th century is that the Frankfurt merchant decidedly did not leave his opinion and assessment of the entire "affaire en question" at only one simple knockout argument, the contractual obligations, which would have been sufficient, but that he also directly picked up and reacted to the preceding letter negotiations, the sensitivities accompanying it and the arguments previously raised and exchanged by the other participants in the letter conversation. Thus, Johann Philipp's letter shows both the importance of ne-

gotiation and the contemporary rules for conducting negotiations. He showed respect for the previous course of the negotiation and integrated it skilfully into his written rejection.

The power of persuasion that his particular letter exhibits therefore does not just stem from his natural authority in the family, which was still an important element of it, by which he would have been able to simply reject the idea and put his foot down, but it derived primarily from the fact that he used rational reasoning to actually convince the correspondents of the impossibility of the undertaking.[91] In his letter, Johann Philipp was able to weaken all the arguments that had shaped the letter negotiations beforehand through which he stole the other correspondents' thunder and enthusiasm. On the basis of this, he was able to mark his standpoint, bring the persons involved down to earth and still remain respectful with regard to the previous discussions. Therefore, he played by the rules of the practice of negotiation by giving consideration to the other participants instead of simply imposing his will on the others. At the same time, his response letter certainly left no doubt about the fact that, apart from personal qualities, it was indispensable to adhere to legal requirements and to meet the expectations of one's family and that these two aspects formed two major contemporary preconditions for establishing a partner firm – even though Luetkens and Simon Moritz Bethmann planned to establish a private partnership firm that was not a family firm.

Actually, the negotiation between the correspondents still did not stop after this letter, although Johann Philipp had been rather clear in his statements and his opinion. After the letter, we can even notice a kind of a last rearing up of Simon Moritz and Nicolaus Gottlieb, who still tried to alter the course of the negotiations. With regard to Simon Moritz, this shows that he must, after all, have had an interest in the plan succeeding. As will become obvious, though, the decision presented in Johann Philipp's letter constituted a point of no return.

In Simon Moritz Bethmann's next letter to Luetkens, the young merchant wrote that he still "thinks that things would not be hopeless" ["nicht unmüglich"]. They only needed to allow some time to pass. Maybe, "after he had fiddled away another year or something […], who knows if heaven dictates it in its miraculous ways that the undertaking can still be successful."[92] Luetkens' response, in turn, once more clutched at this last straw. He wrote that he "understands that things are lying kind of out in the open ["in weittem Felde"], but at the end of E.E.'s letter E.E. still gives me hope that we can reach an agreement". He asked for a "final resolution" if it was possible to get away from Furly in the next 4 months. At the same time, he even picked up on the criticism by Johann Philipp and once more expressed his own view that there were still excellent trading opportunities in Nantes. To this end, he boasted that he had already conducted lucrative "afferes" and "great enterprises" in France and that he knew "the trade there very well". Taking a dig not only at Simon Moritz but surely also at Johann Philipp, whose letter he might have interpreted as a kind of affront against his own power of judgement, he added that he "would be able to find another associate with little effort" but that

91 Regarding the natural authority of the firstborn son in a family, see Capp, *Ties that Bind*, 1-13, 32-50.

92 Letter from Bethmann, Simon Moritz to Luetkens, Nicolaus Gottlieb, December 9, 1743, TNA, HCA 30/234.

he still preferred Simon Moritz because of their corresponding "humeures".[93] Luetkens therefore mobilised the same expressions, resources and arguments that had already been used in the negotiation before, but this time they served as an underpinning of his own goodwill towards the Bethmanns by which he tried to regain credibility, but also to put pressure on Simon Moritz to encourage him to stand his ground. Nicolaus Gottlieb also continued the discussion with Johann Jakob, writing him another letter expressing his regret that "your brother in Frankfurt obviously had no real interest" ["nicht groß Lust darzu"] in putting his plan into practice, by which he also sounded out Johann Jakob's willingness to intervene.[94] Unfortunately, both strategies did not have the desired effect. Johann Jakob refrained from commenting further on this matter, which means that he also did not want to make an open stand against his older brother. Simon Moritz once more chose a workaround. In his response letter, Simon Moritz promised to "once more ask his oldest brother for his opinion" and confirmed the merits that Luetkens had presented. He agreed that with regard to the challenge of finding a suitable business partner it was a "reasonable approach to go about it carefully". Notwithstanding this, he did not change his basic approach and remained true to himself, closing his letter by recalling that he must still always "consult his brothers, because I am not yet my own master".[95] He therefore did not comply with Luetkens' request essentially to break with convention, but stuck with the opinion of his oldest brother. The latter presumably happened because at this stage of the conversation he basically no longer had any other option if he did not wish to risk a family conflict.

In the end, the whole episode resulted in a foreseeable end; an end that shows that in fact the letter by Johann Philipp had already marked the decisive turning point of the whole negotiation. With the last letter that Simon Moritz wrote to Nicolaus Gottlieb, he therefore only wanted to "confirm what I have written before". He added that "furthermore, now that my uncle Jakob Adami is dying, who had made all arrangements with my current patron, we will not be able to denounce ["degagieren"] the contract" and therefore, "my hands are tied."[96] This argument, now even referring to the highest instance of the Bethmann family, put an irrevocable end to the negotiation. Luetkens subsequently had no other option than withdrawing from the negotiation with "decent generosity" ["sittsamer Generositat"] as he wrote in his letter from the 10th of January 1745, two months after he had written the first letter to Simon Moritz Bethmann.[97]

93 Letter from Luetkens, Nicolaus Gottlieb to Bethmann, Simon Moritz, December 17, 1743, TNA, HCA 30/232, Letter Book II, unnumbered.

94 Letter from Luetkens, Nicolaus Gottlieb to Bethmann, Johann Jakob, December 20, 1743, TNA, HCA 30/232, Letter Book II, unnumbered.

95 Letter from Bethmann, Simon Moritz to Luetkens, Nicolaus Gottlieb, December 23, 1743, TNA, HCA 30/234.

96 Letter from Bethmann, Simon Moritz to Luetkens, Nicolaus Gottlieb, January 3, 1744, TNA, HCA 30/234.

97 Quoted in Bethmann, Simon Moritz to Luetkens, Nicolaus Gottlieb, February 2, 1744, TNA, HCA 30/234.

## 6.6 Gallant Merchant Letters

From our modern point of view, gallant letters of the 18th century often seem stilted, artificial, exaggerated and ultimately superficial. The many compliments seem affected, the language and rhetoric overly florid and flamboyant.[98] For a modern reader, the whole scene of the represented letter episode might appear somewhat as a charade. In order to understand the events of the first large letter episode of this chapter, however, we have to realise a simple fact. We have to become aware of the fact that this modern impression is a fallacy. By getting this impression, we are falling into the trap of historical antagonism and forgetting about the most important task of historiography, which is to analyse historical documents and artefacts from within their own historical context and historicity. In order to understand the events of this letter episode, we have to realise that the gallant way of conversation was at that time simply the normal, appropriate and understandable way of communicating with each other, and that it encompassed its own rules and practices, which shaped the way of human interactions.

We have to understand that we have to take a step back from our romanticised viewpoint and that the reason for this is the seriousness and the practical significance that this way of talking, writing and conversing with each other had for the contemporaries in their daily encounters and as a means of managing their affairs. The letters of this episode decisively helped to achieve a concrete goal. They were used and deliberately created in their particular style and language by the letter writers for the purpose of mutually sussing out each other and to court and schmooze each other in a historically typical and appropriate way. The letters show us how seriously the gallant way of writing was used and for what serious purposes it was used. In this episode, the contemporary gallant way of dealing and corresponding with each other – as also represented in the manifold intertextual references to merchant manuals and letter-writing manuals – represented the crucial shared language register and style on the basis of which the concrete action of a targeted enticement was negotiated: the headhunting of a possible business partner from an established merchant for the purpose of establishing a merchant firm of one's own. There is no better illustration to point to the seriousness of this language register than presenting this special case.

There is certainly no doubt that Simon Moritz exaggerated his rhetoric in his letters. However, choosing such a way of writing was no gimmick or frippery and did not happen accidentally, but it served a concrete purpose for him in the course of the negotiation. In doing so, the young merchant was able to mark his position and role within the negotiation and to shape the course of the negotiation. The same fact in the end applies to all the participants in the letter conversation and the epistolary conference circle presented in this chapter.

All letter writers used the given gallant language register, in which they were practiced and experienced and which they had internalized. Yet, they employed this register in their own particular ways to shape and foster the course of the letter negotiation.

98 See apart from the letter examples in the episode also Rose, *Conduite und Text*, 191-215 and 181-190. For typical French gallant letters, see Rollin, Charles. *De la Manière d'Enseigneur et d'Etudier le Belles Lettres*. Paris: Estienne, 1726.

Each of them used the opportunities, the properties and effects, provided by the language register, but without deliberately choosing to do so. It was normal routine. The fact that they often also combined their letter style with a language best described as a business style, about which we have learned in the chapter on commission trade, furthermore underpins the fact that gallantry must not necessarily have meant that a certain commitment of the written words and seriousness was lacking. Quite on the contrary, the letters of this episode have shown that it was possible to use a gallant way of writing, complimenting and schmoozing each other and at the same time combine it with a business-writing style in order to conduct serious business. Nicolaus Gottlieb Luetkens' own letter style tended more in the direction of a sober style of commercial writing, using a very direct, plain and unadorned way of writing. However, even he used polite phrases, gallant letter formulae and gallant gestures in his letters. More importantly though, he obviously clearly understood the particular gallant gestures that were sent to him in the letters by the Bethmann brothers because Luetkens clearly aligned his own actions and words to these letter phrases and gestures sent to him. He dealt with them and reacted to them in the course of the negotiation. Therefore, obviously, there was once more a shared language game that all of the participant shared, were actively involved in and understood as such, which structured the negotiations around the question of the enticement of Simon Moritz.[99] Within this game, the gallant letters were an effective and powerful tool that helped to directly influence the course of the respective negotiation.

## A Suitable Subject

During the conversation the letter writers used both the *gallant language register* and the *commercial language register of business and trade*. In the analysis of the episode, we have learned how the different writers mobilized these registers in different ways, what letter practices were performed and to what purpose or for what personal interests the letter strategies were chosen. Most importantly, though, we have learned that letter writing was always primarily a negotiation and coordination process with its own dynamic, in the course of which the letter writers came to an understanding with each other about the respective object of negotiation. Only in mutual agreement, achieved during practice, the merchants defined what it meant to conduct good business and what it meant to be or to become a merchant. This represents the reason why deriving conclusions directly from the analysis of historical practice is a promising undertaking. It provides results about arguments that have already gone through the wringer of an 18th century letter negotiation among merchants. In other words, each argument used

99 A language-game, "Sprachspiel" in German, as defined by Ludwig Wittgenstein. See Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophische Untersuchungen. Kritisch-genetische Edition*, edited by Joachim Schulte. Frankfurt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2001 (first published 1953), see particularly § 23. "The concept of language-games points at the rule-governed character of language. This does not entail strict and definite systems of rules for each and every language-game, but points to the conventional nature of this sort of human activity." Biletzki, Anat, and Anat Matar. "Ludwig Wittgenstein." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2019 Edition), edited by Edward N. Zalta, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/wittgenstein, accessed November 17, 2019.

in a letter episode that passed the test of surviving a letter discussion unscathed and was still regarded as valid at the end of the letter episodes, can certainly be regarded as a very reliable source of information about the respective object of negotiation.

In this chapter the main question so far has been what qualified a young merchant to be regarded a suitable business partner, a suitable *subject*, for establishing and opening up a merchant house with another merchant in a joint partner company and therefore what the basic conditions for such an undertaking were for the merchants. On the basis of my analysis of the letter episode, I was able to show that within the letter circle there was a general consensus and agreement regarding the most basic personal characteristics future business partners had to demonstrate. The presented characteristics match the respective provisions given in contemporary commercial encyclopaedia, merchant manuals and literature on the preconditions for founding private firms.

During the 18th century, the family and family firm was no longer the only warrantor of trust relations. Instead, individual merchants, too, established merchant houses together based on individual selection processes, individual criteria and trust relations. I therefore pointed out that consequently new or, rather, newly valued personal qualities and character traits of persons also gained in significance. The basic preconditions of mercantile socialisation and at the same time also crucial selection criteria for finding suitable business partners during the 18th century consisted of individual liability and reputation based on one's own successful businesses and enterprises instead of, or as a supplement to, only relying on family reputation. Furthermore, it was deemed highly important and inevitable that a person also showed a good, reasonable, trustable, cautious and gentle character or personality, in modern terms, that was compatible with others because this element basically and unavoidably became and represented the necessary common ground and connecting factor of individual actors.

On the basis of "corresponding humours" bonds were established and professional ties could be forged. This element and topos of the *corresponding humours* therefore also became the anchor point for the argumentation in the letter episode. Put in a nutshell, the order of the day for establishing commercial connections was mutual liking, so the persons establishing a company together were required in modern terms to be a good fit in terms of their personalities. This idea also stood for and advocated trust and confidence in the personal aptitude of one another, which therefore served as the decisive and necessary foundation and putty for trust relationships in merchant partnerships in an age that increasingly strived towards a capitalistic individualisation of trading activities.[100] Thus, *corresponding humours* was so very important because it provided the merchants with another basis for justifying the business model of the private firm.

Also with regard to the potential benefits of such private firms and partnerships for doing business, the correspondents in the letter circle negotiated and shared an un-

100 On the importance of trust in Early Modern commercial relations, see Haggerty, *Merely for Money*, 66-96. See Lamikiz, *Trade and Trust*, 141-181. See in general Muldrew, *Economy of Obligation*; see Aslanian, "Social Capital." Regarding the process of building trust in letters with a similar approach, see Dossena, "Building trust." See as basic reading on trust also Fiedler, Martin. "Vertrauen ist gut, Kontrolle ist teuer: Vertrauen als Schlüsselkategorie wirtschaftlichen Handelns." *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 4 (2001): 576-592.

derstanding, which once more also corresponded with contemporary provisions and advice in merchant literature. The main advantage of the private firms as joint partner companies between individual merchants was that by means of establishing a firm together the individual partners joined forces with regard to manpower, knowledge, competence, capital and networks in order to be able to keep pace and cope with the challenges of international trade during that time. By means of joining forces the merchants were provided with the necessary operational flexibility that helped them to react appropriately to the "world economy in-the-making", which was evolving during that time, and to accomplish a certain reliability and predictability for their business enterprises and transactions during an age in which these factors were jeopardised and threatened to disappear through the vastness and new complexity of the international markets.[101] The business model that was envisaged by Luetkens for his partnership with Simon Moritz Bethmann reflected precisely these benefits of the private firm. His idea and vision were to establish a joint partner company in which he would take the part of the investor and capital provider while Simon Moritz would take on the role of the workhorse, and this was a highly accepted practice during that time.[102]

The two major personal skills which the correspondents referred to as fundamentally important with regard to the feasibility of the undertaking and for the success of the firm were experience in business and local usances and habits on the one hand and diligence on the other hand. The fact that the different correspondents in the episode were divided about whether or not the two associates actually showed these skills makes it clear that in most cases the significance and mandatory nature of these personal abilities were ultimately unquestionable. In order to be recognised as a suitable merchant subject for establishing a merchant house, the young men had to show experience, diligence, a good reputation, a certain amount of capital in the form of contacts or actual funds, and they needed a personality that was conformable and adaptable to others as well as good humours that created the means and facilitated cooperation in joint companies. These were the crucial elements and qualifications that enabled young men to become recognised by other merchants as a suitable subject for the merchant business. This became obvious from the letter negotiations in my analysis, in which the participants clearly drew on and mobilised these contemporary arguments during the negotiations as a certain underlying canon of expectations.

The exciting point about this canon of expectations, seen in the context of letter practice, is that not even the canon occurs as a pre-determined and fixed requirement catalogue that simply had to be met by the letter writers in order to take effect. Rather, it also occurred as an object of actual negotiation for which letters were needed. That means that although the correspondents shared a general understanding about the crucial qualifications a young man had to have, they nevertheless used these qualifications in different ways as arguments in their personal reasoning. As my analysis has shown,

101 Lindemann, "Doing Business in 18th century Hamburg," 163. See Crouzet, "Economic Change," 192. See Crouzet, "Le négoce international."; see Reinert/Fredona. "Merchants and the Origins of Capitalism," 171-181; see also Subrahmanyam, *Merchant Networks*, xiii.

102 See the explanations above as well as Marperger, *Der allzeitfertige Handels-Correspondent*, 412 ["der eine Geld einleget, der andere seinen Verstand und Leibarbeiten"].

the letter writers in the end used this canon as a resource to present and underpin their own respective standpoints and positions with regard to the planned undertaking of disengaging Simon Moritz. This means that in the course of letter negotiations the letter writers always linked the shared elements of mercantile subjectivation to their own standpoint in order to also exert influence on the further course of the negotiation. This fact becomes most recognisable in the example of how the different letter writers mobilised the very same topos of breadwinning as a traditional Protestant topos and cipher representing the virtues of diligence and zeal. All letter writers used it differently and for various purposes. The original passage from the Bible reads "By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken" (1. Moses 3:19).[103] Each and every one of the letter writers in the episode now tailored the topos to their specific needs. Nicolaus Gottlieb Luetkens referred to the topos of breadwinning to emphasise and claim the feasibility and lucrativeness of the undertaking. Simon Moritz used it to point to the challenges connected to the undertaking. However, in the same breath he nevertheless also indicated by alluding to the topos that he considered himself capable of mastering these challenges "through the sweat of my brow".[104] Johann Jakob used the topos to confirm the aptitude of his younger brother, but he also employed it to refer to his good and reputable standing in the merchant community. Johann Philipp used it to doubt the feasibility of the undertaking. In the final analysis, it becomes clearly obvious that and how each letter writer masterly moulded their language to their own motives. Thus, I was able to also show how these letter writers "mold language to influence the reader, expressing themselves in such a way that what they say will have an impact, given their knowledge of the reader", as Couchman and Crabb put it. This directly leads us the second field of insights and results that my analysis has yielded, which are insights about the power of persuasion present and mirrored in this letter episode.[105]

## 6.7 First Conclusion: The Benefits of Keeping a Low Profile in Letters

With regard to learning about the power of persuasion in letters, the analysis has shown how the historical actors used different discursive resources, arguments and canons of expectations, in a number of different ways, each tailored to their specific needs and demands, in order to put forward, substantiate and justify their own standpoint and approach to the matter of negotiation in the letter conversations. We observed a certain appropriation of discursive resources for the sake of one's own progress and reasoning. This served as the basis for the persuasion processes taking place in the letter episode. The prevailing mercantile catalogue of virtues, duties and expectations from discourse served as the necessary specified grid and matrix which the letter writers used to be

103 "Im Schweiße deines Angesichts sollst Du Dein Brot essen, bis das Du wieder zu Erde werdest davon Du genommen bist."

104 "Im Schweiße meines Angeßichtes." Letter from Bethmann, Simon Moritz to Luetkens, Nicolaus Gottlieb, November 25, 1743, TNA, HCA 30/234.

105 Couchman/Crabb, "Form and Persuasion," 11.

able to formulate their specific interests and opinions in the matter, and on the basis of this, the letter writers were also able to highlight their personal ability and opinions. The gallant way of speaking and writing served as the crucial language register which structured the conversation, which provided the authentic language and rules for the conversation and which added meaning to the written words in terms of how the statements in the letters were to be understood by the addressees. The language register added the rhetorical element to the conversation. That is, each argument that was put forward during the negotiation never appeared detached from the motivations of each of the letter writers, but quite on the contrary each argument was always combined with a certain motivation of the letter writer. This is reflected in the fact that the letter writers all chose specific ways and means of how to transmit their messages in special ways to the addressees in a rhetorically trained way, which again were understood by the addressees and reflected back in their response letters.[106] By means of the arguments presented and the specific ways in which these arguments were presented, the letters exchanged between the correspondents gained their significance as a source and powerful tool of negotiation and of persuasion.

The concrete effects and opportunities that the gallant language register offered becomes most apparent in the letters of Simon Moritz Bethmann. Yet, also in Luetkens' letters the practice of moulding one's language to the requirements of a situation, namely to the headhunting of Simon Moritz, already became clearly obvious. In the previous part, we have learned in detail how Luetkens mobilised elements from language registers available to him and certain resources of persuasion, like the topos of *corresponding humours*, in order to court and try to cast a spell on Simon Moritz in his letters in order to put forward his plan to establish a joint partner company. For this purpose, he drew on the practical principle of meeting on as equals, with his correspondent. Even more intriguing in this letter episode, however, is Simon Moritz's tactical manoeuvring in terms of his self-positioning and his ways of influencing the course of the negotiation, particularly with regard to initiating and ensuring that his brothers were integrated into the letter negotiation. His letter practice in this respect is not just very insightful because of the fact that the young man was obviously able to put himself into a position that allowed him various options for action. But it is also particularly insightful in relation to the central topic of this book because his strategy represented one of the strategies, apart from the sledgehammer method, that showed the clearest effects on the course of the negotiation. In other words, the practical principle Simon Moritz adhered to during the conversation, in the end paid off for him; it proved to be highly useful and helpful means for his subjectivation, and therefore it presents us with a verifiably promising or successful contemporary way of persuasion practice.

In the end, all participants of the present letter conversation ultimately conformed to the described pattern of negotiation practice, which becomes immediately clear from the fact that they all literally quoted each other's arguments in their letters only to add their respective opinions with regard to the matter afterwards. The example of Simon

106 This perspective and viewpoint was furthermore influenced by Wright Mills, Charles. "Situated Actions and Vocabularies of Motive." *American Sociological Review* 5, no. 6 (1940): 904-913. Thanks to Robert Mitchell.

Moritz, however, still provides the best opportunity to present the existing practical possibilities offered by letter-writing practice with regard to efforts of persuasion and the question of how to convince others of one's own standpoint because he was, after all, the person in question in this whole matter and his situation was the tricky issue for which the participants had to find a solution. Simon Moritz therefore was the person who was most required and under pressure to find convincing arguments. His tactical manoeuvring therefore provides a prime example to exemplify possible and typical contemporary ways of exerting influence in contemporary letter practice and business practice.

Strictly speaking, Simon Moritz's actions provide us with a kind of reverse logic of the power of persuasion because the strategy he pursued was to try to act as non-committedly und unaccountably as possible, passing on the responsibility and powers of decision to others. He effectively tried to position himself in his letters as merely a bystander, which helped him in the end to get himself out of the 'questionierte affair' without running the risk of losing face. This practice in itself, however, can definitely be described and seen as a way of persuasion in its own right, as a concrete way of exerting influence on others, and as a tool of the powers of persuasion provided by letters because this manoeuvring helped him to decidedly shape the entire course of the letter negotiation. I would describe and best define the persuasive principle underlying this approach, as mentioned before, as him applying the principle of keeping a low profile. This was the means by which he was able to keep all his options open – which was ultimately the reason why the negotiation took so long and why a solution in this case was delayed for months. The reason was that Simon Moritz always tried to look for loopholes in his negotiation practice, which gave Luetkens the hope that in the end the undertaking could still be brought to a positive conclusion.

As the analysis has shown the material and practice of letter writing and correspondence provides concrete, appropriate means for this approach of keeping a low profile while at the same time pressing ahead with the negotiation process, which Simon Moritz masterly applied. From the beginning, Simon Moritz Bethmann pursued a strategy with regard to his self-presentation and self-positioning that deliberately put him in a submissive position relating to Luetkens but also relating to his brothers. At the same time, however, he constantly signalled that he himself would in general be agreeable to the idea of being enticed away from Furly and establishing a merchant house together with Luetkens – because as a matter of fact, Luetkens' offer was very tempting for him. By means of this two-pronged approach, he therefore handed over the responsibility to his brothers but still presented himself in the best possible light. For this purpose, the gallant language register of flattery presented itself as a perfectly suitable tool and framework to perform such a pirouette because it allowed him to put himself in a humble position, executing a kind of devoted bow before Luetkens through his choice of words, letter formulae and rhetorics while at the same time sending compliments to Luetkens and making a courtesy call on him by reaffirming the benefits that Luetkens had outlined in his letter. Thus, also with regard to the argumentative strategy of his negotiation practice, he walked the tightrope and chose the same approach as with regard to the mobilisation of the language register. In his letters, he took up and strongly confirmed the arguments presented by Luetkens

with regard to his plans, only to then mould them from their original meaning to a meaning that was more suitable for his own situation. He thus used the arguments not to point to the easy efforts to put this plan into practice but to point to the challenges that he would face with regard to the plan but that he was hoping to master. By that, he simultaneously emphasised his aptitude for this job but also justified why he still needed to consult his brothers.

The way Simon Moritz then literally copied-in his brothers into the negotiation to shape the conversation, by means of adding a genuine copy of the letter of his oldest brother, is highly significant with regard to the opportunities that letter practice offered. We are presented with a practice that was omnipresent in Early Modern letters but that now impressively shows and demonstrates its significance in terms of how negotiation practice was conducted on the basis of letters. The significance of the material practice of attaching copies of letters to a letter or letter packet goes far beyond the mere purpose of providing additional information for the addressee, and it also did not only follow practical purposes such as saving postage.[107] Rather, as the analysis has shown it also clearly served persuasive purposes and motives. We can already state at this point that this fact is applicable to many other copied-in letters in other contemporary contexts and in the other letter episodes in this book.[108] In the present case, for Simon Moritz the practice of copying in the letter of his brother Johann Philipp served the purpose of absolving himself from responsibility, which only confirmed the logic of his previous self-positioning. With regard to learning about the character of letter practice in general from this material event and evidence, we can observe how, through the material and physical means of the letter as material artefacts, literally polyphonic conversations unfold before our eyes. In these letter conversations, reciprocal reference, quoting each other and copying in each other were considered and valued as a precious asset for the purpose of generally being able to conduct negotiations on the basis of letters.

We have also learned that these practices were furthermore always also intertwined and connected to the personal motives and motivations of the persons involved, who tried to exert influence on the other participants and the further course of the negotiation. In his first response letter, Simon Moritz enthusiastically wrote that after Luetkens had left Rotterdam, "his heart and soul would still revel in the memory of E.E.'s amiable person, with whom I am still, so to say, maintaining a distant conversation". His brother Johann Jakob used a similar expression in his letter, writing that there "is still some time to converse with you".[109] During the 18th century, such sentences were very common letter phrases, omnipresent in letters and letter-writing manuals, which strangely often leads modern researchers to the assumption that we have to regard these phrases

107 Whyman, *Pen and People*, 46-71. See Behringer, *Im Zeichen des Merkur*.

108 In this book, the practice is not only relevant in the present chapter but particularly also in the chapters on the shipping business and Luetkens' marriage.

109 Letter from Bethmann, Simon Moritz to Luetkens Nicolaus Gottlieb, April 17, 1744, TNA, HCA 30/234. Letter from Bethmann, Simon Moritz an Luetkens, Nicolaus Gottlieb, March 3, 1744, TNA, HCA 30/234. See in this regard in further detail also Haasis, "Augenblick."

essentially as mere platitudes or temporary fads.[110] This assumption is not sustainable because it misses the mark. In my opinion, we have to take these phrases quite literally. From a contemporary point of view, letter correspondence often certainly served as precisely its own sphere of conversation, which was necessary and which the letter writers accepted as such, which becomes clearly obvious in the presented episode. On the basis of letters, negotiations took place, solutions were found and goals were reached that could not have been negotiated in any way other than by letter because of the simple fact of the spatial separation between the actors. Therefore, letter writing was a tool of empowerment and an extension option of their communication possibilities and channels rather than a limitation. It was a communication asset which the letter writers used to compensate for spatial separation and to remain capable of acting in certain fields of action for which they would not have found any other way of communication. This fact, in turn, was clearly known and appreciated already also by the contemporaries themselves. As only one of many examples, the *Zedler Encyclopaedia* for instance defined a letter in 1733 as a "short, well-arranged speech, dealing with all kinds of things, which you send to each other in writing and under a seal, if you cannot or do not want to speak orally with one another."[111]

As is my deep conviction, it can therefore surely be assumed that they regarded their letter exchanges not only symbolically but in fact quite literally as an actual continuation and extension of their typical ways of conversing with each other, on the basis of which they were able to deal with each other and manage their affairs.[112] These written conversations naturally had their own rules, and the contemporaries developed specific letter practices to essentially transpose certain ways and means of conversation, particularly with regard to the rules of gallantry, to the medium of the letter. Nonetheless, "conversing with the pen", as Bruce Redford put it,[113] was regarded a regular way of conversing with each other. One of these practices of transposing conversations to paper was copying-in letters in other letters in order to concretely comment on each other's arguments, perform gallant gestures, interrupt each other or bring a new player to the negotiation table during letter conversations.

Nicolaus Gottlieb Luetkens definitely knew how he had to understand the material gestures by Simon Moritz when receiving the copies of the letters of his brother. He

110 Vellusig, *Schriftliche Gespräche*, 28-66, particularly 51-53; see Stuber/Hächler/Lienhard, *Hallers Netz*, 10. See also Anton, *Authentizität als Fiktion*, 5-12, 134; see Furger, *Briefsteller*, 145-146; Nickisch, *Stilprinzipien*, 204-223, Gurkin Altman, *Epistolarity*, 3-12. Regarding the "arsenal of formulaic expressions" ["Arsenal formelhafter Argumente"] see already Steinhausen, *Geschichte des deutschen Briefes*, vol. 2, 302. For a more differentiated and sophisticated perspective on letter formuale, see Droste, "Briefe als Medium". See also Van der Wal/Rutten, "The Practice of Letter Writing."

111 "eine kurze, wohlgesetzte, von allerley Sachen handelnde Rede, die man einander unter einem Siegel schriftlich zuschicket, wenn man sonst nicht miteinander mündlich sprechen kann oder will." "Brief." *Großes vollständiges Universal-Lexikon aller Wissenschaften und Künste*, edited by Johann Heinrich Zedler, Bd. 4, Halle/Leipzig, 1733, 1359. See also Hunold, *Die Allerneueste Art Höflich und Galant zu Schreiben oder auserlesene Briefe*, 53 ["den Mangel der mündlichen Unterredung durch schriftliche Correspondence ersetzen."]

112 See with a slightly different view even Fitzmaurice, "Like talking on paper."

113 Redford, *Converse with the Pen*.

responded to them accordingly. Simon Moritz indicated by this practice, as part of the principle of keeping a low profile, that his hands were tied in this matter, and Luetkens in the end had no other option than agreeing on that. Copying-in the letter of his oldest brother was therefore a far more powerful way of sending and transmitting this message than if Simon Moritz had only expressed this fact in his own words. This once more shows the powers of persuasion provided by the practice of letter writing for the practical principle of keeping a low profile in correspondence. As Toby L. Ditz once put it, "when merchants articulated intentions and defined situations, they did so within the matrix of possibilities and constraints posed by the genre and narrative conventions, symbolic repertoires, discourses, and vocabularies that they mobilized and reworked in their letters."[114] Simon Moritz's actions and letters provided us with a prime example of this, mobilizing the gallant language register in particular, purposeful ways, and they furthermore showed us the practical consequences evolving from it with regard to the actor's self-representations. At the end of the letter episode, Simon Moritz left the negotiation table with his reputation still intact and having saved face. The result of the episode for Luetkens, on the other hand, was quite pragmatically that he unfortunately still had to continue his search for a suitable business partner for his future merchant house.

The third point that we had to learn from the episode is that, although the negotiations in the beginning seemed promising, in the end the formal conditions spoiled Luetkens' plans. In the course of the negotiation, the argument put forward by Johann Philipp that Simon Moritz Bethmann had to serve at least the minimal possible duration of his employment contract according to contemporary standards, which was 2 to 2.5 years, appears to have been the knockout argument putting an end to Luetkens' initial plans. As a matter of fact, this argument must indeed be regarded as a legitimate and valid contemporary reason for ending the negotiation. However, before Johann Philipp's intervention, negotiations had been in full swing even though this condition must have already been known to all other participants. Thus, and especially also in the light of continuing negotiations after the letter by Johann Philipp had reached Luetkens, we must assume that even this argument left a certain degree of leeway in interpretation and therefore was negotiable. The actual problem with regard to the enticement of Simon Moritz from Furly therefore particularly came down to one particular circumstance. All the arrangements regarding the employment of Simon Moritz in the house of Furly had been made by the foster father and mentor of the Bethmann brothers, Jakob Adami, who, as we know from other sources, had been a loyal trading partner of Furly's for ages.[115] Since Adami, however, was actually on his deathbed at that precise moment in time, as we learn from the letters, the Bethmann brothers refrained from seeking confrontation with Furly. Apart from legal reasons, this is another probable explanation why the family council rejected Luetkens' proposal in the final stages of the negotiation. This also once more shows the significance and role of the family as consultants and as a decision-making body during a time in which business culture was gradually developing more and more individualistic structures. The argument of

114 Ditz, "Formative Ventures," 62.

115 See Henninger, *Bethmann*, 116. See also Haasis, *Augenblick*, 112.

Adami lying on his deathbed in the end, which did not allow for a continuation of the negotiation, as valid as it may be, however also represented, if you will, an immense persuasive undercurrent and clearly served as a persuasive tool for Simon Moritz as well. As macabre as it might sound, the crucial question that this argument raised and the question that literally blighted the negotiation was in the end, who would dare to voice objections to a dying man? One year after this letter episode and after the death of Jakob Adami the Bethmann brothers founded the Bethmann bank, which is still in existence today.

## 6.8 The Second Episode: Insider Dealings

Finding a merchant clerk was much less challenging than finding a business partner. The reason for this was that the requirements and formal barriers for employing a merchant clerk had a far lower threshold than with regard to finding a business partner. The reason for this was that the responsibilities associated with the position of a clerk were far lower and relatively limited.[116] The task of a merchant clerk was basically to help with and take on parts of the daily work of a wholesale merchant, while a business partner and merchant associate, as we have learned, was directly responsible and liable for carrying out and procuring trading activities for the shared company. Regarding Luetkens' specific situation, however, there was yet another reason why things in this matter were resolved very quickly. The reason was that his future merchant clerk was recommended to him by his longest and closest trading partners in Hamburg, the merchants Jobst Henning Hertzer and Christopher von Bobartt. In order to support Luetkens in making his business more competitive and to advance his work and career, the Hamburg merchants proposed to Luetkens in March 1744 to send him one of their own most experienced, valued and trusted employees, Hinrich Schuetz or Schütz, to France to support him in his business. Luetkens gladly accepted this generous offer. The fact that this matter was resolved in such an uncomplicated way, however, should not obscure just how crucial this step was for Luetkens' establishment phase. Having an employee was an important step towards gaining a firm standing in business. It brought his business to a new level, formalising and accelerating his trading activities and processes, which helped him to further enhance his business and reputation. In order to illustrate this fact, we can simply once more draw on very concrete material evidence from the Luetkens archive, which clearly points us to the significance of this change in Luetkens' business life and how the employment of Schuetz in some respects even immediately affected his business practice.

When reading Nicolaus Gottlieb's main large Letter Book, we can notice that almost all letter copies in this book were written in the same handwriting. It was Luetkens'

116 See Deges, "Zusammenfassende Übersicht," commenting on the book *Der getreue und geschickte Handels-Diener* by Paul Jacob Marperger, XV-LXV. See "Factor." *Oekonomische Encyklopädie*, edited by Johann Georg Krünitz. 242 volumes. Berlin, 1773-1858, vol. 12, 21-22. See Häberlein, "Trading Companies."

own handwriting, as we can conclude from comparing the letter copies with other letters that he had sent out during that time. His handwriting style was furthermore very individual, very neat, but somewhat compressed and small. In a sample of 100 letters I could easily spot those by Luetkens. Many of the hands of his correspondents were in fact very buoyant. I know no other hand that is comparable to his in the Prize Papers collection. At the very end of the Letter Book, however, after 685 letters in the same handwriting and 15 letters before the Letter Book ended at number 700, we clearly and immediately recognise a stark caesura in the handwriting. The handwriting changes from compressed to a typical French hand. The copied-in letters were now much more zestfully written. This material caesura reflects the start of Hinrich Schuetz's employment as Luetkens' merchant clerk. From this moment onwards, his clerk took on the task of copying into the Letter Book and also started correcting the letters that Luetkens sent out to his correspondents.[117] It is not hard to imagine the considerable relief that this change must have meant for Luetkens.

This task was not the only task that Schuetz would take on in Luetkens' business, which is why, when the court proceedings took place in the case of the ship the *Hope* in London later on, the British authorities had reason to ask the defendants in the *further additional hearings and interrogatories* that were send to Hamburg in January 1747 "in forma diplomatis", the very revealing question: "Do you know Mr. Henry Schutz? Did not the said Mr. Henry Schutz go to France and to what part in or about April 1745? To whom and in whose Service did he go thither? Did he not go as a contracted Clerk Apprentice or Servant to someone and whom? And did he not arrive in France and serve such Person there and in what Post or Capacity? Where does he now live and reside? Is he now a servant Agent or Factor for anyone and whom or what Business or Employment does he follow?"[118] Albert von Bobartt, who was at that time "Clerck in the Compting House of Mess. Hertzer & von Bobart 20 years old", who succeeded Schuetz as a clerk in the said Hamburg merchant house and who was one of the additional witnesses that the British court had asked the Hamburg authorities for, answered this question in a similarly revealing manner. He stated that "Hinrich Schutze as a citizen's son here [in Hamburg], […] has served 8 years in the compting house of Messrs. Hertzer /& von Bobart & that he knew that he sett out about a year & a half […] for Brest & other places in France to pick up some correspondence, as a traveller, & that this Hinrich Schutze, as far as this d[eponent] knows was in no service, but lived at his own expense […]."[119] As we already know, this witness statement was obviously nothing less than a downright lie and came about neither by chance nor coincidence. Albert von Bobartt's statement in the end mirrored a strategy and plan that the Hamburg merchants Hertzer & von Bobartt, together with Nicolaus Gottlieb Luetkens, had concocted right from the beginning with regard to the impression that the connection between Luetkens and

117 Letter Book I, TNA, HCA 30/232, no. 685-700.

118 Additional Hearings and Attestations of Hamburg Witnesses and Deponents based on additional interrogatories of the English High Court of Admiralty regarding the case of the *Hope*, taken place in Hamburg, January 1748, TNA, HCA 32/115/14.

119 Examination and attestation of Albert von Bobart, "Clerck in the Compting House of Mess. Hertzer & von Bobart", as part of the *Additional Hearings and Attestations*, TNA, HCA 32/115/14.

Schuetz might create in the eyes of any outside party. The plan was that no one should know about the employment of Schuetz in Luetkens' service, because in March 1745 Hertzer & von Bobartt had already made other, more far-reaching plans with regard Schuetz's role in their future business endeavours. They planned to employ him later as a factor and agent for their and Luetkens' business in France, for the time after Luetkens had returned to Hamburg. Since this, however, might have awakened suspicions on the side of their other trading partners and would have made it necessary to also acquaint several other trading partners with the plan, they instead decided to treat this whole matter confidentially. This is why all negotiations took place in sealed letters.

In this part of the chapter, I will analyse this confidential letter correspondence between Hertzer & von Bobartt and Luetkens, and in the end also including Schuetz himself, in order to generally demonstrate the subtleties and processes accompanying the employment of a merchant clerk as a crucial step of a mercantile establishment phase. On a more detailed level, however, I will also analyse the powers of persuasion effective in the episode, which relate primarily to the question of what the correspondents contemplated, planned and concocted with regard to Schuetz's future role in their business. I will therefore once more take a look at the properties of the practices and their effects on the lives of the people involved in my analysis because in the end, speaking of the actual events taking place on the basis of letter practice in March and April 1745, both of these areas of interest form two sides of the same coin. Before coming to that and the actual analysis of this second part, however, we once more have to take a look at the background and past history of the events that had led to this episode and in fact that had made it necessary that such an approach was needed in the first place, which does, however, not mean that the ultimate solution was only a compromise and a less-than-ideal solution. Quite on the contrary, the solution that Luetkens found in the end with the help of his trading partners in Hamburg was extremely favourable for him and was in some ways even a better solution than his original plan, which had been to join forces with Simon Moritz Bethmann. In short, we can say that all his efforts paid off. The background to this second episode of this chapter connects directly with the episode analysed in the following last part of this chapter, and it also already in some ways anticipates the next and last chapter of this book, which will deal with Luetkens' marriage. Before finding his merchant clerk, Luetkens actually had found a business partner for his future merchant house. Contrary to his initial plans, however, in the end Luetkens decided to open up a merchant house together with his business partner in his hometown of Hamburg.

His chosen future business partner, Ehrenfried Engelhardt, however, had neither contact to France, nor had he visited France beforehand, nor did he visit Luetkens during the time Luetkens was still trading there. Engelhardt simply waited in Hamburg until Luetkens' return. In order to guarantee, however, that his French businesses could continue without interruption after his return to Hamburg, and since he was desperately in need of help already during the last months of his stay in France, Luetkens needed a helping hand for his business. He found this help in Hinrich Schuetz, who would later also become agent and merchant factor in France for Luetkens and Hertzer & von Bobartt. Once again, Luetkens therefore killed two birds with one stone during the last months of his establishment phase.

## Finding a Business Partner

The initial situation that made it necessary for Luetkens to rethink his future plans for his business was the failure of the negotiations with the Bethmanns. This had forced him to find a new solution and a new idea for where and how to establish his own merchant house. As a matter of fact, he found this solution very soon after he had withdrawn from the negotiations with Simon Moritz Bethmann. Notwithstanding this, the negotiations in this case must have been similarly complex as the negotiations with the Bethmanns and even after a general agreement was found in this matter, the negotiations still continued and required effort before the matter was brought to an end. The latter, in turn, is the story that I will mostly tell in the next chapter. But generally, it can still be said already at this point that these negotiations finally brought the breakthrough for Luetkens' plans to establish a merchant house in one of the booming trading towns of northern Europe, which happened to also be his hometown.

About half a year after the Bethmann negotiations, Luetkens found a business partner in the person of Ehrenfried Engelhardt, a merchant from Hamburg, who until this time had lived and worked in the house of Luetkens' old employer, David Speelmeyer. Engelhardt entered into the joint partner company and opened up a merchant house together with Luetkens in November 1745, but before that, the two merchants still had to go through and settle manifold challenges. This time, however, in contrast to the episode with Simon Moritz, the negotiations came to a conciliatory ending. This conciliatory ending also included the employment of Hinrich Schuetz as another helpful hand needed to implement their plans. The explanations about the merger with Ehrenfried Engelhardt conclude my remarks and explanations about the challenges of finding a suitable business partner, also called socius, as an important step for a merchant's establishment phase. The last chapter of this book will then be devoted ultimately to the results and consequences of this merger. In November 1745, Luetkens in fact did not only open his merchant house in Hamburg together with Ehrenfried, but he also married Ehrenfried's sister, Ilsabe Engelhardt. This step finalised his establishment phase as a wholesale merchant in 18th century Europe.

Unfortunately, the most important early letters that were exchanged in this whole matter between Luetkens, Ehrenfried Engelhardt, David Speelmeyer and, in some ways most unfortunately, also the private letters from Ilsabe have not survived in the Luetkens archive but are lost. This is also the reason why I can unfortunately not analyse this early letter negotiation in detail. We can neither find letters by Luetkens himself dealing with this matter in his Letter Books nor do we find letters by his future business partner of this early time as parts of his letter bundles. We only find later letters from both writers, Luetkens and Engelhardt, starting in October 1744, at a time when things were already been settled between them, at least as regarded the plan to enter into a partnership. The possible reason for this was that Luetkens still carried these particular letters with him as part of his most personal belongings during the last days of his stay in France. Notwithstanding the absence of these early letters, the later letters still allow me to present the subtleties of the joint future and particularly

the question of how they should handle the interim period until the opening of their merchant house.

The surviving letters show that after the negotiations with Simon Moritz had failed, the merchant Luetkens quickly turned his focus and interest to the Engelhardt family, a family that is, unfortunately, no longer well-known today.[120] This time, he furthermore played it safer than in the case of the Bethmanns by approaching a merchant that was closely associated with Luetkens' own former employee and close confidant, David Speelmeyer. This way, he stood a good chance that this time matters were to be resolved more easily. However, in this case, too, the challenge and precondition were the same as before: the correspondents needed to first pitch their plan to the current employer of Engelhardt's, Speelmeyer, and they needed to convince him and make it palatable to him to allow Engelhardt to leave his service in his house to join forces with Luetkens. Additionally, even before that, Luetkens' plan was to invite and convince Engelhardt to visit him in France to introduce him to his businesses there. But since Speelmeyer had already allowed Luetkens, too, to take such business trips years ago, during the times that he himself was a clerk in the house of Speelmeyer,

Luetkens must have hoped and trusted that Speelmeyer would once more not be generally opposed to such an idea with regard to Ehrenfried.[121] The important thing was, however, that the merchants needed to find suitable ways and reasonable arguments to sell the idea to the "old man", "seinen Alten" as the correspondents called Speelmeyer.[122] Last but not least, Luetkens also slightly changed and adapted his general approach of how to best tackle the issue of founding a merchant house, either deliberately or simply by means of grasping an opportunity that was provided to him. The result was the same. His new approach was one that had essentially already been practiced successfully in mercantile business for centuries: Luetkens' ultimate solution was to marry into another merchant family. By doing so, he won a business partner, the brother of his future wife, he found a place for establishing his business, Hamburg, and he furthermore gained additional financial and personal resources on which he could build his future career, all at the same time.[123] Engelhardt, as a person, was neither family nor kin to Luetkens beforehand. But in their private firm, they would now build up a new family linkage as a basis for a prospering business. The merger helped both families. For Luetkens, it definitely came at the right time. Still in the 18th century, there was no more direct or promising way to build a strong business than to marry the

120 Regarding the Engelhardt family, see "Engelhard." *Genealogisches Handbuch bürgerlicher Familien (Deutsches Geschlechterbuch)*, edited by Bernard Koerner. 221 volumes, Görlitz: C.A. Starke, 1912, vol 20, 70-92.

121 This fact is revealed to us in a letter from Luetkens to Simon Moritz Bethmann. "habe da [in Frankreich] alle Afferes von mein gewisene Patron [Speelmeyer] meist alle getriben und zwey Jahr in Lorient auf dem Verk[auf] gewesen." Letter from Luetkens, Nicolaus Gottlieb to Bethmann, Simon Moritz, December 17, 1743, TNA, HCA 30/232, Letter Book II, unnumbered.

122 Letter from Hertzer & von Bobartt to Luetkens, Nicolaus Gottlieb, March 5, 1745, TNA, HCA 30/234.

123 On the importance of the dowry, see Earle, *Making of the English Middle Class*, 190.

daughter of a reputable merchant family and therefore establish an alliance with this family on the basis of which one could start one's own business.[124]

In late November 1745, Luetkens married Ilsabe Engelhardt. Her brother Ehrenfried Engelhardt became his future business partner, the *compagnion* or *socius* for his merchant house, as the contemporaries called it. Together with him Luetkens established and opened up the merchant house Luetkens & Engelhardt in Hamburg. This step therefore represented the completion of his establishment process. The merchants later became Hamburg's third largest sugar merchants.

During the planning and preparation phase of this association and merger with Ehrenfried Engelhard, which in the end was put into practice and entered into force in November 1745, things, however, once more did not completely go according to the plan that Luetkens had devised and envisaged beforehand. This led to the result that once more an alternative solution to an original plan was needed. This solution is what I will direct my attention to next because it called into action the merchants Hertzer & von Bobartt, who provided the solution to this problem by sending Hinrich Schuetz to France. The general agreement regarding the merger and the establishing of a joint merchant house in Hamburg had been reached between Luetkens and Engelhardt in some form in the second half of 1744. We unfortunately have no further evidence of the date or the details in the Luetkens archive due to the missing letters apart from the reassurance that it had been adopted and was taken for granted by both the future partners in their later letters and that it later entered into force. Following this agreement, Luetkens' actual plan was, however, to also impel Engelhardt to travel to France to support him with his business there. The idea behind it was that Luetkens would thus ensure a smooth transition from his business activities in France to a relocation of his businesses to Hamburg. For Engelhardt, in turn, visiting Luetkens in France should already make him familiar with the businesses and the networks that Luetkens had in France, and, as Luetkens also did not conceal from his future socius, Engelhardt was also offered to extend his stay in France to continue their business there for the time when Luetkens would already begin his return voyage to Hamburg.

The negotiations in this matter provide us with the necessary background for also understanding the actions and measures taken with regard to employing Schuetz because this initial plan, too, failed, which once more forced Luetkens towards a strategic rethink. The reason why we should still take a detailed look at the previous events is that Luetkens pursued a rather similar way of approaching his correspondents in both episodes. In both episodes, he tried to exercise the utmost care to keep the original plan underlying the idea concealed and confidential as best as possible and only let it be known to the parties directly involved. That meant specifically that in the first part of the episode basically only Engelhard was privy to his plans, and in the second part only Hertzer & von Bobartt and Schuetz knew about his motivations. His letter-writing practice and particularly the letters by Hertzer & von Bobartt in this episode there-

124 See Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, 43, 245. See Weber, *Deutsche Kaufleute*, 272-273, 287. See Earle, *Making of the English Middle Class*, 189-194. See Grassby, *Business Community*, 303. See Roseveare, *Markets and Merchants*.

fore strictly followed the principle of confidentiality or, to put it more accurately, the practical principle of arranging insider dealings, which I will present in this chapter.

This principle is similar to the practical principle of giving correspondents preferential treatment that is going to be presented in the next chapter on Luetkens' marriage initiation. In contrast to the principle of special treatment, however, the principle of insider dealings was different with regard to its initial conditions. While the principle of special treatment, as I will show in the next chapter, was used to create a feeling of exclusivity on the part of the addressees in order to convince them to help Luetkens, the principle of insider dealing, as it is presented in this chapter, was primarily based on an already done deal, a fait accompli, which, however, needed to be put into practice appropriately by means of letter. In order to do so, the letter writers used certain practices that are presented in the following explanations. In this episode, Luetkens was offered help by his trading partners. They presented him with a tailor-made solution in the end. But we will start at the beginning.

The original idea behind his plan to lure Engelhardt to France is revealed to us in two letters that we can find in Luetkens' large Letter Book, both addressed to his correspondent Ehrenfried Engelhard and a certain "E.E.", which was a diction that already in itself held a very revealing connotation. In the contemporary common parlance, "E.E." often was used and simply stood for "Honored Sir" or "Esteemed Gentleman". And this fact is interesting because as it will turn out the second letter sent, although it was addressed to Ehrenfried Engelhard, whose initials were also "E.E.", it was actually and primarily addressed and meant for the eyes of Engelhardt's employer, David Speelmeyer.[125] This fact was also the reason why the content of the second letter slightly differed to the content of the first letter. It was an alternative version of the first letter, to be chosen in case it was needed. The first thing we have to acknowledge with regard to both letters, however, before devoting us to these different contents of the letters, was that we learn from the letter that the merger during that time was already a done deal. The correspondents did not in any way address the fact that they would in due course of time enter into a partnership. However, what the correspondents did discuss in these letters were the particularities of the provisions that would apply for the interim period, which apparently still needed to be negotiated, and this object of negotiation provides us with enough material to learn about the status quo of both future partners and their room for manoeuvre.

The strategy that Luetkens noticeably pursued in these letters and the way that he tackled the matter of enforcing Engelhardt's journey to France was to deliberately use two letters for delivering his message to Hamburg. He thus split up his proposition into two separate written statements, one personal version for Engelhardt, one alternative version for external parties. The two letters were, however, both sent to Engelhardt as one postal item, one letter packet, with the second letter having been inserted in the first, just as in the case of the letter packet sent to Luetkens' brother Anton in the chapter

125 The abbreviation E.E. or V.L. in Early Modern letters stands for "Euer Edlen", "Euer Ehren" viz. "Viver Liebden", which was typically used as an abbreviation in many German, Dutch, but also in many French letters of the 18th century as a form of address. See the merchant manual Marperger, *Getreuer und geschickter Handelsdiener*, 217.

on Luetkens' shipping business. In the present case, the first, outer letter was intended and addressed to Engelhardt "for personal uses only", "in eigen Händen" as it was called in the Letter Book, which corresponds with the practice of writing "particulair letters" about which we have already learned in the chapter on commission trade and about which we will once more learn in detail in the chapter on Luetkens' marriage preparations. The second letter was inserted "proforma" as he called it, that is, if needed for a wider audience, but was actually intended for Speelmeyer.[126] If, therefore, Engelhardt was willing to agree to Luetkens' proposal, he could use this second letter, in the same way as Luetkens had already used this strategy in the case of the arrangements with his brother Anton, to present the idea to his patron Speelmeyer. Luetkens thus provided his future business partner with a kind of power to act and power of attorney, which enabled him to take the necessary steps to get the plan underway. For this purpose, this second letter was deliberately inserted folded into the first letter so that Engelhardt could simply use this letter provided by Luetkens if he needed material proof, a bargaining chip and a powerful lever for the undertaking, namely the journey to France. Speelmeyer would never know about the first letter.

In his first letter Luetkens chose a rather attentive and tender tone for presenting his idea to Engelhardt, keeping the ultimate outcome open, while in his second letter the presented idea already assumed the shape of a very concrete request and a lucrative offer for all involved. Sending two letters and splitting up the proposal between these two letters, however, did not only pay tribute to two different addressees and target groups, whom one would address in different ways, but it also, first and foremost, followed a strategic calculation. This becomes apparent in the simple fact that the message and statements sent in the respective letters differed slightly from one another. It becomes apparent from looking at the entire letter packet that the first letter served the purpose of acquainting Engelhardt with an idea that would, however, need a certain adaption, an alternative framing in the letter to Speelmeyer in order to increase the probability that Speelmeyer would agree to the proposal that Engelhardt should travel to France. The reason why the contents of both letters differ from one another was ultimately to increase their persuasiveness. Consequently, the actual plan behind the proposal, which was that Luetkens in essence wanted to introduce Engelhardt to his business, was left out of the second letter, and instead the second letter presented a slightly different version of the proposal that Luetkens made to Engelhardt. In this second letter he simply suggested that Engelhardt should go on a trip to France, on his own account. Reading the two letters one after the other will be highly informative with regard to how Luetkens once more tried to pull the strings to get his initial idea put into practice by means of his letters, their text and material. In the first letter, no. 583 in his Letter Book, Luetkens wrote to Ehrenfried Engelhardt that if

> "E.E. would travel to France, this would certainly accelerate my return ["Retur beschleunigen"]. It would also be advantageous for E.E., since I can introduce E.E. to my businesses here, so that E.E. becomes familiar with everything and I could introduce E.E.

126 See letter from Luetkens, Nicolaus Gottlieb to Engelhardt, Ehrenfried, March 8, 1745, TNA, HCA 30/232, Letter Book I, no. 583 ["in eigen Händen"] and no. 584.

> to many people ["mit Leute bekant zu machen"]. E.E could also act as a substitute for me here ["meine Stelle hier vertretten"]. E.E. will certainly not regret it. And when E.E. is here, it is very likely that E.E. as well as I will gain a lot of profit ["viell Geldt"] from it. [...] If E.E. doesn't like it here or if E.E. doesn't find it advantageous ["avantageus"], E.E. can return with me or I arrange for a free lodging at my friends' German merchant houses in Nantes or Bordeaux [...]. And if E.E. wished E.E. can work at their compting houses ["auf derro Contoer arbeyten"] and enjoy every freedom of trade there. E.E. would therefore find an amicable way ["mit Gütte"] to leave Monsieur S[peelmeyer]. As soon as I am back in Hamburg, he would most certainly not easily and amicably disengage you."[127]

The general tenor and aim of his proposal to Engelhardt was to convince Engelhardt to follow in his footsteps in France and to take on his role and responsibilities in France as an acclimatisation process and adaption period in the run-up to their future joint company. In this regard, Luetkens emphasised that such a training period would also provide a far better basis for the upcoming negotiations with Engelhardt's current employer, Speelmeyer, who still had to consent to the plan that Engelhardt would leave him and enter into a new merchant house. As the second letter will reveal, unlike the employment relationship in which Simon Moritz Bethmann served in the house of Furly, Engelhardt was already approaching the end of his employment time in the house of Speelmeyer. However, despite or maybe precisely because of this, the letters that were sent to Hamburg and the proposal presented in them did not in any way create the impression that Engelhardt would immediately enter into the service of another merchant, namely Luetkens, in France but rather that he would just pay a visit to France. A message that would signal the opposite could under no circumstances be presented to Speelmeyer, even despite the fact that this merchant had been amicable to Luetkens, who was Speelmeyer's former employee. The old merchant would not have agreed to that. This was finally also the reason why writing a second letter, with a slightly adapted version of the proposal, was indispensable. This second letter needed to present valid grounds and reasons for sending Engelhardt out to France that were reasonable, understandable and justifiable before Speelmeyer, which was why Luetkens choose a different line of argument. This line of argument completely omitted the fact that Engelhardt would work with Luetkens in France, but it presented the journey to France as an individual travel activity for Engelhardt, which only served his own individual purposes and benefits. Providing his employee with an opportunity for personal advancement that would furthermore also come with certain benefits for Speelmeyer, such as French commissions, was a basis for negotiation and an argumentation that Speelmeyer would more probably agree to than being presented with the actual plan behind it, which was introducing and integrating Engelhardt into Luetkens' business. Just as in the case of his brother Anton, Nicolaus Gottlieb Luetkens once more left the decision to Engelhardt whether or not he would make use of the letter and forward it

127 Letter from Luetkens, Nicolaus Gottlieb to Engelhardt, Ehrenfried, March 8, 1745, TNA, HCA 30/232, Letter Book I, no. 583.

to Speelmeyer. Engelhardt could accept the material gesture or destroy all material evidence of it. In his letter, Luetkens added the statement that "I am sending this enclosed letter to E.E. proforma ["einliegenden Brief proforma"], so that if wished E.E. can show it [to Speelmeyer]. In case it meets with approval, I wish that it shows the intended effect and E.E. will get free through it ["frey kommen"]. In case that E.E. does not find this advisable, do not forward to the letter".[128]

Luetkens' second letter with the alternative version of his plans subsequently reads:

> "Since E.E. had told me some time ago that he would like to travel to France at his earliest convenience, it appears to me that now is the best opportunity in the world ["schönste Occasion von der Weldt"]. Since E.E. had written to me that, since his skills in French are not yet perfect, E.E. would first like to stay for one or two years in a German merchant house ["Teutsch contor"] in Bordeaux or Nantes, I have presented this idea to my intimate friends ["intime Freunde"] Ochs & Schweighauser at Nantes, who are Protestants and whose house is one of the best in France and who are currently in need of a clerk to look after their German correspondence, and they have agreed to welcome E.E. in their house. I have told them E.E. could be in Nantes directly after Easter. [...] They have left me master ["meister gelassen"] of the terms and conditions of the employment, so I have arranged with them that E.E. would get no salary in case he would leave their house before the expiry of one year, if he stays another year, he receives 400 £, after the second year 500 £, after the third 600 £. You can trade freely in their house but only à costy [in Nantes]. Furthermore, E.E. should know that he would not be treated as an employee ["nicht wie ein Bedienten"] but as a friend. There could not be a better opportunity than this opportunity and I wish E.E. all best luck with it. I hope that M. Sp[eelmeyer] will not be that fussed about the two or three weeks [left of his employment in Speelmeyer's house], so that E.E. will be able to leave at the first opportunity, that is, before Easter, which I will gladly hear from E.E.'s response letter."[129]

The second letter in the end took the form of a recommendation letter as they circulated widely and in manifold ways during the era, which is also they reason why the authors of the letter-writing manuals of the time even devoted whole chapters just to letters of recommendation.[130] The letter in this respect stuck to a certain standard repertoire with regard to the arguments provided. Luetkens praised the *good occasion* that presented itself precisely at this moment in time for a trip to France, which served the purpose to underline that the opportunity should not be missed. He, however, left out the fact that it was a particularly opportune moment for Engelhardt to come to France because during this time Luetkens, too, was present in the house of Ochs & Schweighauser. In this regard, however, he secondly made Engelhardt a very concrete offer for a lucrative and lasting way of employment at a reputable German house in Nantes, which had to be seen as beneficial for a young merchant. This would also stand to reason

128 Ibid.

129 Letter from Luetkens, Nicolaus Gottlieb to Engelhardt, Ehrenfried, March 8, 1745, TNA, HCA 30/232, Letter Book I, no. 584, originally part of a letter packet together with letter no. 583.

130 See as a prime example Marperger, *Der allzeitfertige Handels-Correspondent*, 686.

for Speelmeyer, who would at the same time gain a lucrative new trading opportunity. As typical for letters of recommendation, Luetkens provides a concrete address as to where Engelhardt could address himself in France. However, what he omitted from the letter was the fact that Engelhardt would in this way not only enter into the service of the Nantes Swiss-Protestant merchant house of Ochs & Schweighausen but at the very same time in certain ways also into the service of Luetkens, who maintained and conducted manifold commission businesses with the said merchant house while living and trading in Nantes himself. The merchant Ochs was furthermore one of Luetkens' frequent travel companions, and thus definitely an *intimate friend*, during the times that he spent in France.

Therefore, the two of them, Luetkens and Engelhardt, in the actual arrangement Luetkens envisioned, would work closely together and both act as commission agents in the house of Ochs & Schweighauser, conducting not only business in the name of the said merchants but first and foremost in their own name and therefore in the name of their future merchant house. In certain ways, Luetkens still at least implied the latter, pointing to the fact that Engelhardt would not be regarded as an *employee* in this house but as a *friend* – and as a friend he would also be given the right to conduct his own business. Last but not least, as usual in letters of recommendation, Luetkens' letters provided a concrete date as to when a trip to France would be most advisable.[131] This date, however, was not only advisable because of, for instance, good travel conditions during the Easter period. Rather, it would be particularly favourable for the two young merchants because it would give them enough time to get to know each other and for Engelhardt to get familiar with the businesses the two of them would conduct together, before they were to start their official business partnership together in November 1745. The latter fact would, however, understandably remain unmentioned in the letter.

In sum, on the surface and to outside viewers, the letter from Luetkens seemed to be a perfect letter of recommendation, providing convincing arguments why Engelhardt should take to the road and travel to France, on his own behalf and with the consent of his employer. At the same time, all of the arguments raised were also always directly tied to and in support of Luetkens' original plan, about which we know due to the first letter and which Engelhardt was therefore aware of, too. Quite on the contrary, the intriguing thing about this letter and the reason why it is such a prime example of the practical principle of persuasion through arranging insider dealings is that Luetkens was able to sell his idea without revealing the original, underlying plan to all participants. He achieved this by serving parts of his plan in well-considered doses of information to the respective addressees, in this case selling the idea to Speelmeyer. His letter can therefore not generally be regarded as selling a lie, but rather it concealed the actual motivation behind the plan, for the purpose of getting Speelmeyer's approval, which would in the end also be beneficial for Speelmeyer, at least in Luetkens' opinion.

Unfortunately for Luetkens though, his letters failed to have the desired effect. We do not know what the decisive reason for the failure was: whether Speelmeyer smelt a rat or simply did not agree to the idea, or whether Engelhardt did not want to risk a quarrel with Speelmeyer or backpedalled because, as we know at least from Luetkens'

131 See ibid., 684-686. See also Bohse, *Der allzeitfertige Briefsteller*, 157.

letter, in the beginning he was generally not disinclined to the idea. The only thing we know for sure is that the failure did not have a detrimental impact on the overall plan of both young merchants to enter into a partnership. At the end of the year 1745, after the time when Engelhardt had fully served his contract in the house of Speelmeyer, Engelhardt and Luetkens established their merchant house together in Hamburg. Knowing about this episode and the persuasive strategy behind it nevertheless is most crucial for us because it serves as a blueprint for the events that took place in the following and as a direct result of it.

The failure of this plan prompted the merchants Hertzer & von Bobartt to jump into action, who in a way provided the compensatory solution for Luetkens, which, in turn, was surely also an important reason for the partnership between Engelhardt and Luetkens not being jeopardised in the end. As a positive side effect of this contingency plan that was subsequently implemented by Luetkens and Hertzer & von Bobartt, the Hamburg merchant in France was provided with a skilled merchant clerk, who would continue to work for him and Engelhardt and for Hertzer & von Bobartt as a loyal employee and agent in France even after Luetkens was already back in Hamburg. So, Luetkens in the end not only gained a merchant clerk but also a future agent and factor in France. So, once more the saying proves true that *when one door closes another one opens,* and this new solution even represented a more conducive one for Luetkens' establishment phase. The negotiation strategy applied in the following letter episode was basically exactly the same as in the case of the Engelhardt letters, only that the circle of insiders was even more limited. Most striking is that Hertzer & von Bobartt and Luetkens even decided not to inform Engelhardt about their concrete plans in the first place.

## Finding a Merchant Clerk

After being informed by Luetkens about the bad progress regarding his plan to lure Engelhardt to France and after a having had a short personal conversation with Engelhardt themselves, maybe at the Hamburg stock exchange, where they had also met before, the Hamburg merchants Hertzer & von Bobartt saw themselves no longer able to stand back and only watch from the sideline. Instead, they obviously saw the need for direct intervention and support.[132] Their resulting letter to Luetkens turned out to be longer than usual. First of all, they decided to write and send two letters to Luetkens in one letter packet, one dealing with only commercial matters, the other one being destined for negotiating more private business. The second letter was again marked with "in eigen Händen", for personal use only, which was synonymous with "particular letters". In this case, the purpose of this additional note next to the address line was again to limit the pairs of eyes that would be privy to the matter and therefore to emphasise and to best ensure the confidentiality of the respective letter. As is at least my impression from all the letters that I have read in the Luetkens archive marked with this note and also knowing these letters' contents and their consequences, I can state with reasonable certainty that most of the time the recipients of the letters seem to have

132 Hertzer & von Bobartt report the meeting with Engelhardt in their letter quoted below.

adhered to this material request for confidentiality. This practice, therefore, as simple as it might appear, actually worked and was effective. This is a fact that is often forgotten or at least underrepresented in current research, which instead tends to stress another very common letter-reading habit of the time, namely that letters were read aloud publicly as a "quasi-public form of communication".[133] The letters with the mark "in eigen Händen", "particular letter", or in French "en mains propres" or "particulaire lettre", however, were definitely meant to be read in private.

In their letter marked with this note, the merchants Hertzer & von Bobartt therefore not surprisingly touched upon the topic of the planned joint partner company of Luetkens and Engelhard and the necessary planning beforehand because this was something that they wanted to and needed to discuss in private. Secondly, this letter exceeded the usual number of letter pages used for their letters to Luetkens. Usually, concluding from their letter pile in the archive, Hertzer & von Bobartt used three to 5 pages for their letters to Luetkens, which equates to one or two large sheets of paper, which were folded in the middle to write on the front and inner side of the paper, but not on the last page which was reserved for the address. The letter sent to Luetkens on the 5th of March 1745, however, marked with the privacy note, consisted of a total of seven complete pages, which shows the great importance that the Hamburg merchants attached to this matter.

Another striking feature of this letter is also that noticeably a single page was deliberately added as an extra contribution, an extra sheet to this letter. Not entirely coincidental in this regard furthermore appears the fact that, written on this single sheet of paper, we find the concrete proposal Hertzer & von Bobartt made to Luetkens to solve his tricky situation. On this inserted letter page, we find Hertzer & von Bobartt's proposal to send over their merchant clerk Schuetz to France. Assuming that this is no coincidence, we can draw the conclusion that in this way the merchants once more offered Luetkens a rather simple way and material opportunity to drop the idea if he did not agree with it. The only thing Luetkens had to do was to remove this single sheet of paper, the extra page from the letter, throw it away or even burn it, as was common practice during that time, before filing the rest of the original letter by Hertzer & von Bobartt in their respective letter bundle in the archive.[134] Having removed the letter sheet would subsequently have created the appearance for any outside viewer that no offer had ever been made. Providing a letter writer and letter recipient with such a material opportunity surely represents just another practical benefit provided by the letter practice: It allowed them to simply let certain plans, ideas, and arrangements disappear or slip away by deliberately but discreetly destroying letters or single letter pages, if needed. As we know from Luetkens' response to this letter, however, the

133 Ditz, "Formative Ventures," 59. See also Körber, "Der soziale Ort des Briefs," 258, who wrote that letters were "often personal yet not private" ["Ein Brief enthält eine Nachricht, die persönlich ist, ohne privat zu sein."]. See Earle, "Introduction," (in *Epistolary Selves*), 7. See Whyman, *Pen and the People*, 72; see Furger, *Briefsteller*, 137.

134 Regarding the practice of burning letters (as it was most prominently celebrated by Rahel Varnhagen) see French, Lorely. *German Women as Letter Writers: 1750-1850*. London: Associated University Press, 1996, 157.

merchant did not decide to remove this extra page but gladly accepted the offer. For him, this offer came at exactly the right moment in time. It provided him with a good compensation for Engelhardt's absence in France.

So, after their report about their meeting with Engelhardt, which filled nearly one and a half pages of their letter and which gave them little hope and the clear impression that "Engelhardt will not travel to France in the near future in order to bring himself to do some considerable business there",[135] they submitted the following proposal on the extra page, starting their explanations with a formative letter phrase and letter formula that is already very familiar to us.

> "After reading E.E.'s letter and after careful consideration, we came up with the idea ["auf die Gedancken kommen"] to propose to E.E. to send E.E. our own clerk ["Diener"] whose name is Schutz who could assist E.E. and who would receive the necessary instructions from E.E., so that when E.E. arrives back here [in Hamburg], he [Schutz] could render us both good services [in France], and so that we have someone there whom we can trust ["einen Menschen haben auf welchen unß beyderseits … verlassen"]. This Schutz has been serving us for 8 years and his contract is expiring next May. As far as we know, he is willing to make a tour to France, he has served us loyally ["treulich gedienet"] and we can confirm he has best knowledge in the trade in sugars, which is our most fundamental trading field ["principahlste Handlung"]. He is not in the slightest addicted to drink or to any other of the human vices. The only flaw that we sometimes notice on him is that he is a smart aleck sometimes ["klug hath dünken laßen"][…] which will, however, go away as soon as he is in foreign lands and mingles with more people. He is a bit scant ["kargh"] on money, which means that travel expenses will hit him hard. For this reason, we think that he will certainly be convenient with entering into E.E.'s and our service in order to visit France without paying any money. […] As soon as we receive E.E.'s approval, we are willing to send him over with one of our ships at the first opportunity and to release him from his contract. We will tell him that he is obliged ["sich verpflichten muß"] to follow E.E.'s orders and instructions, while in return we will offer him a certain interest in our enterprises, and we ask E.E. to do the same and allow him, if he is inclined to do so, a small interest in your enterprises. This interest, however, should be small. Furthermore, when E.E. leaves France and comes here, he [Schutz] is obliged to doing business only on E.E.'s and on our behalf, however, he will be allowed to keep a small interest in these enterprises, and furthermore we will give him a 1% provision on all the purchases he does on our behalf."[136]

Precisely through this latter regulation, Schuetz was to become their agent and factor in France. On the left hand side of the letter page, as a later addition to their letter, written diagonally on the page, the merchants also added the important information that they would now "set out and confirm all of this in writing together with him ["schrifftlich mit Ihm abfaßen"] and we will draft the contract in such a way that E.E. will be content with it, and we will send E.E. a copy of it for the records."[137] This information was

135 Letter from Hertzer & von Bobartt to Luetkens, Nicolaus Gottlieb, March 5, 1745, TNA, HCA 30/234.

136 Ibid., written on a separately enclosed sheet of paper, an extra letter page.

137 Ibid.

simply too important to forget and miss it in their letter, which was the reason why they added this *postscript* to their letter. The latter practice of adding certain information to free spaces on the letter pages can often be observed in the letters within the Luetkens archive. We will hear in greater detail about the practice of writing a P.S. in the next chapter. As becomes obvious from this letter in particular, as only one typical example, this practice was not always due to negligence or carelessness on the part of the letter writers. Quite on the contrary, it far more often served the purpose of keeping the letter and its information up to date. Another piece of information they added to this letter page was that since Schuetz was already "acquainted with M. Engelhard, whenever the same would make a tour to France, the two of them would certainly get along with each other."[138] This information points us to the fact that Engelhardt was not meant to be privy to this matter. It was the conviction of Hertzer & von Bobartt that Luetkens' future partner would surely in the end benefit from this deal. However, there was no need to tell him about their arrangements at this stage.

In general, it must be assumed that this offer must have presented a sheet anchor for everyone involved and particularly for Luetkens. For Hinrich Schuetz, too, this offer presented a good opportunity because he got the chance to gain experience abroad instead of only serving his duty as a merchant clerk in Hamburg. Even the Hamburg merchant house would get a certain benefit from this agreement. First, doing Luetkens this favour further strengthened their ties with Luetkens and his dependency on them. Secondly, with regard to their business cooperation in the future, as they already anticipated in the letter, they as well as Luetkens would later be able to draw on their own factor in France due to the stipulated regulations. Their proposal therefore was not only a generous offer, but it also served their own interest in the future. Last but not least, for Nicolaus Gottlieb Luetkens it was an offer that he simply could not reject because it was very helpful for him. After it must have become apparent to him that his plan to get Engelhardt to travel to France would fail, which happened at the very same time as the letter exchanges regarding Schuetz with Hertzer & von Bobartt, he therefore expressed his consent and his appreciation of this presented idea most tellingly. His words are so remarkable because they completely omitted to beating about the bush and instead addressed the matter as directly and plainly as it could be. It is precisely this brevity and succinctness that conveys to us the gratitude and great relief that Luetkens must have felt when he received the letter by Hertzer & von Bobartt or, looking at it the other way around, we at least get a glimpse of the weariness that the previous efforts in the negotiations must have left him with.

On the 29th of March 1745, representing letter copy no. 613 in his Letter Book, Luetkens wrote to Hertzer & von Bobartt that "if the matter could be resolved with M. Schutz, I ask E.E. to not waste any time ["nicht zu manquiren"] and send him over at the earliest convenience because I am in great need of him [….]", whereby the word "great" ["groß nöttig"] is added in this letter to give his words further emphasis.[139] After this approval by Luetkens, things were handled with astounding speed. Already in their next

138 Ibid.

139 Letter from Luetkens, Nicolaus Gottlieb to Hertzer & von Bobartt, March 29, 1745, TNA, HCA 30/232, Letter Book I, no. 613.

letter, from the 9th of April, Hertzer & von Bobartt announced that "our clerk Schütz agrees with everything, to confirm everything in writing ["eine Schrifft verbürglich zu machen"] and to travel to France and enter into E.E.'s service at the first opportunity. We are willing to send him over after the [Easter] feast, and he will soon be with E.E. We will send E.E. a copy of the contract."[140] They also once more added that Schuetz would certainly be of help to both parties in future. In the end, however, the contract was not sent directly to Luetkens by regular post, but Hertzer & von Bobartt instead decided to give this letter enclosing the contract to Schuetz personally before his departure, so that he could hand it over to Luetkens directly upon arrival. On the 26th of April, Schuetz entered the ship of captain Paatz in Hamburg as a passenger. Four days later, the ship departed.

## 6.10 Second Conclusion: On Hand-to-Hand Delivery

The fact that Hertzer & von Bobartt decided to hand over the respective letter enclosing all the requisite documents regarding the future employment in France to Schuetz himself before his departure and not send these documents via mail as announced in their letter, points us to two crucial facts and conditions underlying this letter episode and the whole undertaking. First, the material gesture of not sending this letter by mail but handing it over to a messenger, Schuetz, who was also directly involved in the respective undertaking, was a clear indication of the absolute confidentiality that the Hamburg merchant house wished to exercise in this matter. It was a result and an intrinsic part of the practical principle of insider dealings applied in this episode.

Apparently, the merchants Hertzer & von Bobartt preferred a hand-to-hand delivery in this case because the matter and agreements that had been made between them were only meant to be known to the persons directly involved, to them, Luetkens and Schuetz. By means of choosing this way of transportation, the merchants prevented in the best way possible that other people got the chance to read this letter or to hear of the plans. Furthermore, hand-to-hand delivery was also a more secure way of transportation relating to letters going missing or being confiscated on the way.[141] The reason, however, for the above argument that the way of transportation was chosen for ensuring the highest confidentiality can be found in Hertzer & von Bobartt's next letter, which was sent to Luetkens in the usual way. In this letter, Hertzer & von Bobartt first reported to Luetkens that they amended the "copia of the contract conditions that they have set out with Schuetz" to a letter which they gave to Schuetz personally. At the end of the letter, they also presented certain reasons and justifications for this approach, referring, however, in this case not to their particular decision to provide Schuetz with the letter and the contract but referring to the general approach that they liked to choose in this

140 Letter from Hertzer & von Bobartt to Luetkens, Nicolaus Gottlieb, April 4, 1745, "In eigen Handen", TNA, HCA 30/234.

141 Regarding the reliability of postal services and routes, see Whyman, *Pen and the People*, 46-74. See O'Neill, *The Opened Letter*, 19-46. See also Behringer, "Communications Revolutions." In general Behringer, *Zeichen des Merkur*.

matter. The latter was not presented to Luetkens as a wish, but quite on the contrary, it far more took the form of a clear request to him, which becomes obvious when we look at their words. The merchants wrote that they "would write to their friends in L & v. B. [Luttman & von Bobartt] at Nantes that captain Paatz has sailed off and that our former clerk M. Schuetz is travelling with him and the same will make a tour through Nantes, so we ask them to assist him in everything. However, we don't want them to know about the arrangement we have settled with him, and E.E. would do well to also maintain silence about this before them ["nichts gegen detti Freunde merken zu laßen"], and if it comes to light, we would prefer it if E.E. would tell our mutual friends that E.E. has settled the deal with Schuetz ["Engagement gemacht"], because otherwise our friends might be a bit displeased ["was unmuthen sein"] about the fact that both E.E. and we saw no need to inform them beforehand despite our family ties [Elart von Bobartt in Nantes was Christopher von Bobartt's brother] and the long friendship we share with them. The news that E.E. had made an arrangement with M. Schuetz will lead to worries not only on their side [in Nantes], but also on the part of the merchants here [in Hamburg], but they will have to content themselves ["begnügen"] with the response that E.E. sends to them."[142]

The reason why this level of confidentiality was therefore chosen or regarded as advisable by the merchants was to prevent suspicions, discord and even rumours relating to Schuetz' future position and role in France on the part of their other trading partners; suspicions and rumours that would have, however, not completely lacked substance because the merchants did in fact have ambitious plans for Schuetz. Mainly, however, this way of dealing with the matter was chosen because the merchants wanted to avoid objections from these other merchants, who would have demanded to have their say in the matter had they known about it. So, instead Hertzer & von Bobartt wanted to create the impression that Schuetz's trip to France was happening of Schuetz's own accord and with the approval of his employer in Hamburg, and in case any questions were raised later, it should appear as if Luetkens had made the respective arrangements with Schuetz in France. Otherwise, the other trading partners would have felt left out and ignored, which might have caused disgruntlement or at least resentment on their side and, furthermore, might have raised further questions. All of this would have unnecessarily delayed the whole process, which would have been unfavourable and problematic for Luetkens, which is why they instead decided to keep it all confidential and a secret. This approach therefore literally represents the pinnacle and ultimate prime example of the persuasive practical principle of arranging insider dealings.

In order to get their venture done, the partners hammered out a deal and compiled a contract, which only they would know about. Considered as a whole, the decision to hand over a copy of the contract and the letter to Schuetz personally, as part of the strategy to keep things confidential, made things a lot easier for the people involved and it helped them to accelerate the process and the implementation of the plan. This was convenient for everyone involved, but especially for Luetkens because he urgently needed help. Therefore, the historical actors once more found a pragmatic solution to a

142 Letter from Hertzer & von Bobartt to Luetkens, Nicolaus Gottlieb, April [further date not readable], 1745, TNA, HCA 30/234.

problem, which they were able to implement on the basis of the opportunities provided by letter writing and correspondence. Consequently, Luetkens himself completely adhered to the provision made by Hertzer & von Bobartt and he did not in any way criticise or oppose the approach suggested.

The second remarkable insight that we gain from the material gesture of handing over the letter with the contract to Schuetz is that it provides a proper explanation of why the whole matter of employing Schuetz was generally solved so easily and quickly: In this present case, Luetkens was simply presented by Hertzer & von Bobartt with a fait accompli. Represented in the gesture of handing over and providing Schuetz with an already completed written contract, prepared exclusively by the Hamburg merchants themselves, we find the proof that both Luetkens and Schuetz from this moment onwards essentially had no further say and no other option than to agree with all the formal conditions that Hertzer & von Bobartt intended for their mutual collaboration. This represents a crucial formative element of the practical principle of arranging insider dealings in this episode, shaping and determining the course of events in this episode. From the moment Luetkens agreed to the plan of being provided with a merchant clerk by Hertzer & von Bobartt in his letter, no further discussions were needed or necessary, and consequently no further negotiations took place. The reason for this, as it appears, was that all participants now simply accepted to leave the leadership, "Meister laßen" in the contemporary wording, to Hertzer & von Bobartt.[143] In the end, for both Luetkens and Schuetz the arrangements now being made were favourable, so there was no need for any opposition or interference from their side. And this was ultimately the reason why things were resolved so quickly.

In this case the powers of persuasion, as they were prevailing in and governing the letter and business practices of the 18th century, mainly become noticeable in the letters by the merchants Hertzer & von Bobartt. By means and on the basis of their letters and by means of the way they chose to send them, they were apparently pulling the necessary strings to create facts necessary for helping Luetkens with his establishment phase, but by doing so they were also skilfully setting up a plan that was in the end beneficial to all the involved parties. As the final piece of evidence being cited in this chapter, in which all the planning in the end culminated, I will quote the original copy of the employment contract that Schuetz was handed by Hertzer & von Bobartt before leaving for France, which still exists today and has survived amongst the Luetkens papers because it did finally reach Luetkens. Therefore, the contract was also stored amongst the document in his business archive. This document, as we will see, represents a masterpiece of contractual arrangements and a masterpiece of forward planning, bringing all the arduous negotiations and planning of the previous weeks to a conciliatory ending.

Two things in particular will become obvious from the document. First, it will show us the room for manoeuvre, the tasks and the responsibilities of a merchant clerk during that time, which provides us with a further explanation why matters and formalities were quickly and easily completed in this case. The entrepreneurial scope of action of a merchant clerk, during that time but also basically during the entire Early Modern Period, was clearly defined and most of the time also deliberately limited in order to

143 See for instance letter from Luetkens, Nicolaus Gottlieb to Engelhardt, Ehrenfried, March 8, 1745.

ensure a smooth workflow and a clear chain of command and hierarchy in the merchant house.[144] More or less the only relatively flexible object of negotiation with regard to the contractual provisions set out for the employment of a clerk was whether the merchant clerk was given the right for financial participation in the firm and its businesses, which, if it was granted to him, furthermore differed in the extent of this participation. Most of the time, merchant clerks were granted a 1 to 5 per cent commission fee for the businesses they conducted and/or a share in the investments and businesses of the firm. In the case of Schuetz, he was granted a 1/8 share in the investments and enterprises of the firm.[145] Secondly, it will become apparent how skilfully Hertzer & von Bobartt engineered and succeeded in pre-planning and contractually paving the way for their future plans with Schuetz, presenting the icing of the cake of the practical principle of arranging insider dealings that was demonstrated in this chapter. In this contract, it is not only Schuetz's employment as a clerk that was stipulated, but the contract also anticipated his future employment as an agent and merchant factor in their and Luetkens' service.[146] Therefore, this document is a prime example of how merchants even or especially with regard to legal formalities were able to predefine and shape the future course of events by means of putting ink on paper. This is the complete contract of employment for the merchant clerk Hinrich Schuetz entering into the service of Nicolaus Gottlieb Luetkens under supervision of the merchants Hertzer & von Bobartt:

> "After Monsieur Hinrich Schutz has fully served his agreed upon period of service in the house of Hertzer & von Bobartt and the same has now decided to travel to foreign lands ["Reise nach der Frembde"], Hertzer & von Bobartt are willing to support him in his wish and give him all their amicable assistance and they are also willing to employ him in their affairs abroad ["Affairen zu employren"], so both parties set out and enter into the following contract with each other. First, Mon. Hinrich Schutz travels at his own request [at his own responsibility] and at his own expenses, as concerns his livelihood, for the whole duration of his travels. He travels from here directly to France and particularly to the place where Nicolaus Gottlieb Lutkens is staying in order to learn from him all thorough skills and knowledge ["gründliche Wißenschafft"] that is necessary to carry out his future tasks, and undertakes to comply to stay with him and also to assist him in his business as long as Mon. Lutkens resides in this place, and he will neither demand any gratification for his service nor will he receive any interests in any purchases [of the said Luetkens], even more he will not trade on his own or for the account of any other merchants [apart from Hertzer & von Bobartt and Luetkens]. Secondly, for after and since the said Nicolaes Gottlieb Lutkens will leave France at the end of the year to return home, Mons. Hinrich Schutz undertakes to comply with the task to take over and carry out the businesses of Hertzer & von Bobartt and Nicolaes

144 See furthermore Ruppert, "Bürgerlicher Wandel," 66. See in detail Deges, "Zusammenfassende Übersicht," XV-LXV. See Häberlein, "Trading Companies." As a contemporary source, see Marperger, *Getreuer und geschickter Handelsdiener.* See also "Factor." *Oekonomische Encyklopädie*, vol. 12, 21-22.

145 See Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, 124-125.

146 Regarding business contracts between merchants in general, see Weber, Klaus. "Au nom de la Sainte Trinité: Kompanieverträge deutscher Kaufleute in Bordeaux (ca. 1740-1780)." *Hamburger Wirtschafts-Chronik* (HWC) 8 (2010): 37-61.

> Gottlieb Lütkens in France ["die Geschäffte in Frankreich wahrzunehmen, an dem Orte zu bleiben], commits himself to stay in the respective city or travel to other cities on his own expenses, wherever there is the best advantage ["der beste Vortheil"] to gain and to refrain from doing any business on his own or on the account of any other merchant [other than Hertzer & von Bobartt and Luetkens], neither direct nor indirect, until December 1747 ultimo. In case Hertzer & von Bobartt and Nicolaes Gottlieb Lütkens consider it conducive ["dienlich erachten"] they will keep him in their service for this whole time. Thirdly, the said Hertzer & von Bobartt advocating and acting at the same time in the name of Nicolaes Gottlieb Lutkens undertake to declare their willingness to grant the said Mons. Hinrich Schutz for after the time when the said Luetkens has left France, a commission provision of 1 per Cto. on all purchases of goods that the said Schutz does on both their behalfs. Furthermore, the said Schutz is free to take a 1/8 share in their purchases, if he wished, and Hertzer & von Bobartt will advance the costs for the purchases at a 4 per Cto. interest rate on his account ["suo conto"] for their avantzo [their advanced money]. Moreover, we will not charge him any provision for the sale of his share in the goods, but only 1 per Cto Decredere [a guarentee liability] for his own safety. And since he himself will not receive any provision or interest for any purchases during the time that M. Lütkens is still in France and is not allowed to trade in his own name or in the name of others [except for Luetkens & Hertzer & von Bobartt], considering that, Hertzer & von Bobartt as well as M. Lutkens agree to pay him a monthly wage [which, if we remember, was no part of their first suggestions] of 100 Livres if he behaves well ["wann er sich dabey wol verhal,"], which, however, ends as soon as M. Lütkens begins his return journey [to Hamburg]. In order to ensure that Mons. Schütz follows the stipulations of this contract, he commits himself to pay two thousand Livres Francais to Hertzer & von Bobartt and to Nicolaes Gottlieb Lütkens in the case of a breach of this contract or if he wished to withdraw – for whatever reason – from this contract. In case that Hertzer & von Bobartt, however, wish and agree to cancel the above conditions, Mons. Schütz is free to go. This accord [contract] stays in force until it is dissolved from both sides with goodwill and consent ["guten Willen und Consens"], and this is certified by the signature of both parties in Hamburg, April 1745."[147]

This was how Hertzer & von Bobartt provided Luetkens with a merchant clerk. The first personal letter by Hinrich Schuetz himself, addressed to Luetkens, that we find in the Luetkens archive is dated the 21st of May 1745, and more letters were to follow.[148] At about the same time, actually only two days later, also the change in the handwriting used in Luetkens' Letter Book set in. This shows us that Schuetz quickly assumed his duty and began his activities in the service of Nicolaus Gottlieb Luetkens. The tasks and functions he assumed in this regard not only show that he immediately and appropriately fulfilled his role but also what a great help and support his work must have been

147 As a sidenote: It was typical during that times that names were written in different spellings. Contract with his clerk Schuetz, April 1745, once enclosed in a letter Luetkens personally received in April 1745, TNA, HCA 30/232.

148 Letters from Hinrich Schuetz (otherwise *Schutz*) in TNA, HCA 30/236.

for Luetkens. Basically, Schuetz already and right from the beginning acted and was deployed as a coordinator and intermediary of Luetkens' shipping business. This means that he ultimately already became a kind of agent and merchant factor right from the moment he arrived in France, which was precisely what Hertzer & von Bobartt must have had in mind when they forged their plan to send their old hand and most experienced employee to France. Just as Luetkens expressly demanded it from his partners and employees in his merchant firm, Schuetz also skilfully mastered and complied with the most important stipulation and requirement that was set out by Luetkens during his search for suitable subjects: Schuetz's letters show us a very skilled writer, who was fluent in French. This was how in the end everything was brought to a conclusion satisfying to all of the parties involved and how Luetkens with the help and huge support of Hertzer & von Bobartt, after many setbacks in his negotiations, found an appropriate solution to this most important challenge and crucial step during a mercantile establishment phase during the 18th century. He had now found a business partner for his future merchant house in the person of Ehrenfried Engelhardt and a merchant clerk and employee in the person of Hinrich Schuetz.

After Luetkens finally left France to marry Ilsabe Engelhardt in Hamburg and to open his merchant house with Ehrenfried Engelhardt in November, his merchant clerk Schuetz stayed in France and became his and Hertzer & von Bobartt's agent in France.